Mixed Migration Review 2021

Highlights • Interviews • Essays • Data

Reframing human mobility in a changing world

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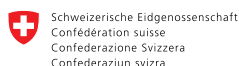
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The Covid-19 pandemic significantly disrupted global migration trends and immigration policies in 2020 and 2021. But recent changes in national leadership have also played a major role. Populist nationalist, right-wing leaders such as Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro (seen here during a rally in Juiz de Fora in September 2018) demonise immigrants, institute more restrictive policies, and step up deportations. Brazil had long enjoyed a reputation of tolerance, refuge, multi-culturalism, and inclusion in relation to migrants and refugees, but following Bolsonaro's victory in 2018, the country's policies and posturing have become distinctly hostile to inward migration. Brazil's case may be extreme, but it is a trend seen in many other countries, too.

Foreword

By now a well-established annual publication, the Mixed Migration Review (MMR) offers perspectives and analysis on the latest developments and policy changes affecting mixed migration across the world, including emerging conflicts and disasters, the impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic, and climate change.

The MMR is important reading for at least two reasons. Firstly, it consistently focuses on the women, men, and children whose security, safety, lives, and aspirations are directly affected by migration policies and practices. This adds a human perspective to a policy area dominated by dehumanising language, one where mobility is often described in terms of unstoppable "floods" or "flows".

Central to the MMR is its "Unexpected circumstances" section. This provides a window into the lived reality of the people behind the numbers. Such insights into the practical and very real impact of policies across geographical contexts is ever-more important at a time when countries' political efforts to keep refugees and migrants outside their own borders means that the suffering and rights violations they endure happen out of sight.

Secondly, the MMR challenges and adds nuance to preconceived perceptions of global mobility and its implications through alternative narratives delivered by expert voices and regional researchers in individual interviews. The aim is to stimulate new thinking, inform policy choices, and establish a sound basis for improving programmatic responses.

Like previous years' MMRs, the "Normalising the extreme" section offers a sobering account of current unsettling global policy trends. The increasingly securitised and militarised borders, pushbacks, refoulement, and denial of entry stand out. A welcome addition to this year's MMR is the accompanying section on the "Resisting the extreme" that provides an injection of optimism to the review, detailing positive developments related to mixed migration that are also emerging.

It is paramount to continue to monitor and analyse the protection implications of the proliferation of extreme and restrictive migration policies. But we also need to celebrate, support, and expand upon promising practices that foster better migration management, and provide space for the positive stories and outcomes of mobility. In response to the rapid deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan in August 2021 we have seen panicked statements and shameful positioning by states, but also the will, heart and commitment to find ways and means to provide safe pathways and to welcome Afghans in need of protection.

I invite everyone—policymakers, journalists, researchers, practitioners, and humanitarian partners—to continue to make that extra effort to seek a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the background to mobility, the circumstances, needs, and plight of those moving irregularly, and to explore, search for, and contribute to dignified and safe responses and solutions. The Mixed Migration Review 2021 and the brilliant and tireless work of the Mixed Migration Centre offer a solid evidence base for exactly that.

Charlotte Slente,
DRC Secretary General

Introduction

This year's Mixed Migration Review (MMR) arrives as the Covid-19 pandemic has had, and will continue to have, a strong influence on human mobility, both directly and indirectly, and in various ways. In many places, the health crisis brought human mobility to a standstill; in others, it led to massive return movements from cities to rural areas. In some places, it inhibited migration, with large numbers of refugees and migrants in mixed migration becoming stranded in transit.

The economic impact of lockdown measures left many aspiring migrants, still in their country of origin, suddenly starved of the resources needed to fulfil their migratory aspirations. But in other places, the economic impacts of the pandemic, such as rising unemployment and closures of businesses, created an additional push for more people to migrate and search for better opportunities elsewhere, leading to increased migratory movements. In addition to such immediate impacts, Covid-19, acting as a stress multiplier, will continue to affect mixed migration dynamics for years to come through a wide range of factors that drive migration.

The myriad ways in which the pandemic has influenced human mobility—some expected, some unexpected—highlight the need for data, evidence, research, analysis, and ongoing reflection, to continuously advance our understanding of migration and inform our policies and programming. They also reinforce the need to remain curious, to keep asking questions, to revisit ideas and to be prepared to reappraise received wisdoms.

Reframing mixed migration is the central theme of this year's Mixed Migration Review.

The global context is fast changing. With new geopolitical emergencies (conflicts and disasters), new public health threats (pandemics), new levels of environmental stress (accelerating climate change), changing trends in movement and government policy affecting movement, changing perceptions around migration, inconclusive forecasting prognoses, and improved data resources, now is the time to reframe mixed migration through the lens of different themes in one volume.

How is the pandemic—which once again laid bare the enormous inequalities between countries and between refugees and migrants and citizens within countries—changing migrants' decision making, migration governance, urbanisation trends, and public sentiment towards migration? (see page 232). In recent years, we have already seen an ever-increasing global investment in border control technology to exclude refugees and

migrants, and an increasingly cosy alliance between the security and defence industry and policymakers working on migration. The pandemic has led to more rigid border controls and increased surveillance by governments of people on the move. While understandable, and even generally accepted by many citizens, there are risks that at least some of these new measures will stay in place after the immediate threat of the pandemic has subsided, to the detriment of the lives and rights of refugees and migrants. Those with vested interests are already lobbying for more border security and control efforts (see page 222).

This continues to lead to measures and actions that would have been hard to imagine several years ago, such as proposals for floating walls at sea or the use of a sound cannon to deter refugees and migrants from entering a country. These are included in our regular "Normalising the Extreme" feature (see page 200), a global compilation of actions and policies that restrict mixed migration and infringe the rights of migrants and refugees but which are often implemented by democratic societies ostensibly guided by principles of human rights. Overall, we can conclude that while some of the world's more outspokenly anti-migration political parties have become weaker in recent years, others have gained more support. At the same time, there is also evidence of centrist, moderate and even leftist political parties mainstreaming and adopting anti-migration positions and policies (see page 243).

However, this MMR is not all doom and gloom. To counter the grimness of "Normalising the Extreme", this year we have introduced a new, sister section called 'Resisting the extreme' (see pages 200 & 209 respectively) charting positive developments and progressive policies on mixed migration, such as regularisation of irregular migrants, access to Covid-19 vaccination for undocumented migrants, and reductions in immigration detention.

One positive impact of the pandemic is a wider recognition that irregular migrant workers often make indispensable contributions to national economies by filling vacancies in many key sectors—not least in the health sector—and contributing to the economies of their host countries, a contribution which could be even higher if their status would be regularised. This could, or at least should, lead to more transitions towards regularity (see page 141).

As the world struggles to recover from the pandemic, a bigger threat—albeit one with a slower onset—has long been looming. With intense floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and record temperatures, 2021 offered another stark

reminder of the climate emergency, which is affecting mobility and displacement patterns around the world and will increasingly do so.

At the same time, the climate change-international migration nexus is still being instrumentalised and sometimes exaggerated to serve vested interests and agendas by both environmental and anti-migration activists, sometimes using imprecise, unsubstantiated and alarmist "predictions" of high numbers of people who will be migrating due to climate change. While climate-induced displacement is one side of the story, it is crucial to consider the full spectrum of voluntary and involuntary mobility and immobility when discussing the impact of climate change on human mobility (see page 178).

Both in relation to the climate change-migration nexus and more generally, there is a strong "mobility bias" in much public discourse, an intense focus on people on the move that obscures the fact that the majority of the world's population stays put. The various forms of "mixed immobility" remain under-researched and under-discussed but are a crucial aspect of a broader reframing of mixed migration (see page 191). Similarly, the contentious topic of returns requires an urgent revisiting (see page 257) as part of broader, more inclusive, and comprehensive approaches to mixed migration that are required to break the continuous political gridlock—and occasional aggressive migration diplomacy, as witnessed between Morocco and Spain, or on the Belarus-Lithuania border in 2021.

Media and policymakers in the Global North continue to focus disproportionally on mixed, irregular migration routes from the Global South to the Global North—such as the various Mediterranean routes between Africa and Europe, and the Central American routes towards the United States—potentially leading to a distorted view that irregular migration along them represents the bulk of global migration. In reframing global mixed migration, this MMR therefore focuses both on south-south migration (see page 147) and takes a deep dive into some of the word's overlooked, yet much-used and highly relevant mixed migration routes (see page 164).

It is equally important to diversify the voices heard in discussions of global mixed migration, where those from the Global North still tend to dominate. MMR 2021 features five essays—selected for publication from more than 600 submitted abstracts—by researchers and writers from the Global South who were invited to provide their insights and reflections on mixed migration.

Reframing mixed migration also requires rethinking the very meaning of the term, including the Mixed Migration Centre's own definition. Over 20 years after the concept was first introduced, is it still fit for purpose, or does it require modification to provide an even better lens to comprehensively understand and address contemporary human mobility? (see page 132).

In addition to the essays covering the topics listed above, this MMR includes many of the same elements as previous editions, starting with a global round-up of new mixed migration trends and policy developments (see pages 14-63) and including a series of in-depth interviews with policymakers, journalists, humanitarian workers, filmmakers, activists, academics, and researchers. A short piece by the Mayors Migration Council takes stock of new developments in the role of cities in local, regional, and global migration governance, offering continuity with last year's MMRC, which mainly focused on urban migration (see page 268).

Early in the pandemic, MMC's 4Mi adapted its primary data collection methodology to remote interviewing and mainly focused on the impact of Covid-19, but early in 2021 it reverted to its standard surveys with refugees and migrants, conducted face-to-face where possible, and remotely only where needed. This year's MMR features data from 4Mi surveys, zooming in on two key topics: the role and use of smugglers, and the drivers of mixed migration (see page 90 onwards).

Finally, to complement the thousands of 4Mi survey questionnaires—which, as every year, provide the foundation of much of MMC's work—this review includes a series of migrants' stories (starting on page 66), interviews with refugees and migrants that highlight their often extraordinary experiences and journeys. While focussing on their challenges, these stories also stress the many ways in which migration can ultimately benefit and enrich people's lives.

Bram Frouws
Director of the Mixed Migration Centre

Introduction to the Mixed Migration Centre

What is the MMC?

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.

What is MMC's mission?

The MMC is a leading source of independent and high-quality data, research, analysis, and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, positively impact global and regional migration policies, inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move, and 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.

What is MMC's vision?

Migration policies, responses and public debate are based on credible evidence and nuanced understanding of mixed migration, placing human rights and protection of all people on the move at the centre.

What are MMC's objectives?

- To contribute to a better, more nuanced and balanced understanding of mixed migration (knowledge)
- To contribute to evidence-based and better-informed migration policies and debates (policy)
- To contribute to effective evidence-based protection responses for people on the move (programming)

What is MMC's relationship with the Danish Refugee Council?

The MMC is part of and is governed by DRC. While its institutional link to DRC ensures MMC's work is grounded in operational reality, it acts as an independent source of data, research, analysis, and policy development on mixed migration for policy makers, practitioners, journalists, and the broader humanitarian sector. The position of the MMC does not necessarily reflect that of DRC.

Where does MMC work?

The MMC focuses on six regions: Eastern Africa & Yemen, North Africa, West Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. The 38 staff members of MMC are based in Geneva and in its regional hubs in Bogota, Dakar, Dhaka, Nairobi, Tunis and Turin, where it works in close cooperation with regional partners, stakeholders and donors. Through MMC's global data collection programme 4Mi approximately 135 enumerators collect data on mixed migration in over 15 countries across different migration routes globally, conducting approximately 10,000 in-depth interviews with refugees and migrants on the move annually.

For more information on MMC visit our website:
www.mixedmigration.org
follow us on: @Mixed_Migration
or write to us at: info@mixedmigration.org

Who supports MMC and the Mixed Migration Review?

The Mixed Migration Review 2021 builds upon the work by the various MMC regional hubs and 4Mi data collection projects, supported by a wide range of donors, including (between mid-2020 and November 2021): DANIDA, the European Commission, ECHO, Ford Foundation, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, GIZ, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, ICMPD, Mayors Migration Council, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, OHCHR, Open Society Foundation, Porticus Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Swedish Postcode Foundation, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Save the Children, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), UNFPA, UNHCR, UNODC, and the World Bank (through IGAD).

The striking beauty of Grande Comore, the largest of the Indian Ocean's Comoro islands, belies the extreme poverty that has prompted many of the country's residents to head to Mayotte, a French island at the end of the same archipelago. Crowded onto fishing boats like the ones shown here, thousands have reportedly drowned en route, making the waters between the islands among the deadliest migrant crossings in the world.

Photo credit: Salva Campillo / Shutterstock

While migration is often viewed as an adaptation to climate change, millions of people around the world are unable or unwilling to move, despite facing significant weather-related challenges. Here for example, fishermen on the shore of Kutubdia in southern Bangladesh used sandbags to protect their homes from rising sea levels, keen to stay put—close to the fish—because of economic necessity. But this photo was taken 13 years ago, and the chances that these houses have survived are slim.

Section 1

Keeping track

A detailed roundup of mixed migration trends and policy responses from around the world in 2021.

This section offers an overview of mixed migration across the world and policy responses to it. After an introduction that summarises various global trends, including the impact of Covid-19 on human mobility in the second year of the pandemic, the section covers the following regions in detail: Africa, the Middle East, the Americas, Europe, and Asia (including the Pacific), setting out key developments regarding people on the move and selected policies adopted or actions taken by national authorities.

Introduction: Mixed migration in the midst of a pandemic

By Peter Grant[1]

Snapshot of global mixed migration

The drivers of mixed migration worldwide are extraordinarily diverse, spanning a breadth of political, social, and economic forces that are often highly localised in origin but global in impact. The outbreak of Covid-19 has added another layer of complexity to this nexus, creating further momentum for people to move while at the same time making it even harder for many to do so. For the most vulnerable, in fact, forced immobility has become a defining feature of the pandemic: border restrictions continue to prevent refugees from seeking sanctuary elsewhere, asylum seekers face even longer waits for claims to be processed, and migrant workers still contend with discriminatory restrictions on their freedom of movement.

The endorsement of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in December 2018, just a year before the coronavirus first emerged, should have served as the perfect preparation for the disruption and trauma it would bring. Both documents provide a roadmap for a solidarity-based approach to migration and displacement that emphasises protection, equality and human rights. Had these been in place, it is possible that some of the most challenging aspects of the outbreak would have been alleviated, given the disproportionate impact it has had on refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers. In practice, however, as outlined in last year's Mixed Migration Review,[2] the pandemic has served to widen protection gaps and further restrict the already limited options for regular migration, forcing people into even costlier and more hazardous forms of irregular migration through the use of human smugglers.

Even in the first months of the pandemic, when migration in many parts of the world almost came to a halt, the need and desire to migrate did not go away. Developments during 2021 have shown that, while the pandemic may have deepened the hardship experienced by many refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, it has not weakened the underlying imperatives driving mixed migration. This is especially the case for those uprooted by conflict, either internally within their own countries or across borders to seek protection elsewhere. At the end of 2020, an estimated 82.4 million people were displaced worldwide, including some 55 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) forced from their homes by violence, natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies, as well as refugees from crisis hotspots such as Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. In many cases, these emergencies have only deteriorated further during 2021.

Normalising the extreme

In recent years, migration management across the world has been reshaped by a trend described by the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) as "normalising the extreme": the emergence of new, increasingly draconian measures to manage and contain refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers that, while previously deemed unpalatable, have quickly evolved into mainstream practices. In many ways, Covid-19 has helped accelerate this process by providing a pretext for governments to tighten restrictions in the name of public health—enabling the passage of emergency measures that in many cases show no sign now of being lifted. In the United States, for instance, the controversial Title 42 provisions invoked in March 2020 that allow border officials to immediately return refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers intercepted at the border, in violation of international law, was justified as a necessary and temporary public health measure. Yet by late 2021, the policy was still in place despite President Joe Biden's pledge to enact a more humane migration policy.

A similar approach is evident in the attitude of European countries to mixed migration. Despite the fact that the large majority of refugees and asylum seekers are hosted in countries neighbouring their own, the fear of unmanaged mixed migration into Europe has driven the growing externalisation of the European Union's migration policy in recent years (an attitude most recently evident in the wake of the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban in August 2021 and the reluctance of many EU states to welcome those who had managed to flee the country). As a result, other governments, particularly in North Africa, have increasingly been tasked with the responsibility to carry out crackdowns and facilitate returns in their own territories on the EU's behalf. For example, European countries are partnering closely with Libyan authorities on interceptions in the Mediterranean, despite the indisputable dangers migrants face upon return to Libya, and are rolling back search-and-rescue operations on the basis that these could incentivise others to attempt the journey—a move

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1   Peter Grant is an independent consultant specialising in urbanisation, migration, and human rights.
2   MMC (2020) Mixed Migration Review 2020: Mixed Migration and Cities.

that has served to make the route even more deadly as a result.

Though each region has its own patterns and drivers of mixed migration, there are nevertheless some connections and similarities at play between them:

- In **Africa**, new conflicts have emerged while others have worsened, creating further displacement across the Sahel, within Tigray and surrounding regions of Ethiopia and in Sudan and South Sudan, among other areas. While migration from North Africa has picked up pace after slowing in the first months of the pandemic, with increased numbers along the Central Mediterranean route and a mass entry of thousands of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta from Morocco in May 2021, perhaps the most significant development was the dramatic increase in movement along the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands. Having been a marginal entry point to Europe since 2006, the islands' sudden popularity has transformed the route into one of the most dangerous migration journeys in the world, with hundreds dying at sea.

- In the **Middle East**, the ongoing crisis in Syria has left millions of civilians displaced either within their country or as refugees in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Turkey. Their predicament shows little hope of improvement amidst rising xenophobia in host countries in the region and continued insecurity in the northwestern province of Idlib, the last redoubt of opposition forces outside the Assad regime's control. Meanwhile, the situation in Yemen continues to deteriorate, placing refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in the country as well as Yemeni civilians at high risk of attack and displacement, with many forcibly expelled across active frontlines by armed groups. This, together with an escalation of deportations from Saudi Arabia, has not only reduced movement from the Horn of Africa into Yemen but also led to a sharp rise in reverse migration as Ethiopians and other foreign nationals have sought to flee the violence.

- In the **Americas**, millions of Venezuelans continue to be displaced in the region, facing challenges around lack of documentation, limited access to services and worsening poverty. The economic impacts of the pandemic have driven increasing numbers northwards, along with thousands of Haitians, despite the increasingly hostile environment for refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in Mexico and the US. While President Joe Biden promised to remove many of the migration-related restrictions imposed by his predecessor, Donald Trump, many abusive practices remain in place, including summary expulsions at the southwestern border. In September 2021, thousands of Haitians who had managed to cross the border and set up camp in Texas were rounded up and deported back to their country.

- Despite arrivals in **Europe** in 2021 representing only a fraction of the numbers in 2015, when irregular migration peaked, various governments have steadily escalated not only their border security but also the use of harsh practices such as pushbacks and police roundups to deter and remove people in their territories. From reports of physical violence by Croatian border guards against refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers to Denmark's passage of legislation to establish offshore asylum processing, basic protections across the continent are in danger of being undermined. Meanwhile, with the rollback of official search-and-rescue maritime operations and the criminalisation of many NGOs undertaking these efforts themselves, the Mediterranean routes into Europe have become even more deadly.

- In **Asia**, mixed migration continued to be shaped by two protracted crises: the armed insurgency in Afghanistan and the displacement of more than 1 million of Myanmar's persecuted Rohingya minority outside the country. While the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021 could bring an end to the civil conflict, deteriorating economic conditions and human rights violations are likely to drive more emigration and international displacement. Meanwhile, February's military coup in Myanmar has made the prospects of return for refugees in Bangladesh and other countries even more distant. The pandemic has also dramatically altered the region's labour migration landscape, with some migrant workers stranded in their countries of origin due to travel restrictions while others are struggling to return home. Natural disasters, aggravated by the impacts of climate change, are also a major cause of internal displacement across the region.

Key developments in the international migration landscape

Stalled progress on the Global Compact for Migration?

The adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in 2018 was a milestone in multilateral cooperation in an area historically characterised by division and disengagement, particularly between the Global North and South. Given the frequent failure of European and North American governments to work on an equal footing with countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, the brokering of a common framework for managing migration represented a historic moment. The GCM continues be a major focus of policy discussions, including in the Global Forum on Migration and Development held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in January 2021.

While there has been some optimism with regards to the positive practices that certain governments have implemented in response to Covid-19, such as temporary regularisation programmes and expanded healthcare[3]—measures that align closely with the recommendations of the GCM—recent analysis by MMC of its implementation on the ground suggests that so far, the promise of a truly collaborative, rights-based approach had yet to be realised.[4]

Specifically, looking at the location of the 23 "champion countries" working with the UN Network on Migration, nearly all of them (with the exception of Canada and Portugal) are part of the Global South. A similar pattern emerges when looking at the geography of the various networks and funded projects that have emerged from the GCM: though often funded primarily by northern governments, they are located almost exclusively in the South. This suggests that, to date, Europe and the US are still viewing migration through their traditional framework of containment and external management, rather than seeking to meaningfully apply the GCM's provisions on issues such as detention, social welfare, and other areas to their own policies. Despite the visionary nature of the GCM, then, the same fissures between North and South risk being replicated again unless all signatories refocus efforts to the spirit of the Compact.

First regional GCM reviews

November 2020: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region (encompassing **Europe**, **North America** and a number of countries in **Central Asia**). The event provided a platform for participants to explore the gaps and opportunities for implementation across the region, including the ongoing implications of the pandemic on international migration management.[5]

February 2021: **Arab region**. The event brought together an array of stakeholders to discuss the specific challenges around migration among Arab states. At the opening session, the executive secretary of the UN Economic and Social Council for West Africa reiterated that "we need to work together to promote the inclusion of migrants in social policies, fight discrimination, and ensure safe, orderly and regular migration".[6]

March 2021: **Asia and the Pacific**. This concluded with calls for stronger partnerships across the region to "reimagine" migration in the region. Participants reiterated the need for solidarity between countries, particularly in the wake of Covid-19, and the need for an inclusive approach that recognises the needs of migrants.[7] UN officials also highlighted the central role that migrants play in the economies of their host countries in the region, and the duty of national governments to ensure that foreign workers have access to Covid-19 vaccination programmes.[8]

April 2021: **Latin America and the Caribbean**. The discussions reaffirmed the value of the GCM, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, and the need to view migration as a positive force for democracy and sustainable development. During the event, the executive secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean stated that "migration is not a problem, nor does it give rise to threats; instead it is a common good that can contribute to reducing inequality and lessening asymmetries in a globalized world".[9]

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3   Mixed Migration Centre (2020) COVID-19 and the Global Compact for Migration.
4   Frouws, B. (2021) Same old, same old? Are we seeing a resurfacing of the North–South divide in GCM implementation? MMC.
5   UN Network on Migration and IOM (2020) First Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the UNECE region.
6   IOM (2021) Arab Region to hold its First Regional Review of The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
7   IOM (2021) First regional review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Asia-Pacific concludes.
8   UN (2021) Asia-Pacific: UN forum highlights central role of migrants in world's most populous region.
9   CEPAL (2021) Countries reiterate commitment to implementing the Global Compact and urge for viewing migration as a contribution to democracy, diversity and sustainable development.

August 2021: **Africa**. Stakeholders explored a range of potential challenges to the GCM's effective implementation, including the continued impacts of Covid-19 as well as longstanding issues around human rights violations, trafficking, detention and forced returns in the region. The meeting also reaffirmed the need for a shared commitment to protecting the rights of those on the move, better national and regional information systems, and a renewed focus on empowering local communities to respond more effectively to migration needs.[10]

A global fund on internal displacement solutions?

A major recommendation from the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, convened in September 2021, was that a global fund on internal displacement solutions be established to provide tailored assistance for IDPs across the world. While the details were still being worked out at the time of writing, there was some divergence of opinion between those who supported such a fund's creation (including many states with large IDP populations) and others (including international financial institutions already sponsoring internal displacement programmes as part of their general funding) who did not feel a dedicated mechanism would necessarily be more effective at resolving IDP issues. Another recommendation to emerge from the discussions was for the UN to appoint a special representative for solutions to internal displacement and the publication of an annual "State of Solutions to Internal Displacement" report.[11]

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was held in July 2021. IOM's submission to the HLPF, "Leveraging migration to better recover from Covid-19 and achieve the 2030 Agenda", emphasised the continued challenges facing migrants in the wake of the pandemic and the knock-on effects this had on social and economic development worldwide.[12] Besides highlighting the challenges migrants faced, from lack of access to health care to xenophobia, the submission presented "11 crucial actions for safe, orderly and regular migration to accelerate sustainable development and recover better from Covid-19". These included a range of rights-based measures to protect migrants, open up opportunities for regular migration, challenge stigma, improve data collection and link post-pandemic recoveries to social inclusion and green transitions.

10   UNECA (2021) First continental review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration concludes in Africa.
11   Chadwick, V. (2021) High-level panel calls for new global fund for internally displaced. Devex.
12   IOM (2021) Leveraging migration to recover better from Covid-19 and achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Africa

Overview

Violence continues to displace communities in a number of conflict hotspots across Africa, including the Sahel, where millions have now been uprooted, either internally in their own countries or in neighbouring states now contending with the threat of armed groups spreading across their borders. Meanwhile, civilians in both Sudan and South Sudan face fresh displacements amidst further outbreaks of conflict, while contested elections in the Central African Republic (CAR) have led to a spike in attacks and forced displacement by rebel militias. This chronic insecurity has been accompanied by protracted humanitarian emergencies, made worse by food shortages and environmental pressures such as drought and flooding.

While most of these conflicts have been ongoing for years, the crisis in Tigray only began in November 2020 with the outbreak of hostilities between Ethiopian government forces and separatist groups. Since then, widespread atrocities against communities have been reported, driving mass displacements in Tigray and increasingly in neighbouring provinces as the unrest has spread. Many civilians have also crossed the border into Sudan to seek protection there. At the same time, as insecurity in Yemen intensifies, large numbers of Ethiopians (including many from the Tigray region) have engaged smugglers to travel back to the Horn of Africa—a notable instance of reverse migration on a route travelled by hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians and Somalis over the years. Dozens have reportedly died during 2021 attempting to cross back to Djibouti.

The impacts of Covid-19 on migration from Africa to Europe have been mixed, increasing the desire to migrate in some areas while also making it harder in practice for people to do so. As a result, while the pandemic prompted a rise in the number of North Africans crossing by sea to Europe, the number of sub-Saharans attempting the journey has declined, as fewer people have the requisite resources.[13] While movement along the Central Mediterranean route has increased and the Western Mediterranean route saw a series of mass entries across the border between Morocco and the Spanish territory of Ceuta, the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands has seen an extraordinary surge in numbers during 2020 and into 2021. The sudden popularity of this route, unprecedented

since 2006, follows years of dwindling activity when other passages to Europe were favoured.

In West Africa, while the initial phase of the pandemic reduced mobility generally due to border restrictions, migration has picked up again in the months since, with a significant number of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in the region reporting that the economic impacts of Covid-19 contributed to their decision to leave.[14] It is still the case that most West Africans on the move remain in the region, with two out of three such migrants residing in another West African country. Nevertheless, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of West Africans in North America and Europe, rising from 3 percent and 12 percent respectively of all emigrants in 1990 to 10 percent and 19 percent in 2020.[15]

Irregular migration from Africa to Europe

The large majority of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers from Africa seeking to enter Europe follows three main routes: the **Central Mediterranean** route from Libya and Tunisia to Italy, the **Western Mediterranean** route from Algeria and Morocco to Spain (including land and sea arrivals into the North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla as well as maritime crossings to the Spanish mainland and Balearic islands) and the **Atlantic** route (also known as the Western African route) to the Spanish territory of the Canary Islands, primarily from Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia.

The relative importance of these routes has shifted from year to year, partly in response to changing situations elsewhere. The Central Mediterranean route to Italy, after becoming the most significant route into Europe in 2016, saw numbers dwindle significantly over the next two years to the point that Spain overtook Italy as the most popular point of arrival from Africa in 2018. However, after reducing further in 2019, the number of crossings to Italy increased sharply in 2020 and continued to rise in 2021, driven in part by increasing political instability and economic crisis in Tunisia, with Tunisians as the most common nationality of sea arrivals. Meanwhile movements to Spain have fluctuated in the same period,

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13   MMC (2021) The Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees and Migrants on the Move in West and North Africa.
14   Donnard, A. & Forin, R. (2021) Migration in the Sahel: Putting human rights and cooperation on the map. ISPI.
15   Migration Data Portal (2020) Migration data in Western Africa.

though one notable development has been the uptick in crossings through the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands, with numbers now similar to maritime crossings from the Maghreb to the Spanish mainland.[16]

Graphic 1. Mediterranean situation

Total arrivals
85,610
Last updated 10 Oct 2021

Sea arrivals in 2021
Includes refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Malta
80,588
Last updated 10 Oct 2021

Land arrivals in 2021
Includes refugees and migrants arriving by land to Greece and Spain
5,022
Last updated 03 Oct 2021

Spain 30,028
Italy 47,932
Greece 6,462
Malta 464
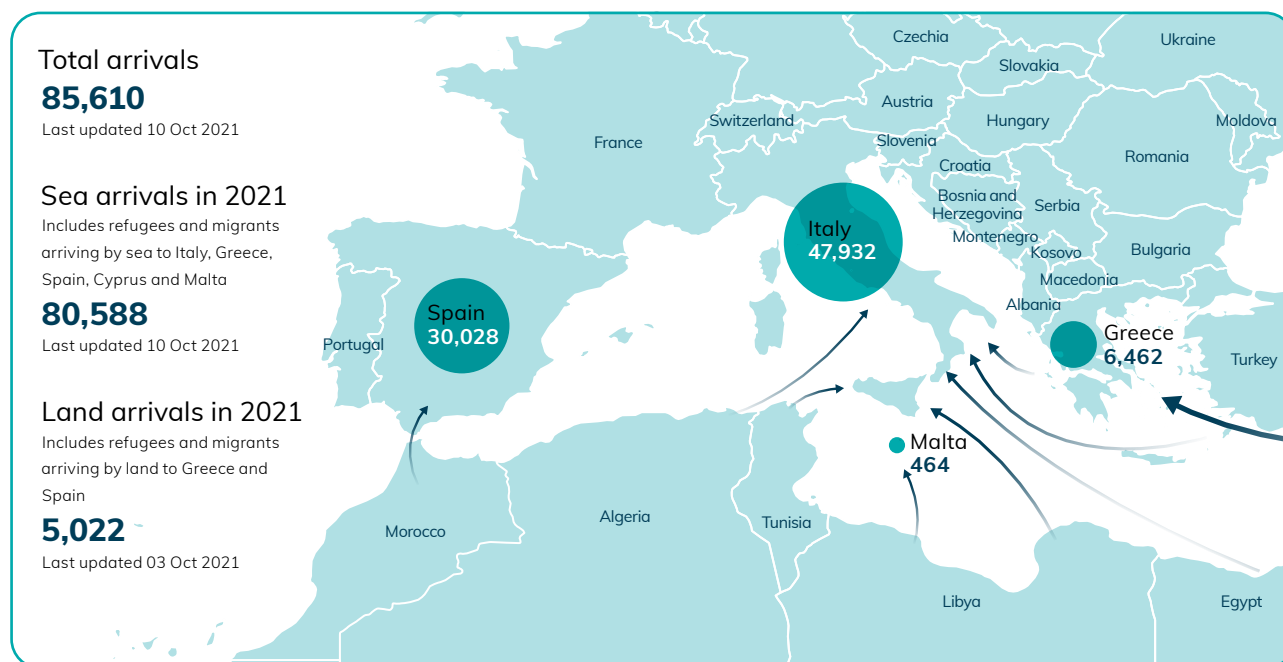
Source (adapted) and credit: UNHCR Operational Data Portal Mediterranean situation

More deaths at sea as search-and-rescue grinds to a halt

The death toll of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers attempting to reach Italy and Spain rose sharply in 2021, with some 1,140 people perishing in the first half of 2021 along the three main routes: 741 on the Central Mediterranean route to Italy, 149 on the Western Mediterranean route to mainland Spain and 250 on the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands. However, it is likely that the actual number of deaths may exceed these figures significantly, given the many unseen and uncounted shipwrecks that occur every year and the regular calls for information from families of missing migrants desperate to find out the fate of their loved ones. Very little is known even about those whose deaths are recorded, with only around a quarter of those who died having a confirmed nationality, while the countries of origin of the remainder have not been identified.[17]

A significant factor in the high death toll is the absence of functioning search-and-rescue operations at sea.[18] Operation Sophia, established by the EU in 2015, was not only tasked with disrupting smuggling activities but also provided emergency support to boats in distress. Its successor, Operation Irini, however, was set up in 2020

with no explicit humanitarian mandate to save lives. While Sophia was credited with rescuing 44,916 men, women, and children over a five-year period,[19] Irini had not undertaken a single rescue in its first year. Though bound like other ships by international maritime law to rescue vessels in distress, the relocation of the fleet slightly away from the main migration routes—reportedly as a result of pressure from certain EU states who regarded Sophia's humanitarian activities as incentivising migration—has effectively allowed it to circumvent any responsibilities to save life at sea.[20]

At the same time, EU member states have actively undermined civilian rescue operations by restricting—or even criminalising—NGOs and impounding their vessels on a variety of pretexts. For most of the first half of 2021, just one rescue boat was active as others continued to have their efforts restricted: in June, nine boats were being impounded in ports while legal proceedings were prepared against them.[21] Sea crossings have become more deadly as a result, with many boats unable to access timely support from either activist vessels or national coastguards.

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16 UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation.
17 IOM (2021) Migrant Deaths on Maritime Routes to Europe in 2021
18 MMC and UNHCR (Eds.) (2021). A Roadmap for Advocacy, Policy Development, and Programming: Protection in Mixed Movements along the Central and Western Mediterranean Routes 2021. Mixed Migration Centre and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
19 European Council (2021) Infographic—Lives saved in EU Mediterranean operations (2015-2021).
20 Wallis, E. (2021) Irini mission: one year, no migrant rescues. InfoMigrants.
21 IOM (2021) Migrant Deaths on Maritime Routes to Europe in 2021.

This was illustrated on 22 April 2021 when a migrant vessel capsized off the Libyan coast, resulting in the deaths of at least 130 people on board. Though those on board had contacted the civilian-run Alarm Phone emergency hotline after their boat encountered troubles, allowing Libyan and European authorities ample time to launch a rescue, no rescue operations were conducted and it fell to the crew of a non-governmental rescue ship, Ocean Viking, to locate some of the bodies of those who had drowned.[22] Though it was the most deadly single incident in the first half of the year, other tragedies have similarly occurred due to the failure of national authorities to respond promptly to those in distress or allow NGOs to operate effectively to fill the ensuing protection gap.

The Central Mediterranean route to Italy becomes busier ...

The number of arrivals in Italy from January to the end of June 2021 was significantly higher (20,532) than the total in the first half of 2020 (6,949),[23] due in large part to the dramatic reduction in migration during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic. After falling in the latter months of 2020 and remaining low for the most part in early 2021, with a brief spike in February, the number of people making the journey rose steadily from April, continuing to climb in July (8,590) and August (10,286) before dipping in September (4,802).[24] Among registered arrivals between January and the end of September 2021, the most represented nationality were Tunisians (28 percent), followed by Bangladeshis (13.4 percent), Egyptians (9.1 percent), Ivorians (7.1 percent), Iranians (4.6 percent Guineans (4.2 percent), Eritreans (4.0 percent), and Sudanese and Moroccans (3.7 percent each).[25]

... with more Tunisians driven to migrate ...

The considerable uptick in migration from Tunisia to Italy was already evident in 2020 due to protracted economic and governance pressures, exacerbated by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, events in 2021 have compounded the country's political instability even further. On 25 July 2021, after weeks of popular protests, President Kais Saied dismissed the prime minister and suspended parliament using emergency powers, with other ministers and officials sacked in the days that followed in what critics described as a coup against democracy.[26]

... while Malta sees a sharp decline in numbers

There was, however, a striking reduction in the number of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers reaching Malta during this period, with just 244 sea arrivals in Malta in the first half of 2021, the majority from Sudan (27 percent), Syria (22 percent), Eritrea (16 percent) and Egypt (9 percent). This compares to 1,699 between January and the end of June in 2020 and a total of 2,281 for the entire year—itself considerably less than in 2019, when Malta saw 3,406 arrivals.[27]

This decline is despite much greater numbers of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers travelling to Italy or being intercepted en route. Human rights activists have argued that the reduction in Malta is due to the country's armed forces choosing to undertake far fewer rescues than previously, with the task of intercepting boats in Maltese waters falling to merchant vessels and Libyan naval boats; many are then reportedly pushed back to Libya, despite the dangers there. Following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Malta and Libya in May 2020 to establish coordination centres between the two countries to facilitate interceptions, Maltese authorities have undertaken surveillance to alert Libyan coastguards of the whereabouts of migrant vessels so they can be intercepted before reaching Maltese waters.[28]

Tunisia rejects EU migrant centre proposals

The EU has increasingly sought to engage North African countries in agreements to reduce irregular migration to Europe and to receive people returned from Europe. However, a proposal to establish migrant reception centres in Tunisia was rejected by Tunisian Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi at the Ministerial Conference on the Management of Migrant Flows at Lisbon in May 2021. Besides stressing his country's resistance to any arrangement that could undermine its national sovereignty, he emphasised the value of a collaborative approach to developing solutions, with particular reference to the spirit of the 5 + 5 Dialogue established in 1990 as a means for states in Europe and North Africa to communicate directly about migration issues. He also emphasised that migration should not be framed as "a permanent threat" but instead as a "factor of economic, social and cultural development, as well as a factor that builds closeness between peoples".[29]

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22 Ibid.
23 UNHCR (2021) Italy sea arrivals dashboard: June 2021.
24 UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation: Italy.
25 Ibid
26 Cordall, S. & Chukov, M. (2021) Tunisia's political crisis greeted with indifference on streets of capital. The Guardian.
27 UNHCR (2021) Malta: Figures at a glance; and UNHCR (2021) Malta Factsheet: 30 June 2021.
28 Abela, K. (2021) Drastic drop in asylum seekers reaching Malta. Times of Malta.
29 InfoMigrants (2021) Migrants: Tunisian premier says no to reception centers.

North African interceptions increase

The increasing numbers of people on the move reaching Italy in the first half of 2021, as well as the uptick in deaths and disappearances at sea, have occurred amid a significant rise in interceptions in the Central Mediterranean. Some 31,565 people were intercepted by North African coastguards between January and the end of June, many more than during the same period in 2020 (23,117) or 2019 (17,971).[30] In the case of Tunisian authorities, 7,541 interceptions were made, amounting to around 90 percent more than in the first half of 2020. Nevertheless, the number of those reaching Italy increased sharply, and at least 220 people died off the Tunisian coast.[31]

Coastguards in Libya, meanwhile, undertook 15,330 interceptions during this time, almost trebling the number for the same period in 2020, while at least 454 people lost their lives off the coast.[32] The interception process itself can be hazardous for those being intercepted, as illustrated by a video taken by the NGO Sea-Watch in June 2021 of Libyan coastguards firing on and repeatedly ramming a migrant vessel in Maltese waters.[33] There have been reports of previous incidents of violent interceptions by Libyan coastguards that allegedly resulted in some of those on board drowning at sea.[34]

Other actors have also been responsible for forcible returns of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers to Libya. On 14 June, for instance, 270 people were rescued in international waters by the Vos Triton, an offshore tug/supply ship sailing under the Gibraltarian flag, but instead of being disembarked at a safe location they were handed over to the Libyan coastguard and returned to Tripoli, where they were then detained. UNHCR and IOM condemned their return, emphasising that conditions in the country remained unsafe and that many of those forcibly returned to Libya were at high risk of torture, abuse, and trafficking.[35]

Human rights abuses in Libya continue

The fate of the thousands of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers intercepted by the Libyan coastguard and returned to Libya is especially concerning, given the high risk of widespread abduction, mistreatment, torture, and extortion they face at the hands of militias, traffickers, and security personnel in migrant centres across the country. Human rights groups have reported that, as interceptions increase and already crowded detention facilities become increasingly strained, violence and sexual abuse of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers within centres have increased.[36]

A 2021 report by Amnesty International highlighted that though these abuses have shown little sign of abating in the last decade, European countries continue to collaborate with Libyan authorities to facilitate thousands of interceptions, in the full knowledge that many of those forcibly returned to the country will be incarcerated in dangerous and degrading conditions. One disturbing development in late 2020 Amnesty noted was the integration of informal places of captivity into the official detention system, meaning many are now being held in newly rebranded holding facilities with a proven track record of violence and brutality. There is also a troubling discrepancy in the numbers of those intercepted at sea and those officially recorded as detainees on land, suggesting that thousands have been forcibly disappeared and held in unknown locations for ransom, trafficking or other purposes.[37] At the end of August 2021, IOM recorded just over 2,600 detainees in official facilities across the country,[38] though the actual numbers are likely to be significantly higher given that many of those intercepted during the year may be held in unknown locations not included in these assessments. Over the course of a single week in early October, Libyan security forces reportedly detained more than 5,000 refugees and migrants in Tripoli, subjecting some to severe physical and sexual violence and holding them in overcrowded facilities under "inhumane conditions."[39]

According to IOM, reporting on the May-June 2021 period, an estimated 597,611 migrants are based in Libya, including 3,860 in detention centres and 42,210 registered refugees and asylum-seekers.[40] Just over half (53 percent) of this total were in the West, 29 percent in the East and 18 percent in the South. The five most represented nationalities among them were Nigeriens (21 percent), Egyptians (18 percent), Sudanese (16 percent),

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30 IOM (2021) Migrant Deaths on Maritime Routes to Europe in 2021
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Tondo, L. (2021) Libyan coastguards 'fired on and tried to ram migrant boat'—NGO. The Guardian.
34 Amnesty International (2021) 'No One Will Look for You': Forcibly Returned from Sea to Abusive Detention in Libya.
35 UNHCR (2021) IOM and UNHCR condemn the return of migrants and refugees to Libya.
36 Ahmed, K. (2021) Violence towards refugees at Libyan detention centres forces MSF to pull out. The Guardian.
37 Ibid.
38 IOM (2021) Libya—Detention centre profile generator (August 2021).
39 The Guardian (2021) Reports of physical and sexual violence as Libya arrests 5,000 migrants in a week.
40 UNOCHA (2021) Libya - Humanitarian Access Snapshot – Migrants and Refugees.

Chadians (14 percent) and Nigerians (6 percent).[41] As of June 2021, there were also 42,769 registered refugees in the country, primarily from Sudan, Syria, and Eritrea.[42]

The Western Mediterranean route

As with the Central Mediterranean route to Italy, the Western Mediterranean route from **Algeria** and **Morocco** to **Spain** became more dangerous in 2021. At least 149 people died on the Western Mediterranean route in the first half of 2021, including 76 during the crossing from western Algeria to Spain, 47 migrating between northern Morocco and Spain, and 26 as they tried to cross from Morocco into the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (significantly higher than in previous years).[43]

Ceuta saw a dramatic escalation in efforts to breach the border by land and water between 17 and 19 May, when some 9,000 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers made a mass attempt to scale or swim around the fence separating the Moroccan and Spanish territory.[44] This was likely the largest influx of people across the border in more than a decade. Their entry was facilitated by the apparent inaction of Moroccan border guards at the time in what was widely interpreted as a reprisal after the leader of the Western Saharan independence movement Polisario Front, Brahim Ghali, was allowed into Spain for medical treatment for Covid-19. Thousands of those who entered Ceuta were expelled by Spanish police with tear gas and force.[45]

Increasing numbers of Algerians on the move to Spain

Continuing a trend evident in 2020, when migration from Algeria to Spain increased significantly, with Algerians making up the largest national group of arrivals in mainland Spain, large numbers of Algerian refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers have journeyed across the sea to Spain in 2021, with some estimates suggesting that more than 10,000 Algerians had reached Spain between January and mid-May 2021.[46] Economic malaise, political repression, and an increasingly hostile human rights environment have played a significant role in the decision of some Algerians to leave their country.[47]

Movement intensifies along the Atlantic route

The journey along the Atlantic route to the **Canary Islands** ranges from 100 to 1,400 kilometres depending on the country of embarkation, with Morocco closest and extending down from the disputed territory of Western Sahara, Mauritania and Senegal to as far as Gambia. In general, apart from an expected spike in 2006 that saw more than 30,000 travel to the Canary Islands and some 6,000 people die en route[48]—a tragedy that came to be known as the Cayucos Crisis—this route saw only a fraction of these numbers in the ensuing years. How ever, in 2020 there was again a sudden increase, with over 23,000 arrivals in the Canary Islands, compared to just under 2,700 in 2019. Deaths and disappearance along the route have also increased, from 45 in 2018 and 210 in 2019 to 849 in 2020.[49] These trends have continued into 2021: along with over 13,292 arrivals between January and 3 October, there were an estimated 785 deaths along the route during up to the end of August, including 379 in August alone.[50]

41   IOM (2021) IOM Libya Migrant Report Key Findings: Round 37—May-June 2021.
42   UNHCR (2021) Operation data portal: Libya.
43   IOM (2021) Migrant Deaths on Maritime Routes to Europe in 2021.
44   IOM (2021) IOM statement on recent arrivals in Ceuta, Spain.
45   MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa—Q2 2021.
46   (2021) Bilan début 2021 : 10.000 sans-papiers algériens débarquent en Europe. Algerie360.
47   Sanderson, S. (2021) Algerian opposition figure among migrants intercepted en route to Spain. InfoMigrants; and MMC (2020) Mixed Migration Review 2020.
48   Kemp, W. (2016) Learning from the Canaries: Lessons from the "Cayucos" Crisis. International Peace Institute.
49   IOM (2021) Irregular migration towards Europe: Western Africa—Atlantic route Jan—Dec 2020.
50   UN (2021) Deadly "invisible shipwrecks" plague migrants bound for Canary Islands.

Graphic 2. Refugees and migrants reaching the Canary Islands

	New arrivals at Spanish Canary Islands	Suspected dead or missing during journey
2021 (first 6 months only)*	6,984	250
2020	23,023	849
2019	2,698	210
2018	1,307	45

Sources: IOM (2021) Irregular migration towards Europe: Western Africa—Atlantic route Jan—Dec 2020
And IOM (2021) Migrant Deaths on Maritime Routes to Europe in 2021

Various factors have contributed to these increasing movements, including the effects of border restrictions imposed along traditional migration routes by countries in response to Covid-19. The pandemic has also aggravated unemployment and economic pressures to migrate. Furthermore, as surveillance and border management by Moroccan forces have increased, more movement has shifted from the Western Mediterranean and led to greater numbers along the Atlantic route.[51] The growing popularity of this route has led to deteriorating conditions for refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers on the islands, with many left stranded in hastily built camps and barred from continuing their journey onward to mainland Spain.

Another protection concern is the continued expulsion of third-country nationals from the Canary Islands to **Mauritania**, under the terms of a 2003 readmission agreement. The mechanisms in place to ensure that those returned meet the appropriate criteria are reportedly inadequate and there is little oversight of what then happens to those transferred to Mauritania, with some simply returned to Mali and Senegal without any further assistance.[52]

Displacement and insecurity in Sudan and South Sudan

Ongoing displacement in Darfur
Besides its refugee population, **Sudan** also has a large population of internally displaced persons (IDPs), numbering 3 million as of the end of July 2021, with the majority (just under 2.2 million) located in Darfur.[53] Many of those displaced were uprooted years before and are still unable to return due to continued insecurity, with intercommunal relations still volatile. In one incident in January 2021, clashes in West Darfur subsequently spread and led to some 250 deaths and more than 100,000 displaced, including thousands who fled into Chad to seek safety. The attacks came just two weeks after a joint United Nations and African Union peacekeeping mission was wound up at the end of December 2020.[54] The situation has remained volatile since then, in the midst of a contested political transition and a security vacuum left by the departure of international peacekeepers.[55]

More refugees seek safety from neighbouring conflicts
As of the end of August 2021, Sudan was host to just over 1.1 million refugees, of whom some 70 percent are from neighbouring South Sudan, with others from Eritrea, Syria, Ethiopia, and the Central African Republic.[56] Many were fleeing violence and persecution in countries neighbouring Sudan, including tens of thousands of Ethiopians and Eritreans fleeing the conflict in Tigray and surrounding regions. Ethiopians and Eritreans face significant challenges in accessing services, employment and other basic needs and rights, particularly in the camps in eastern Sudan. Poverty among refugee communities has also deepened as a result of a sharp economic downturn in the country and other pressures, including Covid-19 and flooding. Many refugees in Sudan live in isolated out-of-camp settlements with little in the way of infrastructure or livelihood opportunities.[57]

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51   European Council (n.d.) Western Mediterranean and Western African routes.
52   Garver-Affeldt, J & Seaman, M. (2021) A Gateway Re-opens: The Growing Popularity of the Atlantic Route, As Told by Those Who Risk It.
53   UNHCR (2021) Operational data portal: Sudan.
54   UN News (2021) Sudan: 250 killed, over 100,000 displaced as violence surges in Darfur.
55   Kleinfeld, P. (2021) From global cause to forgotten crisis: A reporter's diary from Darfur. The New Humanitarian.
56   UNHCR (2021) Operational data portal: Sudan.
57   UNHCR (2020) Sudan Country Refugee Response Plan.

South Sudan crisis intensifies

The largest refugee population in Sudan is from South Sudan, a country that has spent much of the last decade consumed by conflict since gaining independence in 2011. Ongoing violence, chronic food insecurity, climate change, and the effects of Covid-19 have together contributed to a protracted emergency, with some 7.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. In addition to 1.6 million IDPs in the country, there are also 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees living outside their country.[58] The largest South Sudanese population is in Uganda, followed by Sudan and Ethiopia.[59]

Harmonising remittance flows in the IGAD region

In May 2021, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—a trade bloc comprising Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda—announced that it would be entering a two-year partnership with the United Nations Capital Development Fund to harmonise remittance payments across the region. The aim would be to create a clear and coherent framework for remittances, removing where possible any discrepancies or inefficiencies to promote an accessible formal system for relatives working abroad to send funds back to their families. It is hoped that as a result, senders will be less likely to pursue opaque and potentially hazardous alternatives to transfer their money.[60]

East Africa and the Horn

Reverse migration to the Horn of Africa from Yemen

The migration of tens of thousands of Ethiopians annually from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, most en route to Saudi Arabia, appeared to increase during the early years of the conflict as weakened governance and border controls enabled an escalation of human smuggling.[61] Despite regular reports of torture, abduction, and mistreatment at the hands of smugglers, criminal groups, and Saudi border authorities, the movement of migrants travelling to Yemen remained relatively constant until the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020. Heightened restrictions, the intensification of conflict within Yemen, and the stigmatisation of foreigners as "carriers" of the virus have made the situation of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers increasingly insecure.[62]

In this context, reverse migration from Yemen back to the Horn of Africa has been on the rise. While IOM has repatriated hundreds of Ethiopians seeking to leave Yemen, many more—an estimated 11,000 between May 2020 and April 2021—have engaged smugglers to make the perilous sea crossing back across the Gulf of Aden to the Horn of Africa.[63] Reportedly, scores have died in the process, including 44 people on a boat that capsized on the way to Djibouti on 12 April 2021.[64] Tens of thousands of Ethiopians were also deported from Saudi Arabia during the first half of 2021.

Outward migration from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, meanwhile, remains substantially lower than pre-pandemic levels. For instance, in the second quarter (April—June) of 2021, some 4,876 arrivals were recorded, an increase from the same period in 2020 (3,669) but still much lower than the totals for the second quarter of 2018 (31,644) and 2019 (47,269).[65] The dangers of this route were again highlighted by the capsizing of a boat off the Yemeni coast on 14 June, resulting in the death of up to 300 people on board.[66]

58 OCHA (2021) South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot: August 2021.
59 UNHCR (2021) Uganda comprehensive refugee response portal; UNHCR (2021) Ethiopia operational data portal
60 IGAD (2021) IGAD and UNCDF announce agreement to formalize, enhance regional remittance flows.
61 Arab News (2021) From Ethiopia to Yemen, a perilous migrant route to endless misery.
62 MMC (2020) Mixed Migration Review 2020.
63 IOM (2021) Ethiopian migrants return home from Yemen with IOM support in wake of tragic boat sinking.
64 IOM (2021) 44 dead after smuggler's boat capsizes off the coast of Djibouti.
65 IOM Yemen (2021) Quarterly Migration Overview April—June 2021.
66 Reuters (2021) Death toll from recent capsizing off Yemen may have been 300-U.N. official.

Graphic 3. Impact of pandemic on new arrivals (mainly Ethiopian) in Yemen (2nd quarter comparison)

31,644	47,269	3,669	4,876
April to June (2nd quarter) 2018	April to June (2nd quarter) 2019	April to June (2nd quarter) 2020	April to June (2nd quarter) 2021
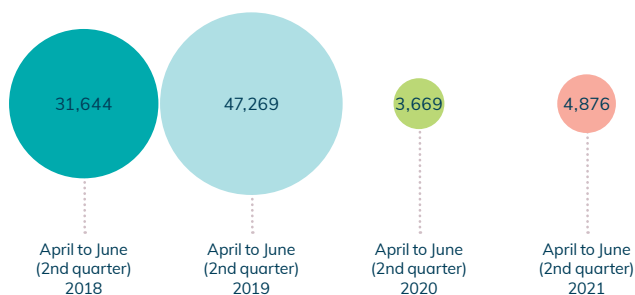
Source: IOM data (IOM Yemen (2021) Quarterly Migration Overview April—June 2021

Conflict in Tigray sparks displacement

The conflict between Tigrayan separatists and federal government forces in **Ethiopia**, beginning in November 2020, has resulted in thousands of deaths and mass displacement as civilians have been forced to flee in the midst of widespread atrocities by both sides. In addition to some 664,000 displacements due to flooding and other disasters during the year, almost 1.7 million were uprooted as a result of conflict and violence, predominantly in the Tigray region, by the end of 2020.[67] The violence has been accompanied by a humanitarian crisis, with some 5.2 million people in need and 400,000 at risk of famine.[68]

During 2021 the conflict has spread into the neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar, displacing a total of 250,000 people,[69] and reports continued to emerge of systematic human rights abuses being inflicted on the Tigrayan population. The crisis has also led to refugees crossing into Sudan, with 55,493 arrivals as of the end of July 2021, with the majority (47,959) located in East Sudan (Kassala and Gedaref) and the remainder (7,534) in Blue Nile State.[70] The majority are sheltering in refugee camps, most without access to clean water, adequate sanitation or sufficient food.[71]

Whether or not the current emergency in Tigray will provoke wider disruption in the East Africa region and further displacement elsewhere remains to be seen. Though it is difficult at present to establish a direct causal link, 1,208 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers from **Eritrea** arrived in Italy in the first half of 2021 compared to just 562 in the whole of 2020. There have also been reports of greater numbers of Eritreans travelling through Sudan and Libya.[72]

Graphic 4. Refugees and asylum-seekers in Sudan

Country	Value
South Sudan	784,860 (71%)
Eritrea	125,671 (11%)
Syria	93,489 (8%)
Ethiopia	69,533 (6%)
CAR	27,356 (3%)
Chad	3,521 (0.3%)
Yemen	2,114 (0.2%)
Others	1,609 (0.1%)
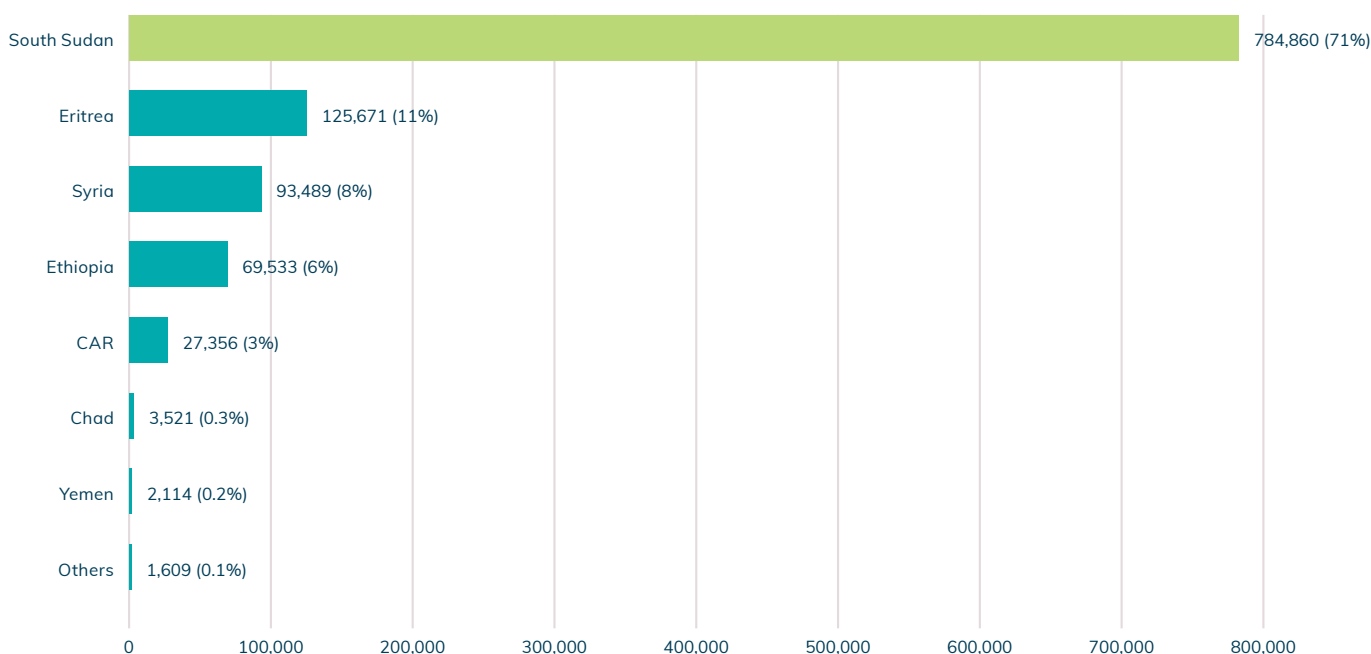
Source: UNHCR Overview of Refugees and Asylum-seekers in Sudan

67 IDMC (2021) Ethiopia.
68 UNOCHA (2021) Ethiopia—Tigray humanitarian update.
69 UN News (2021) Ceasefire in Tigray more urgent than ever: UN relief chief.
70 UNHCR (2021) Ethiopian emergency situation update—New arrivals—East Sudan and Blue Nile—as of 31 July 2021
71 ICRC (2021) Sudan: Ethiopian refugees face increasingly difficult conditions as more people flee their homes.
72 MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: East Africa and Yemen—Q2 2021.

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A final timeline for the closure of refugee camps in Kenya?

For decades, Kenya has hosted a sizeable refugee population in its territory, numbering almost 530,000 as of the end of August 2021. The majority of refugees and asylum seekers in the country are Somalian, displaced by the protracted violence and insecurity in their own country. More than 433,000 are based in the Dadaab and Kakuma camps, located close to the borders of Somalia and South Sudan respectively. Kenya has repeatedly threatened to shut down Dadaab and in March 2021 announced the imminent closure of both camps, with UNHCR receiving a two-week ultimatum to develop a roadmap to do so.[73] By April, however, following protracted negotiations, the Kenyan government had agreed to postpone their closure until June 2022, while UNHCR proposed a long-term plan to ensure the safety of the refugees and asylum seekers by either repatriating them voluntarily to their home countries, allowing them residency in Kenya, or arranging for their transfer to a safe third country.[74] Some fear that the closure of the camps, should it actually happen this time, could trigger a major humanitarian crisis, particularly as many residents do not consider it safe to return to Somalia.[75] Some residents have already attempted return previously but were forced to leave again as a result of conflict and lack of access to essential services.[76]

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The Sahel crisis intensifies

According to UNHCR, the Sahel is currently undergoing "one of the fastest growing displacement crises in the world—and yet one of the most forgotten".[77] The situation has deteriorated further in 2021, with over four million persons of concern in the region as of the end of July. In this context, the conflict continues to drive displacement in the region, with fears that the violence could spread further as non-state armed groups gain a firmer foothold in **Burkina Faso**. Though much of the conflict is centred in the **Liptako-Gourma** region, which straddles the borders between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, it has already had a significant impact on neighbouring countries such as Chad, with the possibility that in future it could spread towards the coast, affecting Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo.[78]

Violence escalates in Burkina Faso

Civilians in Burkina Faso have faced an escalation in brutal and largely indiscriminate attacks by armed groups, forcing communities to flee. At least 1,019 Burkinabé civilians were killed in 2020, with further atrocities in 2021 driving more deaths and displacement.[79] This included the massacre of at least 130 civilians in Solan at the beginning of June, the deadliest single attack since the outbreak of the conflict in 2015, forcing 900 others to cross the border into Niger for safety.[80]

With around six percent of the national population displaced within the country by July 2021, the number of IDPs has multiplied as security has unravelled. In addition, some 17,500 civilians had fled into neighbouring countries since the beginning of the year, bringing the total number of Burkinabé refugees in the region to 38,000, with just over half (20,000) in Mali, followed by Niger (11,400) and Benin. In May, Côte d'Ivoire also saw its first influx of refugees and asylum seekers from Burkina Faso—a troubling development that could signal the emergence of a new frontline in the Sahel crisis.[81]

Mali's crisis shows no sign of abating

Since 2018, Mali's protracted conflict has spread south from Timbuktu towards the central regions of Mopti and Gao, sparking further displacements.[82] Despite a significant security presence in the country, including around 13,000 UN peacekeepers, hundreds of thousands of IDPs in the country are confronted by acute protection gaps. In the face of escalating violence between extremist groups, armed militias and government forces, many have been forced to flee south into crowded, unsanitary camps in the capital Bamako and other cities.[83]

Food shortages, the continued threat of Covid-19 and continued political uncertainty—including a military coup in May 2021, the second in less than a year—have served to deepen the country's humanitarian crisis, with close to 6 million people in need of assistance. The situation of those displaced in the centre and north of the country is especially challenging, given the difficulties of delivering essential supplies to these conflict-affected areas. Humanitarian workers have been actively targeted by fighters, with around 200 documented security incidents in 2020 that impacted the operations of NGOs in the country.[84]

73 Al Jazeera (2021) Kenya orders closure of Dadaab, Kakuma refugee camps.
74 DW (2021) Kenya to close 2 refugee camps next year.
75 Maruf, H. & Hared, K. (2021) Kenya's Plan to Close Two Camps Worries Refugees. VOA.
76 MSF (2021) Return is not a solution, say refugees in Dadaab after camp closure announcement.
77 UNHCR (2021) Sahel emergency.
78 Ibid.
79 Amnesty International (2021) Burkina Faso: In the wake of the Solhan massacre, the priority must be to protect the people.
80   UNHCR (2021) Record numbers forced to flee ongoing violence in Burkina Faso.
81 Ibid.
82 IDMC (2021) Mali
83 Sangaré, B. & Cold-Ravnkilde, S.M. (2020) Internally displaced people in Mali's capital city. Danish Institute for International Studies.
84 European Commission (2021) Mali.

Displacement from Nigeria into Niger

Like Mali, Niger has had to contend with the intersecting threats of food insecurity, drought, flooding, intercommunal conflicts over land, and a violent jihadist insurgency that has spilled over from neighbouring Burkina Faso and Mali.[85] Insecurity in Nigeria has also been another source of instability, with almost 7,700 displaced in the first two months of 2021 by armed clashes in the north-west of the country into Maradi, a region in southern Niger. Maradi itself has seen a sharp rise in violent and indiscriminate attacks against civilians, triggering fresh displacement.[86]

Graphic 5. Sahel food and nutrition crisis
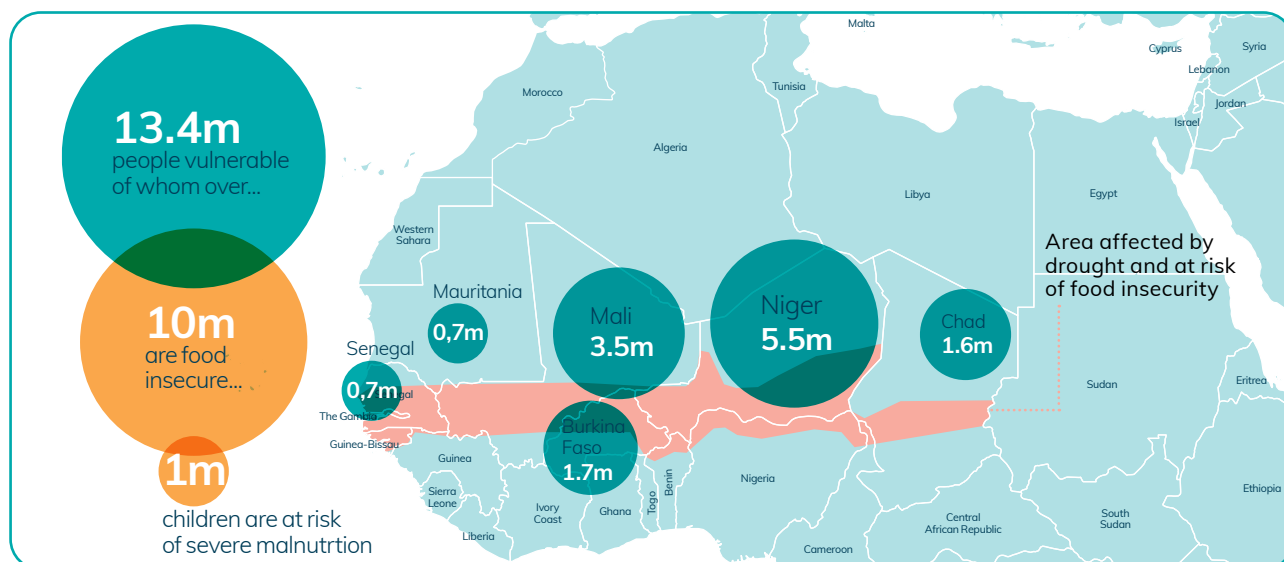
Source (adapted) and credit: The Guardian, adapted from UN OCHA, 1 March 2012

Algeria's deportations to Niger

Niger also receives thousands of deportees of various nationalities every month from Algeria. While the return of Nigeriens in Algeria takes place under the auspices of a 2014 verbal agreement between the two countries, this does not extend to the forcible transfer of other nationalities across the border. Nigerien officials have previously called on Algeria to halt the mass expulsion of foreign nationals into its territory. In April 2021, Algerian authorities announced the construction of a new migrant reception centre near its border with Libya.[87]

A wave of roundups and detentions of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in Algerian cities that began in early September 2020 resulted in the deportation of at least 3,400 people from more than 20 different countries in the space of around a month. A significant proportion were children, including some under the age of 10 who had been separated from their families during the crackdowns.[88] A total of 23,175 people were expelled across the border in 2020,[89] with around almost 18,000 reportedly deported in the first nine months of 2021.[90] The expulsions typically involve refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers being taken to an area in the middle of the desert known as "Point Zero", then being abandoned to make their way to Assamaka, a distance of some 15 kilometres.[91]

Central Africa

Post-election violence in the Central African Republic

A crisis triggered by national elections in the Central African Republic (CAR) in December 2020 led to mass displacement in the months after. Armed groups seeking to undermine the process were aided by the support of former President Francois Bozizé after his candidacy was rejected by the Constitutional Court. Armed groups launched attacks on the capital Bangui and other key targets in the week before the election and following the victory of the incumbent President Faustin Archange Touadera, with Bozizé subsequently announcing his leadership of the rebel alliance.

In the midst of this crisis, more than 213,000 people were internally displaced by the violence, bringing the total number of IDPs in the country to 690,705 by the end of August 2021, with a similar number of refugees

85 IDMC (2021) Niger.
86 UNHCR (2021) Surging violence in Nigeria drives displacement to Niger.
87 InfoMigrants (2021) Algérie : bientôt un nouveau centre d'accueil pour les migrants dans le sud-est.
88 Human Rights Watch (2020) Algeria: Migrants, asylum seekers forced out.
89 InfoMigrants (2021) Algérie : bientôt un nouveau centre d'accueil pour les migrants dans le sud-est.
90 Alarm Phone Sahara (2021) 1st of October 2021: 1275 people deported from Algeria to Niger in a huge official deportation convoy.
91 African Arguments (2021) "The guards had no compassion": The migrants abandoned in Niger's desert.

(709,425).[92] This means that, out of a total population of around 5 million people, some 1.4 million are displaced either internally or in neighbouring countries. Close to half of the CAR refugee population is hosted in Cameroon (331,287), followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (206,346), Chad (121,036), Sudan (27,356) and Republic of the Congo (20,867).[93]

Insecurity and displacement in the Democratic Republic of Congo

While the Democratic Republic of Congo hosts a sizeable refugee population of over half a million, primarily from Burundi, CAR, Rwanda and South Sudan, even larger numbers of its own citizens (962,138 as of the end of September 2021) have been forced to seek sanctuary in neighbouring countries to escape chronic insecurity. By far the largest refugee population from DRC is in Uganda (432,390).[94] In addition, more than 5 million people are internally displaced in the country, including more than 1.3 million newly displaced in the first half of 2021.[95] Interethnic violence, driven by a proliferation of armed militias, has left civilian communities at risk of constant attacks. In Tanganyika province, where hundreds of thousands have been forced from their homes by conflict, the local population has been terrorised with a campaign of systematic sexual violence waged by armed groups seeking to control gold mines in the area.[96]

Southern Africa

Xenophobia on the rise in South Africa

Since 2008, outbreaks of anti-migrant violence have been a regular occurrence in South Africa, often emerging at times of recession or high unemployment when foreign residents are scapegoated for the country's economic problems. Despite the passage of the 2019 National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, anti-migrant violence has continued unabated: a report published by Human Rights Watch in September 2020 catalogued repeated incidents of violence and harassment against foreign nationals, with perpetrators still enjoying widespread impunity amid official indifference, with some law enforcement officials themselves complicit in stigmatising treatment of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.[97] In November 2020, South African authorities announced the deportation of around 20 foreign nationals who had engaged in protracted sit-in protests against xenophobia in the country.[98]

> ### An end to South Africa's asylum backlog?
>
> The environment for refugees in South Africa has become increasingly restrictive in recent years, with amendments in January 2020 to the Refugees Act imposing a raft of new restrictions on its refugee population, including a ban on political activities. Despite its strong legal commitment to international protection, in practice the country's asylum system has long been afflicted by dysfunctional and cumbersome decision-making processes: this has left those in need of protection in limbo for years or even decades while their asylum claim has awaited review. At the same time, South Africa has been notable for the high rejection rate of applicants—as much as 96 percent—for those whose cases have been processed. Human rights groups have accused the "broken system" of asylum in South Africa of driving resentment and hostility towards foreign residents.[99] However, in March 2021 a joint partnership between the South African government and UNHCR was announced to reform the asylum system. The initiative, the Asylum Decisions Backlog Elimination Project, will work to reduce delays and inefficiencies with the aim of resolving the more than 153,000 pending applications currently awaiting review.[100]

Mass displacement in northern Mozambique as insecurity spreads

Since 2017, northern Mozambique has faced a violent insurgency that has, so far, claimed more than 2,000 lives. The situation dramatically deteriorated from late 2020 as a series of attacks by armed groups caused widespread displacement, with the number of IDPs rising to over 700,000 by March 2021, compared to around 70,000 a year before.[101] There were also reports that between January and September 2021 some 10,300 Mozambicans who had fled to **Tanzania** to escape the violence had been forcibly returned.[102] The conflict has also triggered a food emergency, with hundreds of thousands of civilians facing severe shortages as livelihoods have been disrupted by the persistent insecurity.[103]

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92 UNHCR (2021) Central African Republic regional response.
93 Ibid.
94 UNHCR (2021) DRC situation
95 UNOCHA (2021) Republique Democratique de Congo: Personnes déplacées internes et retournées juin 2021.
96 UNHCR (2021) UNHCR gravely concerned about systematic sexual violence in DR Congo's Tanganyika Province.
97 Human Rights Watch (2020) "They have robbed me of my life": Xenophobic violence against non-nationals in South Africa; and Human Rights Watch (2020) South Africa: Widespread xenophobic violence.
98 BBC (2020) South Africa deports African migrants after protests.
99 Amnesty International (2019) South Africa: Failing asylum system is exacerbating xenophobia.
100 UNHCR (2021) Work to revamp the asylum system begins in South Africa.
101 UN (2021) Mozambique: Cabo Delgado displacement could reach 1 million, UN officials warn.
102 UNHCR (2021) UNHCR Mozambique Operational Highlights Northern Mozambique 8 September 2021.
103 WFP (2021) Displacement crisis driving up hunger rates in northern Mozambique as families flee violence.

The Middle East

Overview

Millions of people are still living in a state of protracted displacement across the Middle East. In particular, amid ongoing hostilities in Syria, approximately half of the pre-war population are either living as refugees in the region or as IDPs within the country. In Yemen, too, a spiralling crisis has left more than half of the total population in need of food assistance and around three quarters requiring humanitarian aid, with IDPs and its largely Ethiopian migrant population particularly at risk.

Even outside conflict zones, the situation of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers has become ever more precarious. In Lebanon, a deep-seated economic crisis has been exacerbated by Covid-19 and the raft of restrictions put in place to contain it, creating added hardship for many Lebanese and pushing the overwhelming majority of Syrians in the country into extreme poverty. Meanwhile, in Turkey, the economic fallout from pandemic-related lockdowns has even forced some Syrians to return to their home country after losing their sole source of income.

A decade of conflict in Syria

More than 10 years after the conflict began, over 5.6 million Syrians are still based in neighbouring countries such as Turkey, where almost two-thirds of Syrian refugees now reside, followed by Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.[104] Another million are living as refugees in Europe.[105] Furthermore, there are some 6.7 million IDPs within Syria,[106] including more than 1.8 million uprooted during 2020.[107] After intense fighting in the early months of 2020, the conflict is now in a stalemate, with government forces controlling much of the country while a variety of opposition strongholds remain in the north. However, there is little sign of the crisis abating, with some 13.4 million people currently in need of humanitarian and protection assistance.[108]

An unstable truce in Idlib

The brokering of a ceasefire in March 2020 between Russia and Turkey in Idlib, following months of intense fighting in northern Syria that triggered the largest single displacement of people since 2011, has created an uneasy stalemate. Of the 3.4 million Syrians currently caught in Idlib province, more than 2 million have been displaced there from elsewhere in the country.[109] Only one remaining border crossing between Turkey and Syria remains open: this was extended by the UN Security Council for another year, despite concerns Syrian ally Russia might veto the extension. As much of the population is heavily dependent on international aid for their survival, the crossing is critical to the continued delivery of essential food and medicines into opposition-held areas.

There is also the threat of renewed conflict and displacement. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Syrian military launched at least 75 separate attacks in Idlib between March 2020 and March 2021, despite the ceasefire agreement.[110] The frequency of strikes by government forces has escalated dramatically during 2021, with an offensive launched in southern Idlib at the beginning of June killing dozens of people and triggering the displacement of at least 5,000 people.[111] In September, opposition-held areas were again shelled by Syrian and Russian forces, reportedly prompting more displacement.[112] With the prospect of further military action forcing more civilians into the border region, there are concerns that the northwest of the country could develop into the "next Gaza strip", with the population trapped in a protracted state of catastrophe.[113]

104 UNHCR (2021) Syria Regional Refugee Response.
105 UNHCR (2021) Syria Emergency McKernan, B. and Akoush, H. (2021) What happened to the Syrian refugees who got stuck in Turkey? The Guardian.
106 UNHCR (2021) Syria Emergency.
107 IDMC (2021) Syria
108 UNHCR (2021) Syria Emergency.
109 Karasapan, O. (2021) The coming crisis in Idlib. Brookings.
110 Aslan, D. (2021) At least 75 attacks recorded in Syria's Idlib since cease-fire Daily Sabah.
111 McKernan, B. (2021) Assad forces' shelling in Syria causes 5,000 civilians to flee. The Guardian.
112 Al-Khateb, K. (2021) Massive displacement wave amid fears of renewed battles in Idlib. Al-Monitor.
113 Cockburn, P. (2021) The next Gaza Strip? Daily battle of survival for those left in Idlib. The Independent.

Deepening poverty for Lebanon's refugees

While more than 851,000 Syrians were officially registered as refugees in Lebanon at the end of May 2021,[114] the true number is estimated to be around 1.5 million.[115] Their situation has progressively deteriorated amidst an economic crisis that has worsened in the wake of Covid-19: according to UNHCR's 2020 Vulnerability Assessment, 89 percent of Syrian refugees are living below the extreme poverty line, up from 55 percent in 2019.[116] Inflation, unemployment, and the aftershocks of the catastrophic explosion at a warehouse in Beirut in August 2020 that killed around 200 people, injured thousands and left tens of thousands of others homeless, have heightened the economic insecurity of poor and marginalised communities across Lebanon, including its refugee populations. The situation has driven an uptick in the number of Lebanese attempting to cross to Cyprus.[117]

Graphic 6. Registered Syrian Refugees in 2021: comparing camp to out-of-camp registration
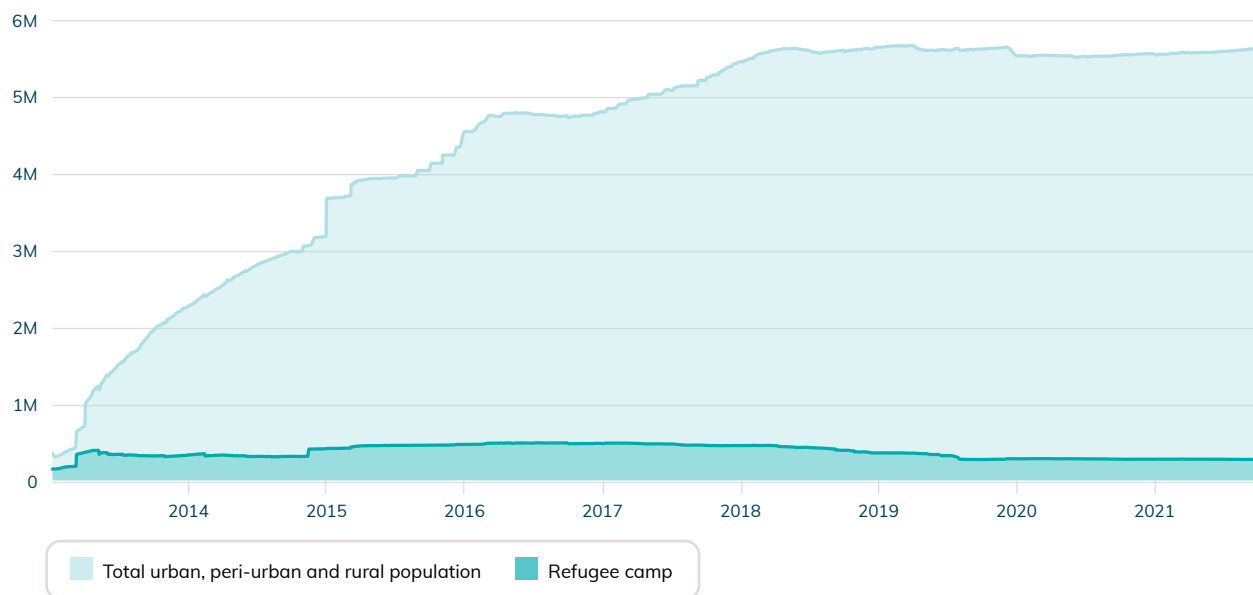
Source (adapted) and credit: UNHCR Operational Data Portal Syria Regional Refugee Response

Restrictions and discrimination

The situation of Syrians in Lebanon has been exacerbated by the government's increasingly inhospitable stance towards its refugee populations. Decades of rivalry between the two countries, Lebanon's complex communal politics, and the deepening economic recession have contributed to a steady rollback of the limited rights and freedoms that Syrians were afforded in the early years of the conflict. This is reflected in the steady rise in the proportion of Syrians lacking proper documentation, with just 20 percent aged 15 or over having legal residency in 2020, compared to 27 percent just two years before—a decline driven by unaffordable service fees and bureaucratic hurdles.[118] As a result, the majority of Syrians struggle to access essential services such as education or health, while also contending with the threat of arrest and even deportation.[119] Discriminatory policies imposed in the wake of the pandemic have further stigmatised Syrians in Lebanon, contributing to an escalation of hostility and violence against them.[120]

This exclusion is mirrored in the country's vaccine coverage. Despite being disproportionately vulnerable to the virus due to poor living conditions and lack of access to health care—Syrians in Lebanon are estimated to have died from Covid-19 at more than four times the rate of Lebanese citizens[121]—the country's refugee populations were largely excluded from the early phases of its vaccination programme, with Human Rights Watch reporting in early April 2021 that just 2.9 percent of those who had received the vaccine to date were non-citizens, despite making up around 30 percent of the total population.[122]

114 UNHCR (2021) Syria Regional Refugee Response.
115 Karasapan, O. & Shah, S. (2021) Why Syrian refugees in Lebanon are a crisis within a crisis. Brookings.
116 UNHCR (2021) Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2020.
117 Sewell, A. (2020) Overlapping crises in Lebanon fuel a new migration to Cyprus. The New Humanitarian.
118 UNHCR (2021) Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2020.
119 UNHCR (2021) Lebanon: January 2021.
120 Hodzic, R. (2021) Plight of Syrian refugees in Lebanon must not be ignored. Al Jazeera.
121 Azhari, T. (2021) 'Grave infraction' by Lebanon MPs may lead to suspension of World Bank financing for vaccination programme. Reuters.
122 Human Rights Watch (2021) Lebanon: Refugees, migrants left behind in vaccine rollout.

Migrants in the Gulf face further challenges

Predominantly from Africa and Asia, engaged as construction labourers or domestic workers, migrants typically make up the large majority of the population in many countries in the Gulf, yet enjoy little in the way of rights or protections. Despite some improvements and reforms in recent years, the persistence of *kafala*—an arrangement whereby foreign workers are directly sponsored by their employers, meaning their continued residency in the country is dependent on the families or companies they work for—has led to widespread abuse and exploitation. The vulnerability of migrant workers in the Gulf was highlighted in a February 2021 report on **Qatar** by The Guardian, that found an estimated 6,751 migrants from five South Asian countries had died since the World Cup contract was awarded in 2010, with Qatari authorities failing to identify the cause of death for around 69 percent of cases.[123]

While some Gulf states have passed measures in recent years to weaken some of the restrictions surrounding labour recruitment, these have failed to address the structural inequalities that expose them to discrimination. In **Bahrain**, for example, the Flexi-Permit scheme introduced in 2017 was regarded as one of the most progressive developments in the region, yet the high user fees and absence of broader measures such as a minimum wage have meant that in practice migrants still lack adequate safeguards.[124] Furthermore, domestic workers are excluded from the scheme and in the first months of 2021 faced additional curbs on their freedoms, including new constraints on their ability to change employer and a proposal to impose harsh penalties on any workers who "abscond"—despite many doing so to escape dangerous or degrading situations.[125]

Even where positive policies have been put in place, substantive change has often been undermined by exceptions or implementation gaps. In **Saudi Arabia**, labour reforms that came into effect from March 2021 in principle enable migrants to change employer or leave the country far more easily than before. However, domestic workers, security guards, drivers, and some other occupations—more than 3.6 million people, comprising the most marginalised sections of the country's foreign workforce—are excluded from these provisions, along with large numbers of undocumented migrants.[126] In Qatar, meanwhile, the passage of legal reforms during 2020 that allowed foreigners to change employer and established a higher, universal minimum wage were also welcomed as an important milestone for the country, yet these have so far failed to curb continued patterns of abuse and mistreatment.[127]

The outbreak of **Covid-19** brought into sharp relief the precarious situation of millions of migrants across the Gulf, with thousands rounded up by police and detained in crowded, unsanitary dormitories or even sent back to their home countries.[128] For the latter, in particular, wage theft has been widespread: repatriated with no mechanisms in place to ensure reparation of unpaid salaries or lost earnings, some are now in situations of debt bondage to the money-lenders who funded their travel to the Gulf.[129] Many also face suspended contracts, reduced salaries and unpaid leave. In the **United Arab Emirates**, foreign workers dismissed by their employers were stranded months after the pandemic, many of them homeless, while attempting to find other jobs or secure repatriation to their home countries.[130]

In the wake of the pandemic, human rights groups have criticised governments in the Gulf for prioritising the preferences of businesses and employers over the basic needs and rights of migrants, who remain more exposed than ever to economic insecurity.[131] The resurgence of Covid-19 outbreaks in early 2021 saw fresh setbacks for foreign workers, particularly those engaged in vulnerable industries such as food and hospitality: in **Kuwait**, for instance, the reimposition of curfews and a ban on in-house dining in February led to further wage reductions and contract cancellations for migrants employed in this sector.[132]

123 Pattison, P. et al (2021) Revealed: 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since World Cup awarded. The Guardian.
124 Mohamed, A. (2021) The Flexi Permit experiment: No fafala, but poor labour practices persist. Migrant-Rights.org.
125 Migrant-Rights.org (2021) "Stricter actions against absconding domestic workers": Proposal in Bahrain's parliament steeped in falsehoods.
126 Migrant-Rights.org (2021) Saudi labour reforms to come into force.
127 Human Rights Watch (2021) Qatar: Events of 2020.
128 MMC (2020) Mixed Migration Review 2020 .
129 Piper, N. and Foley, L. (2021) The other pandemic for migrant workers: wage theft. OpenDemocracy.
130 Sethi, M. (2020) Homeless in the UAE. Migrant-Rights.org.
131 Migrant-Rights.org (2021) Cases on the rise, Ramadan round the corner: Domestic Workers' plight of urgent concern.
132 Al Mulla, Y. (2021) Job loss and wage theft: The grim reality of Kuwait's F&B sector. Migrant-Rights.org.

"Vaccine nationalism" and the problem of inequitable access

In the first phase of the pandemic, the concentration of infections among migrants in the Gulf highlighted the precarious living and working conditions they had endured for years across the region. Inadequate facilities, cramped housing, and other discriminatory measures, including the imposition of mass quarantines without social distancing, contributed to a surge in cases among foreign workers that saw them unfairly stigmatised as "spreaders" of the virus. In the ensuing months, many struggled with lack of food and evictions. Though this should have been a wake-up call to governments on the need for urgent remedial action, little appears to have improved one year on.[133]

This was illustrated by accusations that Gulf states were engaging in "vaccine nationalism" during the first months of their vaccination programmes by side-lining foreign workers from the rollout.[134] In **Kuwait**, for instance, despite making up around two-thirds of the country's population, just 18,000 foreign nationals had been vaccinated compared to 119,000 Kuwaiti citizens by mid-February 2021.[135] Later, however, prompted in part by growing concerns that leaving a significant share of the population unvaccinated could make them vulnerable to further waves of the virus, some Gulf states increased their efforts to extend coverage among migrants. By July, **Oman** was the only country in the region that was still excluding non-citizens from its vaccination programme: as a result, migrants were either depending on their employers to provide vaccines or purchasing them themselves through private operators.[136]

Nevertheless, undocumented migrants have faced persistent barriers in securing vaccination. **Bahrain**, some six months after the launch of its national vaccination campaign, began to register irregular migrants to receive the vaccine in June 2021. As of then, other Gulf states, however, while including documented migrants in their drives, had yet to provide access to irregular migrants.[137]

Fewer arrivals in Turkey

Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world, with approximately 4 million refugees, including close to 3.7 million Syrians,[138] in its territory. Yet after rising steadily in recent years, peaking at 454,662 in 2019, the number of registered new arrivals in the country fell dramatically in 2020 to 122,302 in 2020, a trend that appeared to continue in 2021 with a total of 106,222 as of 23 September 2021.[139] Of these, as in previous years, the largest proportion were from Afghanistan (44,565), Syria (15,429) and Pakistan (11,721).[140] The border with Syria has been closed to asylum seekers since 2016, with periodic reports of pushbacks and violence against those attempting to cross into Turkey.[141] In response to the crisis in Afghanistan, Turkey has also constructed a concrete barrier on its border with Iran to prevent the entry of thousands of displaced Afghans.[142]

Graphic 7. Fall in number of registered new refugee arrivals in Turkey in 2021

454,662 — 2019

122,302 — 2020

106,222 — 2021 (up to late September 2021)
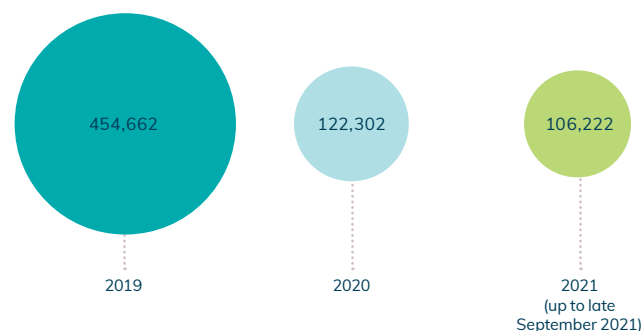
Source: www.goc.gov.tr/duzensiz-goc-istatistikler

133 Saraswathi, V. (2021) Protecting migrant workers in the Gulf: Don't build back better over a poor foundation. OECD Development Matters.
134 Castelier, S. (2020) Vaccine nationalism in the Gulf: Kuwait's cruel COVID caste system. Haaretz.
135 MacDonald, F. (2021) Kuwait puts citizens before expats as vaccine push stirs anger. Bloomberg.
136 Migrant-Rights.org (2021) Oman's discriminatory vaccine policies.
137 Migrant-Rights.org (2021) Bahrain includes irregular migrants in its Covid-19 vaccination drive.
138 UNHCR (2021) Operational data portal: Turkey.
139 Government of Turkey (2021) Düzensiz göç.
140 Ibid.
141 HRW (2021) Turkey: Events of 2020.
142 Euronews (2021) Turkey builds a border wall to stop refugees from Afghanistan.

A new arrangement with the EU

These figures could decline even further if an EU proposal to support increased security at Turkey's eastern borders is approved. Critics argue that the plan, intended to reduce the pressure on European borders by curbing the number of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers entering Turkey, could encourage authorities to undertake forced returns of new arrivals to Iran, Iraq and Syria rather than offer them protection.[143] Five years on from the 2016 EU-Turkey pact, a controversial agreement that permitted Greece to return refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers to Turkey in exchange for financial assistance and resettlement quotas, the EU has signalled its willingness to renew the agreement with another €3.5 billion to Turkey over the next three years.[144]

Economic pressures push some Syrians to return

Llockdowns and other restrictions imposed to manage the spread of Covid-19 have impacted particularly on the Syrian refugee population, given the large numbers who work informally in restaurants, construction, and other sectors that were especially hard hit by the measures put in place. As many lacked welfare nets or secure salaries to weather the crisis, their savings were rapidly eroded by rental payments and other living costs. As a result, thousands reportedly chose to cross back into opposition-held areas of northern Syria in the early months of 2021, driven by economic pressures and increasing hostility towards refugees in some Turkish cities.[145]

Yemen's crisis continues

The conflict in Yemen has shown little sign of improvement, with continued displacement and an escalating humanitarian crisis described by the UN in December 2020 as a "ticking timebomb": out of a population of 30.5 million, around 16 million are in urgent need of food assistance and 23.4 million require some form of humanitarian support.[146] The situation is especially acute for the estimated 3.6 million IDPs in the country. This includes around 143,000 people newly displaced in 2020 as a result of the conflict between government forces and Houthi rebels, often in the wake of indiscriminate shelling of towns and civilian infrastructure, and a further 223,000 displaced during the year by floods and storms.[147]

In addition, Covid-19 has placed further pressure on already overstretched health systems and brought more disruption to Yemen's devastated services. While the pandemic has affected the entire population, the impact on IDPs has been especially severe. A survey published by IDMC in February 2021 found that some 45 percent of IDP respondents reported that they or a member of their household had experienced Covid-19 symptoms, compared to 30 percent of non-displaced respondents, a differential driven by overcrowding and a widespread lack of sanitary facilities.[148] IDPs also appeared to be struggling to maintain their housing in the face of economic pressures, with one in three fearing that financial difficulties linked to Covid-19 could force them to leave their current accommodation, in addition to 14 percent who had already had to do so for this reason.[149]

Ethiopian migrants return

For years, hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians have travelled through Yemen, most on their way to Saudi Arabia, despite the dangers of the journey and the hardship, discrimination, and violence many experience during their journey. These challenges have intensified as the conflict has become more entrenched, with the outbreak of Covid-19 ushering in a further deterioration in their living conditions. The sudden imposition of restrictions on movement, increasing insecurity within Yemen, and the stigmatisation of foreigners as potential vectors of the virus left refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in an even more precarious situation, with thousands attacked or forcibly displaced.[150] According to IOM data, at least 23,000 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers have been expelled across active frontlines between November 2019 and March 2021 by combatants in an effort to remove them entirely from certain areas, with another 10,000 believed to have been forced into the southern governorates in the second quarter of 2021.[151]

Amidst continuing conflict and a second wave of Covid-19 in early 2021, large numbers of Ethiopians in the country are now attempting to leave Yemen. Their vulnerability was underscored by the deaths of dozens of Ethiopian migrants on 7 March 2021 after Houthi security forces launched projectiles into a detention centre in Sanaa, causing a fire.[152] Hundreds of migrants who protested the attacks were subsequently abducted and violently deported by Houthi groups.[153] An estimated 32,000 migrants remain in the country in a state of

143 Rankin, J. (2021) EU plan to fund Turkey border control "risks refugees' forced return". The Guardian.
144 DW (2021) EU eyes billions in extra funds for Turkey migration deal.
145 Al-Khateb, K. (2021) Why are Syrian refugees returning from Turkey? Al-Monitor.
146 UN News (2020) Yemen: food insecurity a 'ticking timebomb', warn aid agencies.
147 IDMC (2021) Yemen.
148 Yasukawa, L. (2021) New survey shows how Covid-19 exacerbates the critical needs of Yemen's IDPs. IDMC.
149 Ibid.
150 MMC (2020) Mixed Migration Review 2020.
151 IOM Yemen (2021) Quarterly Migration Overview April—June 2021.
152 Human Rights Watch (2021) Yemen: Scores die in migrant detention center fire.
153 Arab News (2021) Houthis abduct, deport hundreds of migrants from Sanaa.

acute insecurity.[154] In the meantime, while hundreds of Ethiopians have been formally returned through official repatriation programmes, thousands of others have engaged smugglers to take them back across the Gulf of Aden to Djibouti, with scores dying in the process.[155]

Deportations from Saudi Arabia on the rise

Before the pandemic, Saudi Arabia routinely deported thousands of Ethiopian refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers from its territory. In the wake of Covid-19 the pace of deportations slowed for a while, with Ethiopians instead held for months in inhumane and unhealthy conditions in detention centres, some of whom were subjected to beatings and physical mistreatment.[156] The Ethiopian and Saudi governments subsequently agreed to release and repatriate thousands of those being detained.[157] The numbers rose steadily in the first half of 2021, particularly following nationwide mass arrests carried out in June 2021 that saw even Ethiopians with legal documentation rounded up by police.[158] Some 30,078 Ethiopian nationals were reportedly repatriated in the space of just two weeks between 26 June and 9 July. Of those expelled between November 2020 and June 2021, around 40 percent are Tigrayan: many face further challenges as they are unable to return to their community in the midst of the conflict in their homeland. In total, some 376,640 Ethiopian refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers were deported from Saudi Arabia between March 2017 and June 2021.[159]

154 Reuters (2021) Ethiopians head home after Yemen migrant life becomes untenable.
155 IOM (2021) Ethiopian migrants return home from Yemen with IOM support in wake of tragic boat sinking; IOM (2021) 44 dead after smuggler's boat capsizes off the coast of Djibouti.
156 Human Rights Watch (2020) Saudi Arabia: Migrants held in inhuman, degrading conditions.
157 Juneja, Z.L. (2021) Saudi Arabia repatriates hundreds of detained Ethiopians. Human Rights Watch.
158 Middle East Eye (2021) Saudi Arabia: Police detain thousands of Ethiopians, regardless of documentation.
159 MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: East Africa and Yemen—Q2 2021.

The Americas

Overview

Mixed migration in Central America includes not only hundreds of thousands of Mexicans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Salvadoreans driven to migrate by violence, corruption, and poverty, but also growing numbers of people originating from outside the Northern Triangle, including Ecuadorians, Nicaraguans, Brazilians, as well as nationals from outside the region, including Haitians, Cubans, and others from countries in Africa and Asia. Continued instability in Haiti in particular has contributed to large numbers of Haitian refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers travelling through the mainland.

The number of apprehensions at the southern border of the US with Mexico has been increasing steadily since May 2020, a trend that has continued since Joe Biden became US President in January 2021. Many hoped his election would usher in a more humane approach to immigration following four years of increasingly restrictive policies pursued by his predecessor, Donald Trump, but many of the most restrictive measures remain in place. Meanwhile, though the US government has proposed aid packages to address the underlying causes of migration from Central America, it has also encouraged Mexico and Guatemala to ramp up their border security to prevent irregular migration northwards through their territories.

Venezuela

There is no clear end in sight of the economic and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela that has, since 2014, seen some 5.4 million citizens leave their country. Some 4.6 million of these are based in the Americas, with the largest populations in Colombia (1,742,927), Peru (1,049,970), Chile (457,324), Ecuador (431,093), Brazil (261,441), Argentina (173,248), Panama (121, 598) the Dominican Republic (114,050) and Mexico (102,223).[160] Worldwide, as of September 2021, there were just over 171,000 recognised Venezuelan refugees, almost 851,119 asylum seekers and another 2.6 million under other legal forms of stay.[161] Many others, however, have an irregular immigration status and are therefore unable to access basic rights, so increasing their vulnerability to abuse, exploitation, and trafficking.[162]

While border restrictions imposed in the wake of Covid-19 and the economic impact of the pandemic had temporarily slowed the exodus in 2020 and even triggered returns to Venezuela, emigration has continued into 2021, with some sources estimating that up to 1,800 - 2,000 Venezuelans leaving the country daily by June.[163] Despite being the second largest external displacement crisis in the world after Syria, the situation continues to be chronically underfunded.

International donors pledge funding for Venezuela's displaced

Commentators have pointed to the significant financial shortfalls in the humanitarian response to the millions of Venezuelans in the region, describing the situation as "the most underfunded in modern history"[164] despite it being the second largest instance of external displacement in the world after Syria. In June 2021, however, more than 30 governments pledged a total of $1.5 billion in grants and loans to support the millions of Venezuelans now living outside the country: of this, $954 million was in loans, a significant increase from the $653 million raised at the previous year's event. Though the total exceeded the $1.44 billion target for donor assistance presented by the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for 2021, it is nevertheless the case that international assistance only covers a fraction of the needs of the millions of Venezuelans displaced in the region, with neighbouring host countries still shouldering much of the economic burden.[165]

A mixed welcome in the region

In the first years of the crisis, the degree of cooperation among governments in the region was striking. However, even before the pandemic, this welcome was showing signs of waning, with various host countries in the region (including Chile, Ecuador and Peru, as well as the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago) imposing

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160 UNHCR (2021) Venezuela Situation September 2021.
161 Ibid.
162 UNHCR (n.d.) Venezuela situation.
163 Deghan, S. (2021) 'Latin America will never be the same': Venezuela exodus reaches record levels. The Guardian.
164 Bahar, D. and Dooley, M. (2021) Venezuelan refugees and their receiving communities need funding, not sympathy. Brookings.
165 Reuters (2021) Donors pledge $1.5 bln for Venezuelan migrants, humanitarian crisis; and IOM &UNHCR (2021) IOM and UNHCR celebrate commitment of the international community to mobilize funds for refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

new entry requirements or visa restrictions to reduce arrivals of Venezuelans in 2019.[166] With the outbreak of Covid-19, even **Colombia**—notable for maintaining a relatively welcoming stance towards arrivals, despite hosting the largest Venezuelan population in the world—imposed strict border restrictions for a time.

Despite this, in February 2021 Colombia announced a new initiative to provide 10-year temporary visas for undocumented Venezuelans, who make up more than half of the total Venezuelan population there. This move will grant legal residence to close to 1 million migrants living there irregularly, allowing them to work and access basic services such as health care.[167] Initiated on 5 May 2021, by the end of June some 942,215 Venezuelans had pre-registered their applications online.[168] Other countries have rolled out similar initiatives, with the **Dominican Republic** launching a plan in April 2021 to regularise more than 100,000 Venezuelans living there.[169] Earlier that month, **Peru** announced that more than 600,000 Venezuelans would be allowed to register for a temporary residence permit.[170]

Brazil has also demonstrated considerable solidarity, despite the xenophobic rhetoric of the country's president, Jair Bolsonaro. Besides granting *prima facie* refugee status to over 21,000 Venezuelans in December 2019, its ongoing federal programme Operation Welcome has supported the relocation of some 50,000 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers from the northern border regions of the country to different Brazilian cities to facilitate improved living standards and integration. Families previously struggling in isolated shacks with little access to services have been able to secure education and employment as a result.[171] On 23 June, Brazil also published a new ordinance regularising Venezuelans who had entered the country without authorisation during the pandemic on humanitarian grounds.[172]

These measures contrast with the increasingly restrictive policies in place in **Chile**. On 20 April 2021, after years of debate, the government passed new legislation that stipulated that any foreigners who had entered the country irregularly after 18 March 2020 (when the borders were closed in response to the pandemic) had to leave within 180 days. Chile has seen the number of foreigners in its territory increase significantly over the last decade, from around 305,000 in 2010 to just under 1.5 million in 2020, with Venezuelans now comprising the largest share of the foreign population (30.5 percent), followed by Peruvians (15.8 percent) and Haitians (12.5 percent).[173] Authorities have also undertaken successive deportations of undocumented Venezuelans in the country back to Venezuela, in many cases without due process and in violation of international law.[174]

The environment in **Trinidad and Tobago** has also become more challenging, with some 700 Venezuelans there registering in June 2021 to be repatriated to Venezuela due to economic pressures resulting from the pandemic.[175] Besides job losses and exploitative working conditions, xenophobia towards refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in the country may also have contributed to their departure.[176] Some 40,000 Venezuelans are thought to have made the sea crossing to the islands, some through trafficking networks that have left them at risk of exploitation. The dangers of the journey were highlighted in December 2020 when a boat capsized en route from the Venezuelan coast, killing at least 28 of those on board.[177] A similar incident in April 2021 saw a boat with 34 people on board capsize off the coast on its way to the islands, with 27 dead or missing.[178] Human rights groups have criticised the government for prioritising border security over humanitarian protection concerns.[179] In the wake of the April 2021 tragedy, UNHCR and IOM issued a joint statement calling for the creation of safe passages to allow those seeking protection to do so through regular mechanisms rather than being forced to use irregular means of entry.[180]

An uptick in arrivals in the United States

There has been a sharp increase in the number of Venezuelan refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers crossing into the US in 2021. This phenomenon has been driven in part by the decline of economic opportunities in host countries such as Colombia in the wake of Covid-19, prompting many Venezuelans to move on again northwards to the US.[181] While a total of 4,520 Venezuelans were intercepted at the border by US authorities during the whole of 2020, 26,861 were encountered in the nine months between October 2020 and the end of June 2021, when the number of monthly

166 MMC (2020) Mixed Migration Review 2020.
167 Treisman, R. (2021) Colombia offers temporary legal status to nearly 1 million Venezuelan migrants. NPR.
168 MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Latin America and the Caribbean—Q2 2021.
169 EFE (2021) Oposición venezolana agradece a República Dominicana por buscar regular a migrantes.
170 El Nacional (2021) Perú promueve regularización de más de 600.000 migrantes venezolanos.
171 UNHCR and IOM (2021) Relocations in Brazil offer dignity and hope to thousands of Venezuelans.
172 UNHCR (2021) Entrada y regularización migratoria de venezolanos en Brasil.
173 Paúl, F. (2021) ¿El fin del "sueño chileno"?: los migrantes que luchan por permanecer en un país que les cierra las puertas. BBC.
174 Human Rights Watch (2021) Chile: Rulings uphold rights of deported Venezuelans.
175 El Pitazo (2021) 700 venezolanos en Trinidad y Tobago serán repatriados debido al desempleo.
176 MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Latin America and the Caribbean—Q2 2021.
177 Hutchinson-Jafar, L. (2020) Trinidad to impose stiffer penalties on trafficking of Venezuelans. Reuters.
178 Rodríguez, N. and Collins, J. (2021) As desperation grows, Venezuelans look to a dangerous Caribbean escape route. The New Humanitarian.
179 Amnesty International (2020) Trinidad and Tobago: Return of deported children gives government second chance to do the right thing.
180 UN (2021) Deadly shipwreck off Venezuela underscores need for safe migration pathways, protection.
181 Goodman, J. (2021) Driven by pandemic, Venezuelans uproot again to come to US. Associated Press.

arrivals peaked at 7,728—compared to just 55 in June 2020.[182] On 9 March 2021, the US government formally granted an 18-month Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to all Venezuelans physically present on US soil.[183]

Change and continuity in US migration policy

Migration remains a highly politicised issue in the US and was a central issue in the 2020 presidential race between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, who took office in January 2021. Since then, as attempted crossings from Mexico have continued to rise, members of the Republican opposition party have repeatedly accused Biden of enabling a crisis at the border. However, while Biden has publicly committed to a more rights-based approach than his predecessor, in practice a significant portion of the country's migration policy remains unchanged. While there have been efforts under Biden to accelerate asylum processing for those most in need of humanitarian protection and clear the backlog of pending claims,[184] the administration is still seeking to discourage border crossings and has continued the Trump-era practice of summary expulsions.

Afghan resettlements in the US
The issue of refugee resettlement in the US has become increasingly politicised in recent years, with Donald Trump slashing the annual quota to just 15,000 during his presidency from a peak of 110,000 in the final year of his predecessor, Barack Obama. Despite promising to raise the cap during his campaign in 2020, Joe Biden subsequently issued an emergency statement in April 2021 that argued that the existing quota was "justified by humanitarian concerns and is otherwise in the national interest". However, following pressure from members of his own party, in May 2021 he announced that the ceiling would be raised to 62,500[185] and in September announced that this would be raised further to 125,000 from the start of the new fiscal year in October.[186]

In the wake of the fall of Kabul in August 2021 to the Taliban and the subsequent evacuation of tens of thousands of Afghans from the country, the US government committed to resettle some 65,000 Afghans by the end of the month and a further

30,000 by September 2022.[187] While apparently enjoying broad popular support,[188] there is still some uncertainty about whether this pledge will hit roadblocks as the issue of Afghan resettlement may become increasingly politicised ahead of the 2022 mid-term elections.[189]

Southern crossings on the rise again
After a peak of 132,856 apprehensions in May 2019, the highest monthly number since March 2006, the number of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers crossing into the US through the Southwest reduced significantly in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 (October 2019 - September 2020) and reached a low of 17,106 in April 2020. However, the total number of arrivals has consistently climbed every month to reach 188,829 in June 2021.[190]

The demographic composition of mixed migration movements into the US from Mexico has fluctuated considerably in recent years. While FY2019 (October 2018 - September 2019) was the first year when Mexicans did not make up the largest national group, with both Guatemalans and Hondurans making up greater numbers, this trend was reversed in FY2020 when Mexicans again outnumbered other nationalities, comprising almost two thirds (65 percent) of all encounters. Yet in the first nine months of FY2021 (October 2020—June 2021), the proportions again shifted: while Mexicans still made up the largest national group (42.8 percent), the relative share of the Central American countries had increased, led by Hondurans (18.3 percent), Guatemalans (16.5 percent), and Salvadoreans (5.6 percent).[191]

Even more surprising, however, is the apparent rise during the first half of 2021 in the proportion of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers originating from countries other than Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador. While in June 2020 just 5.5 percent of those apprehended on the border were not from one of those four countries, by June 2021 the figure had risen to around a quarter of the monthly total, including a significant number of Ecuadorians, Venezuelans, Nicaraguans, Brazilians, Haitians, and Cubans.[192]

Deteriorating conditions in Texas
Despite the securitisation of the southern border, thousands of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers still managed to enter the US. Their situation was highlighted by a growing humanitarian crisis as thousands gathered

182 US Customs and Border Protection (2021) Nationwide encounters.
183 Human Rights Watch (2021) US: Temporary protection for Venezuelans.
184 Owen, Q. (2021) Crisis at the border: How it happened and what is being done. ABC.
185 BBC (2021) Joe Biden raises Trump refugee cap after backlash.
186 Rosenberg, M. and Lambert, L. (2021) Biden administration seeks to lift U.S. refugee cap to 125,000. Reuters.
187 The New Arab (2020) Afghans resettled unevenly across US states following first wave of evacuations.
188 Rose, J. (2021) Support for resettling Afghan refugees in the U.S. is broad—but has limits. NPR.
189 Narea, N. (2021) The fight to resettle Afghans in the US has just begun. Vox.
190 US Customs and Border Protection (2021) Nationwide encounters.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.

under the bridge that connects Del Rio in Texas with Ciudad Acuña in Mexico. By mid-September the group, made up predominantly of Haitians as well as Cubans, Venezuelans, and Nicaraguans, numbered more than 10,000. Crowded together in soaring temperatures and with limited opportunity to socially distance, they faced food and water shortages and a lack of medical care, proper sanitation, and adequate shelter. As border officials hurried to process them, around 50 Democratic lawmakers publicly called on Biden's administration to halt deportations back to Haiti given the insecure situation there.[193] The situation in Texas also became a major political issue, with some senior Republicans blaming the resurgence of Covid-19 across the entire US on the presence of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers at the border—a theory rejected by health officials, who instead pointed to the refusal of many US citizens to be vaccinated as a major contributing factor.[194] However, towards the end of September, the camp was emptied and some 16,000 people relocated, many of them on flights back to Haiti.[195]

An end to the Migrant Protection Protocols?

The **Migrant Protection Protocols** (MPP) programme, also known as the "Remain in Mexico" policy, was one of the most controversial measures of the Trump administration. Beginning in January 2019, more than 70,000 people who had applied for asylum in the US were forcibly transferred into Mexican territory and obliged to wait there while their claims were reviewed by US immigration courts. Besides exposing them to a high risk of violence, murder, rape, child abduction, and other abuses, with hundreds of documented incidents of MPP applicants being targeted by criminal gangs, the arrangement also made it almost impossible for asylum seekers to access adequate legal counsel or even attend their own hearings in the US. As a result, the proportion of successful applications under the MPP programme was just 1.5 percent.[196]

On the first day of Joe Biden's administration, 20 January 2021, the suspension of the MPP was announced and by the beginning of June, when the programme was formally brought to an end, 11,000 MPP applicants had already been permitted to enter the US while their claims were reviewed.[197] As with the rescinding in June 2021 of the Trump administration's restriction on asylum claims for victims of domestic violence and persecution by

criminal gangs,[198] this policy shift marked a move away from some of the Trump administration's more hardline immigration policies. However, in August 2021 a district court ordered the US government to restore the MPP. The Supreme Court then refused to temporarily lift the lower court's injunction, forcing Biden to reinvigorate the MPP pending an appeal hearing scheduled later in the year. In response, the administration said in late September that it would craft a new memo to rescind the "Remain in Mexico" policy.[199]

Title 42 provisions remain in place

While government rhetoric around migration has softened since January 2021, human rights groups have highlighted that many protection gaps within US migration policy have yet to be addressed—in particular, the highly divisive current implementation of Title 42-related provisions. The first of these provisions was invoked by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in March 2020, reportedly under political pressure, as an emergency measure to contain the spread of Covid-19: framed as a public health measure, it enabled the summary removal of people on the move intercepted at the southern border and their expulsion back into Mexico, in violation of their right to apply for protection and have their case heard.

Though initially timebound, the Title 42 provisions were repeatedly extended until Trump left office and have been continued under the Biden administration, with the CDC announcing a further extension in August 2021, to the dismay of human rights groups.[200] As of the end of August 2021, well over 1.1 million summary expulsions had taken place under Title 42, including more than 600,000 in the five months between March and July 2021.[201] An announcement by the Biden administration in May outlined a daily quota of 250 "vulnerable" refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers (including families with young children and those at heightened risk of violence in Mexico) to be granted entry to the US to have their claims processed there.[202] The individuals in question are identified and referred by humanitarian organisations and NGOs operating along the border. In general, however, reports suggest that many at-risk refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers are being sent back summarily to Mexico, including the large majority of unaccompanied children intercepted at the border.[203]

193 Villareal, A. (2021) Texas: thousands of migrants gather under border bridge in makeshift camp. The Guardian.
194 Subramaniam, T. & Lybrand, H. (2021) Fact-checking claims that migrants on the Southern border are to blame for Covid surge. CNN.
195 Corpi, S. (2021) After the U.S. cleared a migrant camp, the border at Del Rio reopens. NPR.
196 Unger, A. & Kocher, A. (2021) Migrant Protection Protocols along U.S.-Mexico border come to an end, but the assault on asylum continues. Border Criminologies.
197 Reuters (2021) US formally ends Trump's 'Remain in Mexico' migrant policy.
198 Hesson, T. (2021) U.S. reopens asylum access for victims of domestic violence, gang violence. Reuters.
199 Bernal, R. & Beitsch, R. (2021) Biden administration moves to scrap 'Remain in Mexico'. MSN.
200 Human Rights Watch (2021) 178 groups denounce Biden administration's continued violation of refugee protections.
201 US Customs and Border Protection (2021) Nationwide enforcement encounters: Title 8 enforcement actions and Title 42 expulsions; and US Customs and Border Protection (2020) FY 2020 Nationwide enforcement encounters: Title 8 enforcement actions and Title 42 expulsions.
202 Ainsley, J. (2021) Biden admin will soon allow 250 'vulnerable' migrants into U.S. daily. NBC News.
203 Amnesty International (2021) USA and Mexico deporting thousands of unaccompanied migrant children into harm's way.

Graphic 8. March 2020 - March 2021: Tilte 42 expulsions and regular apprehensions of all migrants encountered between ports of entry under COVID-19 measures at the U.S.-Mexico border
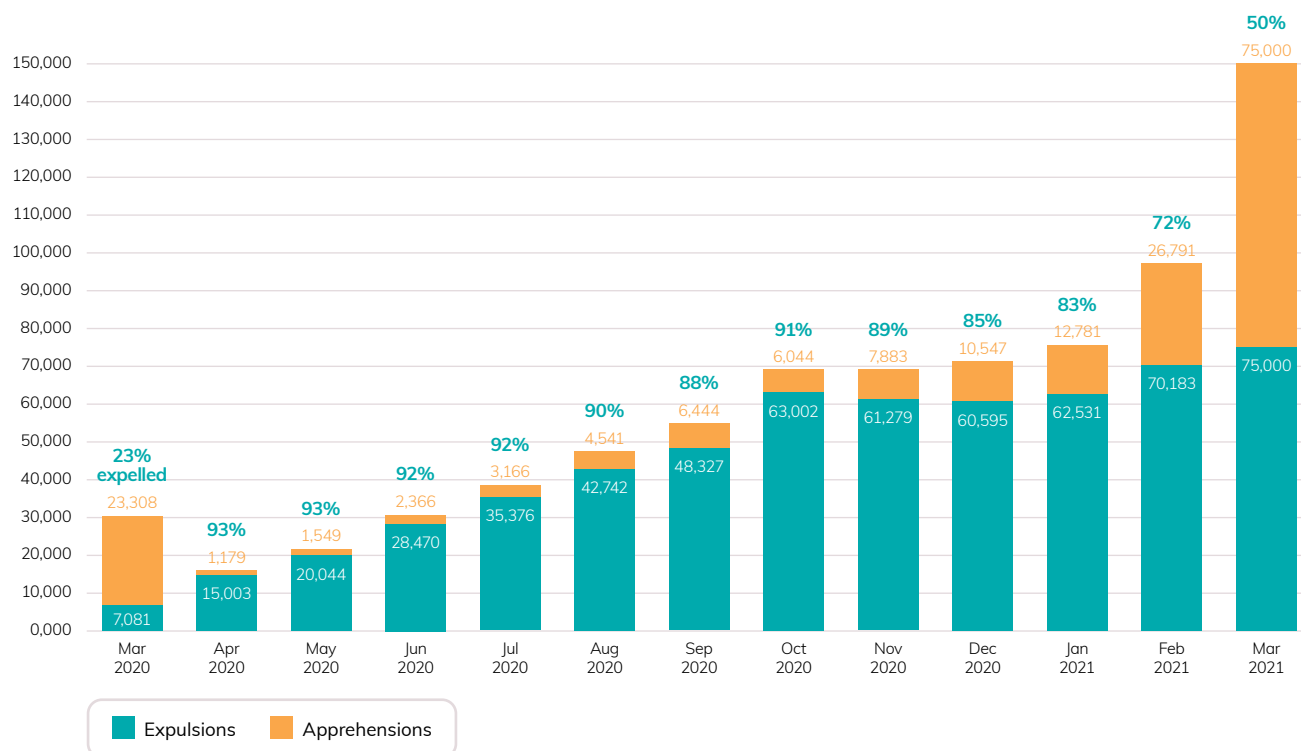
Source (adapted) and credit: WOLA Weekly U.S.-Mexico Border Update: March Migration Numbers and New Projections

The Bipartisan Border Solutions Act raises new concerns

Meanwhile, the Bipartisan Border Solutions Act was introduced in the Senate in April 2021 by a group of lawmakers from the rival Democrat and Republican parties. The legislation has been criticised by migrant rights activists for proposing a fast-tracked asylum interview process within 72 hours of being taken into custody and the creation of "priority" immigrant court processing. Critics have argued that these provisions would not only deny applicants the right to due process, but effectively reconfigure the country's asylum system into a tool of deportation. The piloting of similar programmes under the Trump administration saw the proportion of asylum seekers who successfully passed their interview plummet from 74 percent to 23 percent.[204]

Central American migration intensifies

The longstanding drivers of migration from Central America north to Mexico and the US—criminal gangs, poverty, corruption and environmental stressors—have been exacerbated by Covid-19 and the adverse impact on livelihoods across the region.[205] Violence continues to be a major factor leading people to leave their country: for example, while **El Salvador** has seen a major drop in the number of murders since 2015 when it was ranked the "homicide capital of the world",[206] gangs continue to control and coerce communities across the country.[207] In neighbouring countries such as **Honduras**, where protracted droughts have hit subsistence farmers hard in recent years, the impact of climate change has added to the chronic insecurity facing many in vulnerable areas.[208] Similar issues have been reported in **Guatemala**, where a series of devastating hurricanes in 2020 have contributed to crop failure and food insecurity, forcing family members in affected households to migrate.[209]

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204 Human Rights First (2021) Human Rights First raises concerns over Bipartisan Border Solutions Act; and Acer, E., Musalo, K. & St. John, L. (2021) Sinema-Cornyn border proposal would hurt refugees. Congress should reject it. Roll Call.
205 Dupraz-Dopias, P. (2021) No easy solutions for tackling the Central American roots of the migration crisis. The New Humanitarian.
206 Watts, J. (2015) One murder every hour: how El Salvador became the homicide capital of the world. The Guardian.
207 Brigida, A.-C. (2021) El Salvador's homicide rate hit a historic low in 2020. Foreign Policy.
208 Bermeo, S. & Deblang, D. (2021) Climate, violence, and Honduran migration to the United States. Brookings.
209 Rodríguez, S. (2021) It's not a border crisis. It's a climate crisis. Politico.

Graphic 9. Unaccompanied children apprehended by the US Border Patrol, October 2012 to June 2021

Source (adapted) and credit: American Immigration Council Rising Border Encounters in 2021: An Overview and Analysis

Biden's carrot-and-stick approach to curbing Central American migration

In early April 2021, the US government requested $861 million in funding from Congress as the first instalment in a four-year, $4-billion programme to address the root causes of irregular migration from Central America. The first tranche will provide support to anti-corruption, security, and poverty reduction efforts in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, with the aim of alleviating the conditions that are currently driving record numbers of people from these countries to migrate northwards.[210] At the same time, however, the US reportedly reached a temporary agreement with Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras to maintain or increase their border security measures to prevent migration towards the US, with thousands of troops deployed at key transit points.[211]

While Biden has moved away from the anti-migrant rhetoric of his predecessor, with more emphasis on addressing the underlying drivers of migration from Central America, officials in his administration have nevertheless continued to discourage refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers from attempting the journey to the US border. At a news conference in Guatemala in June 2021, US Vice-President Kamala Harris warned potential migrants: "If you come to our border, you will be turned back".[212] To date, the US government's efforts to forge partnerships in the region have focused on Guatemala, with the countries agreeing among other measures to establish "migrant resource centres" there to provide information on legal avenues of migration and provide support to deportees.[213]

210 Jakes, L. (2021) The budget plan boosts funding to prevent future pandemics and stabilize Central American countries. The New York Times.
211 Jaffe, A. (2021) Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala deploy troops to lower migration. Associated Press.
212 BBC (2021) Kamala Harris tells Guatemalan migrants: 'Do not come to the US'.
213 Rodriguez, S. (2021) Harris, White House betting on Guatemala to help stem migrant influx. Politico.

More people seeking asylum in Mexico...

Mexico, until recently regarded primarily as a country of transit for the hundreds of thousands of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers travelling north to the US, is increasingly becoming a destination in its own right for those fleeing violence or destitution elsewhere. This is reflected in the steady uptick in asylum applications in the country: from 1,296 in 2013 to more than 70,609 in 2019, with projections of 90,000–100,000 for 2021. Many asylum seekers are experiencing long delays in the analysis of their case, particularly in the wake of Covid-19, with only around a fifth of the applications made in 2019 having been resolved by May 2021.[214] Despite this, however, the number of asylum applicants has been steadily increasing, with the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) processing some 29,021 applications in the second quarter of 2021, over 6,400 more than in the first three months of the year.[215] This development and the continued obstacles to entering the US may have led an increasing number of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers to choose Mexico, rather than the US, as their destination country.

...amid soaring detentions and deportations

At the same time, the number of detentions and deportations of migrants by Mexican authorities under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has continued to rise, continuing a trend evident for a number of years. March 2021 saw the number of detentions jump by almost a third (32 percent) from February, to reach 15,800, more than double the number detained in March 2020. Deportations increased by 61 percent from February to March 2021 to reach 9,400, a jump of almost two thirds (65 percent) compared to March 2020.[216] In a similar move to the US, Mexican authorities have militarised the country's southern border and forcibly returned people on the move intercepted there, including minors: around 70 percent of Central American children taken into custody were subsequently sent back across the border in 2020.[217] In late September 2021, Amnesty International warned that continuing mass deportations and detentions conducted in Mexico "potentially endanger the lives of thousands."[218]

Guatemala sends back Honduran migrants

Though a significant country of departure itself, Guatemala has been escalating the use of force against refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers attempting to transit its territory towards Mexico and the US. A pivotal moment in this shift was the pushback of a caravan of some 3,500 Hondurans at the beginning of October 2020, justified by officials as a public health measure.[219] Since then, Guatemala's migration policy has become increasingly restrictive. In January 2021, a large migrant caravan that had just entered the country from Honduras was forced back by security forces with truncheons, tear gas, and sticks, with at least 1,000 sent back across the border, including 200 children.[220] Towards the end of March, the Guatemalan government issued a "state of prevention" along the border with Honduras in response to reports that another caravan might be forming, with a temporary ban imposed on unauthorised public gatherings.[221]

Panama sees increased extra-regional migration

Large numbers of people from outside the Central America region, predominantly Haitians with some Cubans and Bangladeshis alongside smaller groups from a range of countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, have been journeying northwards from South America and become stranded in the hazardous **Darien Gap**. Many of these were refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers who had left first destination countries (predominantly Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay) due to the deteriorating economic conditions there.[222]

The monthly total of extra-regional refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers crossing the border into Panama increased from 1,009 in January to 5,818 in April, dropping briefly in May before reaching a new peak of 11,116 in June.[223] By August, it was reported that more than 50,000 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers had crossed from Colombia into Panama through that route, compared to around 20,000 in a normal year, including over 10,000 in June and close to 20,000 in July. Government officials have raised concerns about the deteriorating humanitarian situation as resources have come under increasing strain, with calls for more international support to prevent a crisis.[224] In response, Panama and Colombia announced a joint agreement to restrict movement to 650 crossings daily in August, reduced further to 500 in September.[225]

214 Linares, A. (2021) Final destination: For many of the world's refugees, Mexico is their new home. NBC News.
215 MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Latin America and the Caribbean—Q2 2021.
216 Montes, J. (2021) Mexico steps up detentions and deportations of migrants. The Wall Street Journal.
217 Amnesty International (2021) USA and Mexico deporting thousands of unaccompanied migrant children into harm's way.
218 Amnesty International (2021) Urgent Action – Mass deportations must stop.
219 Al Jazeera (2020) Guatemala sends back some 3,500 migrants amid COVID-19 concerns.
220 Philips, T. (2021) Migrant caravan trekking north to US border clashes with Guatemalan troops. The Guardian.
221 Al Jazeera (2021) Guatemala issues emergency decree as new migrant caravan reported.
222 Tines, M. (2021, forthcoming) Getting It Together: Extra-regional Migration in South, Central and North America and the Need for More Coordinated Responses. MMC.
223 SWI (2021) Unos 11.370 migrantes extrarregionales llegaron a Panamá entre enero y abril; Paz, F. (2021) Junio fue el mes en que más migrantes cruzaron la frontera con Colombia. Panamá América.
224 Welsh, T. (2021) Panama calls for solidarity in managing migration through Darién Gap. Devex.
225 Zamorano, J. (2021) Panama, Colombia agree to limit of 650 migrants per day. AP.

Haiti's ongoing crisis drives migration across the Americas

There has been considerable emigration from Haiti for years, especially in the wake of the devastating 2010 earthquake, as thousands have sought to escape poverty, violence, and political instability and build a life elsewhere. Many settled in Brazil and Chile, but have been driven by discrimination and lack of economic opportunities to move again northwards towards the US. While there has been significant coverage of the thousands of Haitians who had managed to cross the southern border into Texas over the summer months of 2021, many others are also stranded in countries in transit. Besides making up the majority of those encamped under the Del Rio bridge, between 30,000 and 50,000 Haitian refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers are based in Mexico and around 5,000 stranded near Panama's border with Colombia.[226]

In addition to the challenges Haitians have faced during their journey, the response of national governments towards them has become more restrictive. In late September, US authorities responded with a series of mass deportations that saw around 5,000 Haitians flown back to Port-au-Prince,[227] prompting the US envoy to Haiti to resign in protest at what he condemned as the "inhumane" expulsion of vulnerable people back to a "collapsed state", one where political instability and gang violence had only worsened since the July assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, and which was again rocked by a major earthquake in August.[228] Similarly, at the end of September, around 70 Haitians were flown out of Mexico in what the government described as "assisted voluntary returns".[229]

Graphic 10. Map of common pathways for Haitian migrants

Source (adapted) and credit: Migration Policy Institute Haitian Migration through the Americas: A Decade in the Making

226 Charles, A. & Wilner, M. (2021) It's not just the United States: Latin America has a Haitian migration problem. Miami Herald.
227 Ibid.
228 Border, J. (2021) US envoy to Haiti resigns over "inhumane" decision to deport migrants. The Guardian.
229 Al Jazeera (2021) Mexico sends 70 Haitian migrants to Port-au-Prince by plane.

Europe

Overview

Irregular migration to Europe has steadily reduced since 2015, especially through the once dominant Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece, where numbers have diminished to a fraction of what they were even two years ago. Elsewhere, however, movement is again increasing: the Central Mediterranean route to Italy, after a significant decline between 2016 and 2019, has become more popular in 2020 and the first half of 2021. Spain also remains a popular entry point, generally through the Western Mediterranean route overland into Ceuta or Melilla or by sea to the mainland. However, the Atlantic route from Western Africa to the Canary Islands has assumed much greater importance in 2020 and 2021, with numbers now matching those on the Western Mediterranean route.

Divisions persist among European Union member states around the uneven impact of migration on different countries, between those—comprised largely of countries currently hosting disproportionate numbers of refugees—advocating for a solidarity-based refugee resettlement and hosting quota, and others—often those with governments strongly opposed to migration—resisting these calls. In the meantime, different countries have adopted a variety of responses, from reported "proxy pushbacks" by Malta in collaboration with Libya's coastguard, as well as actual pushbacks conducted by Greece,[230] to new legislation in Denmark that paves the way for the creation of offshore asylum processing outside Europe.

Across Europe, asylum and migration policy has been characterised by the frequent use of violent and illegal methods to prevent entry or summarily deport new arrivals without affording them the right to claim asylum. A report by The Guardian published in May 2021 estimated that some 40,000 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers had been prevented from entering Europe since the beginning of the pandemic through abusive measures such as pushbacks, with some 2,000 deaths linked to these actions.[231] The absence of an effective official search-and-rescue fleet along key

maritime routes and the barriers to securing legal entry to claim asylum have also contributed to the rise in deaths, with IOM estimating that some 1,146 people died at sea trying to reach Europe in the first half of 2021, more than double the number (503) in the same period of 2020.[232]

A variety of international organisations and human rights groups, including the UN and the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, have been adamant that the "lethal disregard"[233] of Europe's "race to the bottom"[234] to keep out people in need have directly contributed to the high death toll. While some countries have been more visibly implicated in human rights abuses, such as Croatia, with disturbing reports of systematic violence and cruelty towards refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, the rest of the EU is by association also complicit in this mistreatment. The practice of "chain pushbacks", for example, has meant that Italy and Slovenia have continued to knowingly deport arrivals on to Croatia, where many have reportedly been assaulted before being forced back into Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A new pact proposed, but old disagreements remain

The EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum, announced at the beginning of 2020 but only officially proposed in September that year because of Covid-19 delays, is designed to pave the way for greater harmony and cooperation around migration and, some hope, to mark a shift from containment to a more humane and welcoming response to refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.[235] But deep-seated divisions persist among member states on how best to shoulder the costs and responsibilities of hosting arrivals. While frontline countries such as Greece, Italy, and Spain have long advocated for other states to commit more fully to mass resettlement in their own territories, others such as Hungary and Poland (both currently ruled by governments with strong anti-migrant agendas) have opposed the introduction of mandatory quotas.

230 Amnesty International (2021) Greece: Pushbacks and violence against refugees and migrants are de facto border policy.
231 Tondo, L. (2021) Revealed: 2,000 refugee deaths linked to illegal EU pushbacks. The Guardian.
232 IOM (2021) Migrant Deaths on Maritime Routes to Europe in 2021.
233 OHCHR (2021) "Lethal Disregard": Search and Rescue and the Protection of Migrants in the Central Mediterranean Sea.
234 Commissioner for Human Rights (2021) A Distress Call for Human Rights: The widening Gap in Migrant Protection in the Mediterranean. Council of Europe.
235 European Commission (n.d.) New Pact on Migration and Asylum – A fresh start on Migration in Europe. For a more detailed presentation of the pact's various proposals and an implementation roadmap see: European Commission (2020) Migration and Asylum Package: New Pact on Migration and Asylum documents adopted on 23 September 2020.

The pact, which comprises a range of proposed measures, is still a work in progress: discussions of it within Europe have done little to alleviate concerns from either side. In November 2020, only weeks after the texts were made public, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain objected to the "complex and vague" commitments of cooperation for other countries and argued that "the notion of mandatory relocation should remain and be pursued as the main solidarity tool".[236] This point was reiterated again in March 2021 in another joint statement (this time including Cyprus, another significant receiving country) that argued that "in its current format, the pact does not provide sufficient reassurances to the frontline member states".[237] Other countries, particularly those in Central and Eastern Europe, continue to oppose the new pact due to its inclusion of compulsory resettlement quotas among its provisions.

Another source of tension that emerged in the middle of 2021 was an apparent rise in "secondary migration" of registered asylum seekers from Greece to elsewhere in Europe. In June, France, Germany, and a number of other states urged Greece to prevent asylum seekers from travelling on to file a second asylum application in another European country, blaming this onward movement on the poor living conditions available to refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers there.[238] Greece, however, rejected these calls.[239]

Tensions have also begun to emerge as the EU seeks to respond to the crisis in Afghanistan and the potential arrival of thousands of Afghans in Europe. The fragmented response to the situation, with a variety of responses suggested by different member states—including heightened border security, funding to non-EU countries such as Turkey to resettle Afghans there, and temporary protection within the EU—illustrates the continued lack of a consensus on migration issues.[240]

Mixed migration continues to fall

Since peaking in 2015 with some 1,032,408 registered arrivals, the total number of refugees and migrants entering Europe irregularly by land or sea has declined year on year, falling to 123,663 in 2019 before reducing even further in the wake of Covid-19 to just 95,031 in 2020—less than a tenth of the total five years before. In the first nine months of 2021, some 84,528 arrivals had been recorded, with more than half travelling the Central Mediterranean route, followed by the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes to Spain.[241] A smaller proportion travelled through the Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece, with a limited number also crossing to Cyprus and Malta.

Graphic 11. 2014-2021 comparisons for new arrivals of refugees and irregular migrants in Europe and those who went missing

Previous Years	Arrivals*	Dead & missing
2021	85,610**	1,445**
2020	95,031	1,401
2019	123,663	1,335
2018	141,472	2,270
2017	185,139	3,139
2016	373,652	5,096
2015	1,032,408	3,771
2014	225,455	3,538

*Includes sea arrivals to Italy, Cyprus and Malta, both sea and land arrivals to Greece and Spain (including the Canary Islands). Data is as of 14th October 2021.
**Figures up to October 2021.
Source: IOM Missing Migrants

More traffic to Italy while arrivals in Greece dwindle

Yet, while the overall number of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers entering Europe has declined steadily, the situation has fluctuated considerably along different routes. While the Eastern Mediterranean route into Greece was by far the most travelled route in 2015, it was then superseded as the primary entry point by Italy (in 2016 and 2017) and then Spain (in 2018) before again becoming the most popular route in 2019, though with

236 Cook, L. (2020) EU nations on Med coast renew push for migrant quotas. AP.
237 Smith, H. (2021) EU's southern states step up calls for 'solidarity' in managing mass migration. The Guardian.
238 Barigazzi, J. (2021) EU powerhouses ask Greece to do more to take back migrants. Politico.
239 Nielsen, N. (2021) Greece dismisses EU states' objections on refugee travel. EUobserver.
240 Barigazzi, J. (2021) Afghan takeover reminds Europe: It has no unified refugee plan. Politico.
241 UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation.

a fraction of the numbers it had attracted a few years before. Yet in 2020, as Greece tightened its borders, registered arrivals again reduced to just over 1 percent of what they had been in 2015, a trend that continued into 2021. Crossings along the Central Mediterranean route, on the other hand, while reducing substantially in 2018 and 2019, rose significantly in 2020 and have continued an upward trajectory in 2021. Meanwhile Spain, after peaking in 2018, fell the following year before, like Italy, increasing again in 2020. While 6,290 registered arrivals entered Italy and 8,451 Spain in September 2021, fewer than 700 reached Greece the same month.[242]

These fluctuations also in turn significantly determine the composition of different nationalities among arrivals. While in 2019 the two most represented nationalities were Afghans (23 percent) and Syrians (16 percent), reflecting the dominance of the Eastern Mediterranean route that year, the subsequent rise of the Central Mediterranean route has favoured other sending countries: in the nine months of 2021, for instance, the largest number of arrivals originated from Tunisia (25.8 percent) and Bangladesh (12.3 percent).[243]

The Eastern Mediterranean route

The steady hardening of Greece's border policy in recent years has seen a dramatic reduction in the number of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers entering the country from Turkey. Compared to 861,630 in 2015, only 15,696 registered arrivals reached Greece in 2020—a downward trend that persisted into 2021, with just 6,350 as of 3 October.[244] This was also the first time that the number of land crossings (3,977) exceeded those by sea (2,373): in 2015, for instance, 856,723 registered arrivals entered by sea compared to 4,907 by land. The total number of sea arrivals had already declined significantly in 2020, with 9,714 compared to 59,726 in 2019, yet the number of dead and missing in 2020 was 102 compared to 71 the year before—suggesting that the crossing had become more dangerous for those attempting it.[245]

More pushbacks from Greece to Turkey
Violent pushbacks by Greek border officials were reported in early 2020 amidst heightened tensions with Turkey after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan temporarily allowed thousands of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in the country to head to the border with Europe. Since then, however, human rights groups have claimed that forced returns from Greece have become systematic. Between June and December 2020, Amnesty International documented 21 separate incidents affecting around 1,000 people, with many experiencing mistreatment, intimidation, or beatings at the hands of uniformed guards and armed men in plainclothes. These roundups were not only carried out at the border but also in mainland Greece, with a refugee and registered asylum seeker among those seized and forced back towards Turkey. Highlighting the apparent coordination of different authorities in planning and executing these returns, in violation of international law, Amnesty stated that these abuses were now "de facto methods of border control" and could not be presented as isolated events carried out by fringe elements.[246] Similar reports of pushbacks have emerged in 2021: according to data released by the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) at the beginning of May, some 6,230 asylum seekers have been forcibly pushed back from Greece since January 2020.[247]

A related development is the increasing use of deterrents such as drones, sound cannons, thermal cameras, and lie detector tests to monitor and prevent migration near the Greek border.[248] In addition to the large sums it has already spent on these tools, a significant portion of the EU's €34.9 billion allocated in its 2021-27 budget for border management is likely to be channelled into the development of new technologies that will identify, track and contain refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers. This will further constrain their ability to access their right to protection and a fair asylum process.[249]

Fewer remain on the Aegean islands
In the wake of the devastating fire in Moria camp on Lesbos in September 2020—reportedly triggered by protests against the squalid living conditions there—Greek authorities resisted calls to resettle residents on the mainland and instead established a temporary camp on the island to accommodate the thousands made homeless by the blaze. It was officially named Mavrovouni, but widely dubbed "Moria 2.0" due to its inadequate shelter, lack of services, and limited food supply.[250] Greek authorities promised at the time that a new, more permanent camp would be constructed but by June 2021, nine months later, construction had yet to begin, raising concerns that residents might have to face another harsh winter in tented accommodation on a contaminated site that could expose them to

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242 UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation: Greece; UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation: Italy; and UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation: Spain.
243 UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation.
244 UNHCR (2021) Operational data portal: Greece.
245 Ibid.
246 Amnesty International (2021) Greece: Violence, Lies, and Pushbacks.
247 Tondo, L. (2021) Revealed: 2,000 refugee deaths linked to illegal EU pushbacks. The Guardian.
248 Bathke, B. (2021) In post-pandemic Europe, irregular migrants will face digital deterrents. InfoMigrants.
249 Popoviciu, A. (2021) 'They can see us in the dark': migrants grapple with hi-tech fortress EU. The Guardian.
250 Oxfam International (2020) Conditions in 'Moria 2.0' camp are abysmal, say GCR and Oxfam.

lead poisoning.[251] It subsequently emerged that the new Lesbos camp is due to become operational by mid-2022.[252]

Nevertheless, the fire may have contributed to a sharp decline in the numbers still based in the Aegean islands, from some 40,000 in April 2020 to below 10,000 in June 2021. Some of this reduction can also be attributed to the resettlement of around 4,000 people to other EU countries during that time.[253] In April 2021, Greece's minister of migration and asylum announced that more refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers were leaving than entering the country, with reported arrivals down to almost a tenth of levels in the same period in 2020. An estimated 56,000 people were in hosting facilities compared to 92,000 a year earlier.[254]

Cyprus seeks assistance as migration increases

Though Cyprus has seen a significant uptick in arrivals in recent years and an accompanying rise in asylum requests, peaking at 12,724 applications in 2019, the outbreak of Covid-19 and a tightening of restrictions led to a significant fall in the number of claims in 2020 (7,036).[255] With asylum seekers now making up around 4 percent of the population, Cypriot authorities claim the country is facing a crisis. While some arrivals cross by sea from Turkey, the majority fly to the Turkish-controlled north of the island before crossing the border into the southern part of the island. The Cypriot government has requested for more support from Frontex, the EU's border agency, to prevent arrivals.[256] In May 2021 Cyprus also reported a sudden influx of arrivals who had crossed directly from the Syrian port of Tartus.[257]

The Council of Europe, a human rights watchdog, issued a statement of concern in March 2021 about the poor living conditions of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in Cyprus following reports of dirty and crowded reception facilities on the island. It also highlighted reports of ill treatment and violent pushbacks at sea.[258] While the Cypriot government has claimed that any returns it had undertaken have been legal, there have been reports of chain refoulement of Syrians who, having been returned to Lebanon, have then been deported back to Syria—a situation that has prompted rights groups to accuse

Cyprus of violating international law.[259]

More walls in response to the Afghan crisis

In response to rising concern about insecurity in Afghanistan, culminating in the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in August 2021, European countries have been quick to discourage any arrivals fleeing the violence and instability there. This is especially evident among those who would be the first points of entry for Afghan refugees, migrants, and asylum seeker. Greece, for instance, has ramped up its surveillance and extended a wall along its border with Turkey.[260] Even those countries at one stage removed from the immediate impacts have signalled their reluctance to accept significant numbers, with French President Emmanuel Macron stating in August that France would need a strategy to "anticipate and protect itself from a wave of migrants".[261] Only a few countries made an immediate commitment to resettle some of those evacuated out of the country in the last weeks of August, many of whom were considered to be at risk as a result of having worked with NATO member governments or international development organisations. Others have explicitly ruled out the possibility of any Afghans being resettled in their territory. Austria, for instance, has argued that it already hosts a disproportionate share of Afghan refugees.[262] As of 10 September 2021, when the EU's draft action plan was published, the main emphasis was on development assistance and dialogue with Pakistan, Iran, neighbouring Central Asian countries (should they become significantly affected), and Turkey to support durable solutions within the region.[263]

Movement continues along the Balkan route

Despite the dramatic reduction of registered arrivals into Greece—the entry point to the Western Balkans—movement within the region (comprising Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) continued despite the imposition of border restrictions from March 2020. The slower movement of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers during the year meant that pressure on hosting facilities increased, creating further health and protection risks. Some of the routes also changed in response to Covid-19: Kosovo, a key transit point in the region on the eve of the pandemic, saw very little movement for the remainder of 2020 while

251 Bathke, B. (2021) 9 months after Moria fire, work on new Lesbos migrant camp still hasn't begun. InfoMigrants; and Human Rights Watch (2021) Greece: Migrant camp lead contamination.
252 Smith, H. (2021) Why Greece's expensive new migrant camps are outraging NGOs. The Guardian.
253 Sanderson, S. (2021) Greece: 4,000 refugees transferred to other EU countries. InfoMigrants.
254 ANSA (2021) More migrants are leaving than arriving, says Greek minister. InfoMigrants.
255 UNHCR (2021) Cyprus—December 2020.
256 The Independent (2021) EU border agency to help Cyprus stem migrant arrivals.
257 France24 (2021) Cyprus says "state of emergency" over Syria migrant inflow.
258 Hauswedell, C. (2021) Cyprus urged to improve its treatment of asylum seekers. InfoMigrants.
259 EuroMed Rights (2021) Pushbacks from Cyprus to Lebanon lead to chain refoulement to Syria.
260 Fallon, K. (2021) Greece will not be 'gateway' to Europe for Afghans fleeing Taliban, say officials. The Guardian.
261 Willsher, K. (2021) Macron accused of pandering to far right over Afghan crisis. The Guardian.
262 Human Rights Watch (2021) Europe: Lead efforts to protect at-risk Afghans.
263 Council of the European Union (2021) Operationalization of the Pact – Action plans for strengthening comprehensive migration partnerships with priority countries of origin and transit - Draft Action Plan responding to the events in Afghanistan.

other countries such as Romania experienced a marked uptick in the number of arrivals during the year.[264]

The most movement in the region has occurred in North Macedonia, with estimates suggesting 41,257 new arrivals in 2020 and 11,625 between January and the end of May 2021, followed by Serbia (25,503 and 6,225 respectively) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (16,211 and

9,723). Yet, few remain in North Macedonia, with some 117 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in the country as of the end of July 2021, with similar numbers in Kosovo (202), Montenegro (170), and Albania (160). The overwhelming majority of the estimated 10,812 across region were in Bosnia and Herzegovina (5,462) and Serbia (4,701), on the border with Croatia.[265]

Graphic 12. Typically used mixed migration routes in the Balkans

Source (adapted) and credit: Nexus Institute [Tackling human trafficking along the Balkan Route. How to improve identification and assistance of trafficked migrants and refugees](#)

Thousands left homeless in Bosnia

Bosnia and Herzegovina has developed into a major transit point, with the number of new arrivals in the country rising from 755 in 2017 to 24,067 in 2018 and 29,196 in 2019. The total fell to 16,150 in 2020,[266] however, with early increases in January and February suddenly cut short by the pandemic in March 2020. Movement picked up again in 2021, though has remained still lower than before the Covid-19 outbreak: for instance, the total in May 2021 (1,421) was almost three times higher than the total for May 2020 (512), but still just over half the number for May 2019 (2,603).[267]

Most of those entering Bosnia and Herzegovina do so with the intention of moving on to Central and Western Europe, but many have found themselves stranded there as the next stage of the route has become increasingly

impassable. Between 2,000 and 3,500 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers were based in the country in 2020, with many lacking access to basic services or adequate shelter even before the closure of Bira camp in September 2020 due to pressure from local residents amid rising anti-migrant sentiment.[268] The humanitarian situation deteriorated further in the wake of a catastrophic fire in nearby Lipa camp in December that left some 1,200 residents homeless in freezing winter conditions. Bosnian authorities were widely criticised for their slow response to this unfolding disaster and the dangerous conditions still evident weeks later.[269]

'Chain' pushbacks from Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia

Croatia continues to subject refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers to brutal pushbacks, with the Danish

264 Save the Children (2021) [Refugees and Migrants At the Western Balkans Route: Regional Overview 2020](#).
265 UNHCR (2021) [Western Balkans—Refugees, asylum-seekers and other people in mixed movements as of end July 2021](#).
266 [UNHCR (2021) Bosnia and Herzegovina—Fact sheet December 2020](#); and UNHCR (2020) [Bosnia and Herzegovina—31 December 2019](#).
267 UNHCR (2021) [Western Balkans—Refugees, asylum-seekers and other people in mixed movements as of end May 2021](#).
268 Refugee Rights Europe (2021) [Transit Country In Crisis: The Deteriorating Shelter Situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina](#).
269 Human Rights Watch (2021) [Bosnia and Herzegovina: Migrants left in the cold](#).

Refugee Council recording some 16,425 pushbacks from Croatia in 2020.[270] Despite official denials, widespread reports by human rights groups have highlighted a shocking pattern of violence, humiliation, mistreatment and sexual assault perpetrated by police.[271] Similar incidents have continued during 2021, with footage emerging in June of multiple pushbacks by border officials that included pregnant women, children and persons with disabilities.[272] In August 2021, it was reported that Croatian border guards were pushing back Afghan families who had fled persecution by militants in their country, with some beaten or robbed in the process.[273] In October, the EU Commission called for an investigation into "credible" media reports that Greek and Croatian special forces had committed "unacceptable" acts of systematic violence during border pushbacks.[274]

Troublingly, other countries are also implicated in this abuse by the growing prevalence of "chain" pushbacks. In **Italy**, for instance, arrivals have been repatriated to **Slovenia** through a 1996 agreement between the countries—a process that a Rome court ruled illegal in January 2021[275]—before being forced back into Croatia and from there to Bosnia.[276] Reports have emerged of overland arrivals in Italy being deported to Slovenia and then passed on to Croatian border guards who, after subjecting them to brutal beatings, have forced them back into Bosnia and Herzegovina.[277] In December 2020, the BVMN published a "black book" documenting the collected testimonies of thousands of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers who had suffered violence, rights violations, and degrading treatment at the hands of border officials along the route.[278]

Hungary's deportations to Serbia continue

Like Bosnia, thousands of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers are based in Serbia, prevented from continuing their journey into Central Europe by Hungary's strict border controls and its anti-migrant policies. Despite a December 2020 ruling by the European Court of Justice that the deportations were illegal, Hungarian authorities have continued to deport thousands of people since: according to its own official statistics, 2,824 in January 2021 alone.[279] This is the culmination of years of cruel and stigmatising policies towards irregular arrivals, including

family separations, that have served as a centrepiece for the right-wing, anti-migrant government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

Tensions rise at the Belarus border

In July 2021, **Lithuania** reported an uptick in the number of people attempting to cross irregularly into the country from Belarus, with more than 4,000 entries during the year by the beginning of August, compared to just 74 in 2020.[280] Poland and Latvia also reported hundreds of new arrivals. This sudden increase in movement appeared to be a reprisal by President Alyaksandr Lukashenka in retaliation for the apparent support provided by neighbouring countries to members of the political opposition and critics of his regime.

The EU responded by requesting the Iraqi government to suspend flights between Baghdad and Minsk. In August, Lithuania also voted to construct a 508-kilometre wire fence along the border with Belarus, while Latvia declared a three-month emergency and authorised its border guards to forcibly return people intercepted at the border.[281] Lukashenka then ordered a surge of security forces at the Belarus border to prevent any expelled refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers from entering the country.[282] By September, Poland had also declared an emergency and banned non-residents from accessing the border area of the country, the first time such a measure had been put in place since the end of communism.[283]

The human cost of this aggressive migration diplomacy was illustrated by the predicament of five Afghan nationals who, having entered Lithuania on 5 September, were subsequently expelled by authorities a few days later despite an order by the European Court on Human Rights that they should be allowed to remain. The men claimed to have fled persecution by the Taliban and wished to apply for asylum in Lithuania.[284] After their expulsion, they were effectively trapped on the Lithuania-Belarus border, denied entry on both sides.[285] Poland adopted a similar stance, with dozens of Afghan refugees caught in deteriorating conditions at its border for weeks, without access to clean water, adequate shelter, or medical care.[286] On 19 September, four Iraqis

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270 Danish Refugee Council (2021) Annual Report 2020.
271 Gall, L. (2021) Violent pushbacks on Croatia border require EU action. Human Rights Watch.
272 InfoMigrants (2021) Illegal migrant pushbacks from Croatia to Bosnia captured on camera.
273 Tondo, L. (2021) Croatian police accused of pushing Afghan refugees back to Bosnia. The Guardian.
274 Reuters (2021) EU executive demands probe into alleged migrant pushbacks in Greece, Croatia.
275 ANSA (2021) Italy: Migrant "readmissions to Slovenia illegitimate". InfoMigrants.
276 Gostoli, Y. (2020) Europe's chain of migrant expulsion, from Italy to Bosnia. The New Humanitarian.
277 Bubola, E. and Pianigiani, G. (2021) Turned back by Italy, migrants face perilous winter in Balkans. The New York Times.
278 Tondo, L. (2020) "'Black book' of thousands of illegal migrant pushbacks presented to EU". The Guardian.
279 Verseck, K. (2021) How Hungary is violating EU law on refugees. DW.
280 RFERL (2021) EU welcomes suspension of Iraqi flights to Belarus amid migrant surge.
281 Ibid.
282 The Independent (2021) Belarus to close border as Lithuania turns away migrants.
283 DW (2021) Poland: 4 people found dead on border with Belarus.
284 MacGregor, M. (2021) Lithuania expels Afghan migrants despite court order. InfoMigrants.
285 LRT (2021) Despite European court ruling, five Afghans remain stuck on border with Lithuania.
286 Davies, L. (2021) Fears grow for Afghan refugees stuck in "Kafkaesque" Poland-Belarus standoff. The Guardian.

were found dead along the border between Poland and Belarus, three on the Polish side and one on the Belarus side.[287]

Migration along the Central Mediterranean on the rise

While the number of new arrivals from North Africa to Italy decreased significantly between 2016 (181,436) and 2019 (11,471), movement along this route picked up again in 2020 with 34,154 registered sea arrivals. This upward trend has continued into 2021, with 47,932 arrivals by the end of September.[288] Of these, the most represented countries of origin were Tunisia (27.7 percent) Bangladesh (12.9 percent), Egypt (10.5 percent), Côte d'Ivoire (6.3 percent), Iran (5.8 percent), Iraq (4.1 percent), and Guinea (4.0 percent).[289] Many of those making the journey, including large numbers of children, are driven by violence and displacement in conflict-affected regions such as the Sahel.[290]

Dead and missing on the rise

The Central Mediterranean crossing remains the most dangerous route into Europe, with IOM recording 983 dead and missing in 2020. Though a slight drop from 2019, when 1,262 died or were missing on the route, the numbers have risen sharply in 2021, with 1,103 dead or missing as of 15 September.[291] According to UNHCR and IOM, reporting on a capsizing in April off the coast of Libya in which some 130 people died, even before the incident the death toll in the Central Mediterranean was already at around 300 people, double the number for the same period in 2020.[292] Other incidents include the capsizing of a boat in July off the Tunisian coast that led to at least 43 deaths.[293] It remains one of the most dangerous migration routes in the world, with some estimates suggesting that between 2013 and the end of 2020 approximately 17,000 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers have died or gone missing during the crossing.[294]

Operation Irini: A move away from humanitarian protection

The EU's previous naval operation in the Central Mediterranean, Operation Sophia, was focused heavily on preventing loss of life at sea and was credited with rescuing some 45,000 people between June 2015 and March 2020. After being effectively suspended for the last year of its mandate, Sophia was replaced with Operation Irini. While critics of Sophia argued that its activities encouraged migration, the cessation of its work has left a vacuum in terms of official rescue operations that charities and NGOs have tried desperately to fill.

Irini's mandate, focused primarily on disrupting arms smuggling, has seen a marked shift away from protection, with not a single boat rescued in its first year. Though in principle it is obliged to rescue any vessel in distress, its patrol area has been shifted eastwards away from the main migration routes to Italy and Malta, meaning that in practice it has not had to respond to an emergency. Irini's mandate has now been extended to 2023.[295]

Italian ports become more open—up to a point

In January 2021, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled that Italy had failed to protect the lives of more than 200 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in 2013 by not responding promptly to their distress call, with officials waiting several hours before telling those on board to contact Maltese authorities instead. By the time a naval ship was dispatched, following an emergency request from Maltese coastguards, over 200 of those on board—including 60 children—had already drowned.[296] The incident illustrates a longstanding problem, particularly between June 2018 and September 2019 when the hard-line anti-migrant politician Matteo Salvini was interior minister and deputy prime minister. While Salvini was in power, Italian ports would frequently refuse entry to boats, sometimes with the justification that they were in Maltese waters. Salvini himself is (at the time of writing) standing trial for an incident in 2019 when 147 migrants on board a rescue boat were refused entry.[297] If found guilty, he could be jailed for 15 years.

287 DW (2021) Poland: 4 people found dead on border with Belarus.
288 UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation: Italy.
289 Ibid.
290 UNHCR (2021) UNHCR warns of mounting refugee and migrant deaths in the Central Mediterranean.
291 IOM (2021) Missing migrants: Tracking deaths along migratory routes. However, UNHCR has different estimates of 754 dead or missing in 2019, rising to 955 dead or missing in 2020. UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation: Italy.
292 UNHCR and IOM (2021) Mounting death toll in the Central Mediterranean calls for urgent action.
293 Al Jazeera (2021) At least 43 migrants feared drowned in shipwreck off Tunisia.
294 Camilli, A. & Paynter, E. (2021) Death on the Central Mediterranean: 2013-2020. The New Humanitarian.
295 Wallis, E. (2021) Irini mission: One year, no migrant rescues. InfoMigrants.
296 UN (2021) Italy failed to rescue over 200 migrants in 2013 Mediterranean disaster, UN rights body finds.
297 The Guardian (2021) Matteo Salvini to face trial over standoff with migrant rescue ship.

There have been some signs of improvement in Italy's treatment of potential arrivals in 2021, following the widespread closure of ports after the outbreak of Covid-19 the previous year. For example, in July authorities granted entry to some 572 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers rescued from Libyan and Maltese waters,[298] a decision that would have been unlikely two years before when Salvini was still in power. Yet, abuses at sea continue to be reported, including the return of some 180 people rescued by a supply ship, the Vos Triton, to Libyan coastguards—effectively amounting to an illegal pushback.[299]

NGOs still face criminalisation

The hazards of the Central Mediterranean route have been amplified by a continuing crackdown on rescue ships operated by NGOs in the waters between Libya and Italy. In the absence of an effective EU-led humanitarian rescue service, these ships have played a vital role in responding to capsized or stranded boats. Arrests, detentions, and seizures of boats by Italian authorities have occurred regularly in recent years, particularly under Salvini, who passed a raft of anti-migrant policies while in power, including a June 2019 decree that sought to criminalise rescue operations.

While Italy's stance on NGO rescues has relaxed to some extent after Salvini's departure from office, ships continue to be impounded or subjected to restrictions that have prevented them from undertaking rescues for months at a time. In July 2021, a ship run by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the Geo Barents, was held in the Sicilian port of Augusta after authorities identified a number of "deficiencies" that needed rectifying—a justification that MSF dismissed as "disingenuous", accusing authorities of seeking "to pursue political objectives under the guise of administrative procedures". The Open Arms, a rescue boat operated by a Spanish charity, was similarly held for two months before being released in late June 2021.[300] Despite some legal reforms, search-and-rescue operations can still be subjected to fines of up to €500,000 (down from €1 million under Salvini) for their activities.[301] The continued risks that shipmasters face for their life-saving work was illustrated in March 2021 when, following a four-year investigation, Italian authorities formally charged dozens of NGO workers for their alleged complicity with human smugglers—with the possibility of prison sentences of up to 20 years if convicted.[302] Such criminalisation extends beyond the NGO sector: in September 2021 a former mayor of a Calabrian town (Riace) was handed a 13-year jail sentence for abetting illegal migration as well as related acts of embezzlement and fraud.[303]

Frosty welcome for arrivals in Italy

For those refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers who manage to successfully reach Italy, the challenges only continue. Asylum requests were down significantly in 2020, with 39 percent fewer applications than in 2019, and around three-quarters were rejected. This was in part attributed to restrictive decrees passed by Salvini during his time in government that were not formally replaced with new legislation until the end of 2020.[304] The legacy of anti-migrant policies is also felt in the everyday racism experienced in Italy, with a migrant poll published in June 2021 by UNICEF showing that some 80 percent of young respondents surveyed reported having experienced or witnessed prejudice.[305]

While Salvini's legacy continues to be felt in the severe protection gaps that many face in Italy, with a March 2021 report by ActionAid and Openpolis claiming that some 15,000 spaces had been lost in reception centres across the country as a result of his policies,[306] there have been some improvements. In October 2020, the Italian government finally passed a new decree that rolled back many of the harshest measures implemented under Salvini, such as the annulment of humanitarian residency permits. As a result, it is hoped that more refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers will be able to avoid becoming undocumented. Yet some punitive elements remain in place, including the continued application of fines for search-and-rescue boats.[307]

'Pushbacks by proxy' from Malta

Malta is a secondary destination for refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers on the Central Mediterranean route, with 2,281 people rescued at sea and disembarked on the island in 2020, down by 33 percent from the total in 2019. Almost a quarter (24 percent) of these were unaccompanied and separated children. The majority of arrivals were from Sudan (28 percent), Bangladesh (12 percent), Eritrea (12 percent), Somalia (9 percent) and Nigeria (5 percent).[308] Numbers have dwindled even further in 2021, with 408 registered arrivals up until 31 July.[309]

298 Reuters (2021) Nearly 600 rescued migrants disembark from charity boat in Italy.
299 Wallis, E. (2021) Accusations of 'illegal pushbacks' leveled at supply ship Vos Triton in Mediterranean. InfoMigrants.
300 Al Jazeera (2021) MSF calls on Italy to release seized rescue vessel.
301 Sunderland, J. (2020) Finally, good news for asylum seekers in Italy. Human Rights Watch.
302 Tondo, L. (2021) Refugee rescuers charged in Italy with complicity in people smuggling. The Guardian.
303 Tondo, L. (2021) Pro-refugee Italian mayor sentenced to 13 years for abetting illegal migration. The Guardian.
304 ANSA (2021) Asylum requests in Italy: 39% drop in 2020. InfoMigrants.
305 ANSA (2021) UNICEF: Eight out of ten migrants in Italy victims of prejudice. Infomigrants.
306 ANSA (2021) "Salvini decree"; 15,000 spots lost in small migrant centers in Italy. InfoMigrants.
307 Sunderland, J. (2020) Finally, good news for asylum seekers in Italy. Human Rights Watch.
308 UNHCR (2021) Malta sea arrivals: January—December 2020.
309 UNHCR (2021) Malta Factsheet—July 2021.

These low figures are due in part to Malta's efforts to prevent migrant boats from reaching its waters. At the end of June 2021, a vessel in distress carrying around 90 people was intercepted by Libyan coastguards after Maltese authorities shared the location of the boat. Incidents such as this appear to have occurred repeatedly, with some reports of coordinated interceptions by Libyan coastguards taking place even in Maltese waters.[310] These returns have been enabled by an agreement brokered in secret between Malta and Libya in 2018, establishing cooperation between Malta's armed forces and the Libyan coastguard to intercept boats en route.[311] This has systematised the practice of "pushbacks by proxy". In July 2021, the NGO Sea-Watch International reported that after alerting Maltese authorities to a boat in distress, the authorities reportedly delayed before eventually rescuing 81 people: by then, three others on board had died. The organisation suggested that the delay could have been due to a planned pushback to Libya or Tunisia.[312]

Spain

Spain has assumed increasing importance as a destination in recent years. While numbers dipped in 2019 after a 2018 peak, migration increased again in 2020 with 40,326 sea arrivals and another 1,535 arrivals by land. In 2021, up to 3 October Spain saw 28,304 arrivals by sea and 1,045 by land, making it the second most popular entry point to Europe after Italy. Almost half of these were in the Canary Islands (13,292), with others in mainland Andalucía (8,746), the Eastern mainland (3,094), the North African enclaves of Ceuta (1,443) and Melilla (1,025), as well as the Balearic Islands (1,749). The five most represented nationalities among these new arrivals were Algeria (39.5 percent), Morocco (20.3 percent), Mali (12.6 percent), Guinea (7.6 percent) and Côte d'Ivoire (6.6 percent).[313]

Conditions deteriorate in the Canary Islands
The increasing popularity of the so-called Atlantic route from Western Africa—predominantly embarking from Mauritania, Senegal, the disputed territory of Western Sahara, and Morocco—to the Canary Islands has been attributed to a range of factors, from the increased surveillance of the maritime route from northern Morocco and the economic pressures arising from the Covid-19 pandemic to environmental stress and the reduction in fish stocks off the coast of Senegal, driven in large part by the commercial activities of Asian and European trawlers there. While the popularity of the route had previously peaked in 2006, when it drew as many as 31,000 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, in the ensuing years the route was little used: even in 2019, only around 2,700 arrivals were recorded. In 2020, however, the numbers surged to 23,000.[314] In the first eight months of 2021 there were over 9,300 arrivals and, in a stark indication of the dangers of this route, some 785 deaths, including 379 in August alone.[315]

The rapid influx of new arrivals placed increasing strain on the ability of local authorities to accommodate them in adequate conditions. Between August and November 2020, thousands were forced to spend an extended period in the small port of Arguineguín, without proper shelter or access to sanitation, in scenes that soon saw it dubbed "the dock of shame". While for a time some of the island's hotels—largely empty of tourists due to the ongoing pandemic-related restrictions on travel—were used to accommodate them, local resentment grew amidst a concerted campaign of anti-migrant rhetoric by the right-wing Vox party. By early 2021 this programme had been abandoned, with authorities relocating arrivals to newly constructed camps.[316]

Human rights groups have criticised the overcrowding and unhygienic conditions in these facilities.[317] Amid reports of hunger strikes, protests and growing despair in the camps,[318] some have left them to establish makeshift settlements elsewhere.[319] In the meantime, the Spanish government has sought to contain refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers on the islands and prevent them from continuing their journey to the mainland, leaving them in a protracted and uncertain limbo. While a Spanish court in April 2021 ruled that arrivals with a pending asylum application and travel documentation could not be legally prevented from travelling to the mainland, in practice the large majority of those on the islands cannot afford the plane ticket necessary to leave.[320]

Ceuta and Melilla
The two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, on the North African coast, are surrounded by Morocco. As the only land borders between Africa and the EU, both have been the focus of repeated efforts to enter Europe by traversing the extensive fences and policing that

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310 Bathke, B. (2021) Migrants in distress returned to Libya—on Malta's request. InfoMigrants.
311 Martin, I. (2019) Exposed: Malta's secret migrant deal with Libya. Times of Malta.
312 MacGregor, M. (2021) 81 migrants rescued, three dead as NGO claims Malta delayed rescue effort. InfoMigrants.
313 UNHCR (2021) Mediterranean situation: Spain.
314 Shyrock, R. (2020) What's driving the deadly migrant surge from Senegal to the Canary Islands? The New Humanitarian.
315 UN (2021) Deadly 'invisible shipwrecks' plague migrants bound for Canary Islands.
316 Hucal, S. (2021) Echoes of Lesvos as migrants get stuck in limbo on Canary Islands. Politico.
317 Amnesty International (2021) Islas Canarias: Conclusiones preliminares sobre la situación de las personas migrantes tras una semana de investigación.
318 Martín, M. (2021) Tension spreads through migrant shelters in Spain's Canary Islands. El País.
319 Suarez, B. (2021) Seeking better conditions, migrants set up makeshift camp on Spain's Canary Islands. Reuters.
320 Hucal, S. (2021) Echoes of Lesvos as migrants get stuck in limbo on Canary Islands. Politico.

separate them. The heavy security presence there is intended to deter the regular mass attempts, sometimes involving hundreds of people, to swim or climb into Spanish territory. Between 17 and 19 May 2021, around 9,000 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, mostly young men, managed to reach Ceuta.[321] Some analysts speculated that the apparent inaction of Moroccan security guards at the time may have been a reprisal for Spain granting medical treatment to the Sahrawi leader of the Polisario Front, a political movement calling for the sovereignty of the Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara, the month before.[322] While the large majority of those who managed to enter Ceuta were subsequently deported to Morocco, hundreds of unaccompanied minors remained there, rounded up into warehouses or sleeping rough in parks.[323] Though on a smaller scale, mass entries have also been attempted at Melilla, with around 230 refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers managing to climb the fences into the enclave on 22 July.[324]

Graphic 13. Map of Spanish territory enclaves in North Africa

Harsher migration policies in northern Europe

While northern Europe is less exposed to movement into Europe than the rest of the continent, some countries have adopted increasingly restrictive asylum policies. In **France**, border officials have been accused of repeatedly returning unaccompanied children and families back into Italy illegally.[325] In **Sweden**, legislation was passed in July 2021 imposing time-limited residency permits in the first instance for refugees in the country: previously, refugees had been granted permanent residency once their status was recognised.[326] **Denmark** also became the first country in Europe to revoke the residency of Syrian refugees, with more than 200 facing the prospect of being returned to Syria on the basis that parts of the country could now be considered safe—despite widespread concerns among refugee organisations and human rights groups that they could face imprisonment.[327]

Crossings to the UK still rising

Boat crossings from France to the UK increased steadily in 2020, rising to 8,461 during the year compared to 1,844 in 2019.[328] These have continued to rise in 2021, with 19 July seeing more than 430 new arrivals, the highest number recorded in a single day, bringing the total since January to around 8,000.[329] Two days later, on 21 July, the UK announced details of a deal brokered with France to reduce migration, with French authorities doubling the number of police patrolling the beaches in return for £54 million of financial assistance from the UK. This followed a previous agreement made in November 2020 that saw a similar increase in the police presence on the French coast in exchange for £28 million from the UK.[330] However, by 6 September 2021, a new record was reached with upwards of 800 arrivals in a single day.[331] Shortly afterwards, following a breakdown in negotiations with France, the UK Home Secretary Priti Patel announced that intercepted boats would be turned back—a move denounced by activists as a violation of international law.[332]

Graphic 14. Rising number of Channel crossings to UK
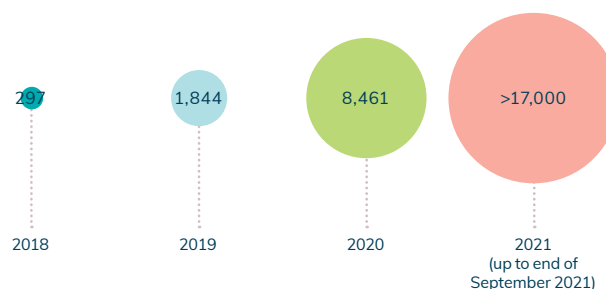
Source: BBC News Channel migrants: Crossing numbers in 2021 double 2020's figure

321 IOM (2021) IOM statement on recent arrivals in Ceuta, Spain.
322 BBC (2021) Migrants reach Spain's Ceuta enclave in record numbers.
323 Kassam, A. (2021) Hundreds of child migrants crammed into warehouses in Ceuta. The Guardian.
324 DW (2021) Hundreds of migrants cross into Spain's Melilla enclave.
325 Human Rights Watch (2021) France: Police expelling migrant children.
326 EuroNews (2021) New Swedish migration law makes permanent residency harder for refugees and visitors.
327 Murray, A. (2021) Denmark asylum: The Syrian refugees no longer welcome to stay. BBC.
328 BBC (2020) Channel migrants: More than 8,000 people make crossing in 2020.
329 Wyatt, T. (2021) Record number of migrants cross English Channel in one day. The Independent.
330 BBC (2021) UK and France agree deal to tackle rise in Channel crossings.
331 Ambrose, T. (2021) Concern for migrants' safety as hundreds resume Channel crossings. The Guardian.
332 Tondo, L. (2021) Return of migrant vessels: a violation of maritime law and moral duty. The Guardian.

The UK government has also pushed forward new legislation, the Nationality and Borders Bill, that will make unauthorised entry to the country a criminal offence with sentences of up to four years for those convicted. It will effectively establish a two-tier system even for those whose protection needs are recognised by granting them a shorter "temporary protection status" lasting up to 30 months. The law builds on the assumption, repeatedly argued by the UK Home Office, that small boat arrivals are simply a form of illegal immigration. Yet, given that almost all (98 percent) of irregular arrivals subsequently lodge asylum applications and that many are from countries with a relatively high success rate for claimants, such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria, this overlooks the fact that many have valid grounds under international law to seek protection in the UK. The bill also includes provisions allowing the UK to send asylum seekers to a "safe third country". While the government has justified the bill as an important deterrent for those seeking to make the crossing, critics have argued that it is unlikely to have any significant impact on the numbers attempting to reach the UK.[333]

Denmark to offshore asylum processing—a sign of things to come in Europe?

Following a series of increasingly harsh measures towards refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in recent years, in June 2021 Denmark passed legislation permitting the offshore processing of asylum seekers in third countries outside Europe while their claims are being considered, with successful applicants then potentially being granted protection in the external country rather than Denmark. There is speculation that a facility may be opened in Rwanda, in light of a memorandum on migration it signed with Denmark in April.[334]

While the concept of offshore processing has previously featured in EU policy discussions, including proposals of "disembarkation platforms" explored in 2018, this is the first time a European country has enshrined it in national law. The UK, however, with the passage of the National and Borders Bill, is now seeking to establish a similar facility. Reports have suggested that the UK may even propose sharing an offshore processing centre with Denmark[335] or establish its own centre in Ascension Island, with disused oil rigs and ferries also reportedly under consideration.[336] Significantly, Denmark's new law has drawn criticism from both the UN and the EU for undermining the international protection system.[337]

333 Walsh, P. (2021) UK Nationality and Borders Bill Q&A: how will it affect migration across the English Channel? The Conversation.
334 BBC (2021) Denmark asylum: Law passed to allow offshore asylum centres.
335 Dathan, M. (2021) Priti Patel plans for migrants to be held in offshore hub. The Times.
336 Grierson, J. and Henley, J. (2021) Home Office proposals due on sending asylum seekers abroad. The Guardian.
337 Adami, M. (2021) Danish refugee law draws criticism from UN, EU. Politico.

Asia

Overview

Migration in Asia continue to be dominated by the effects of two longstanding crises: the armed conflict and widespread poverty in Afghanistan, and the ongoing persecution of Rohingya in Myanmar. In the case of Afghanistan, the entry of the Taliban into Kabul in August 2021, two decades after their removal from power in 2001, could signal the cessation of a civil conflict that has killed tens of thousands of civilians and displaced many more. Yet, given the Taliban's legacy of violence and human rights abuses, as well as the country's deepening economic and humanitarian crises, it is likely that violence and insecurity will continue to drive displacement within Afghanistan as well as more migration into neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Iran. In Myanmar, too, the ouster of the democratically elected government by the military and the outbreak of localised conflicts have not only led to the uprooting of thousands of civilians, but also made the prospects of return for the more than 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, Malaysia, India and elsewhere even more uncertain.

Labour migration is also a powerful social and economic force in the region, with countries such as Nepal and the Philippines heavily dependent on emigration: while many head to the Gulf, migration within Asia to more economically developed countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand is also widespread. Given the dependence of millions of workers on migration for their livelihoods, not to mention remittances to their families at home, the pandemic and the restrictions introduced in its wake have had deep and lasting impacts across the region. Many migrant workers are still back in their home countries, keen to access work opportunities abroad but unable to travel due to entry requirements that they cannot fulfil, including proof of vaccination—something only a small fraction of the population have been able to access in countries such as Bangladesh. Tens of thousands of others, however, are still stranded in their destination countries and vulnerable due to job loss, wage theft, and lack of documentation.

Environmental pressures and natural disasters are also a significant factor in migration, including cyclones that displaced hundreds of thousands of people in India, Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Asia has seen millions of new internal displacements during 2020/21 as a result of floods, storms, earthquakes and other events, with the four worst affected countries worldwide all being in the region: China (5.1 million), Philippines (4.4 million), Bangladesh (4.4 million) and India (3.9 million).[338] Even in contexts where violence is a known driver of displacement, natural disasters can also play a significant role. In Myanmar, for instance, while around 70,000 people were internally displaced during 2020 as a result of internal armed conflict, 50,000 others were also displaced by natural disasters, including floods and landslides during the rainy monsoon season.[339] In Afghanistan, too, more than 1.1 million were in a state of displacement at the end of 2020 as a result of natural disasters such as drought, flooding and earthquakes.[340]

Afghanistan

The conflict in Afghanistan, one of the most deadly and protracted in the world, intensified in the early months of 2021 as civilian casualties escalated in the midst of an armed Taliban insurgency against the Afghan government. Despite the resumption of peace negotiations in September 2020 between the government and Taliban representatives, these discussions failed to deliver any concrete agreement to prevent the bloodshed and upheaval that 2021 ushered in. Between January and the end of June, 5,183 civilians were killed or injured in the fighting, an increase of 47 percent from the number recorded in the first half of 2020. This uptick in violence came after four years of declining civilian deaths and injuries.[341]

The desperate departure from Kabul

Against this backdrop of increased insecurity and the withdrawal of NATO troops, beginning in May, the Taliban mounted an offensive that saw them capture vast swathes of the country in a matter of weeks, steadily taking control of major cities, districts, and highways before finally moving into Kabul on 15 August. With the capital surrounded, US and allied forces scrambled to evacuate personnel, foreign nationals and Afghans judged to be at risk, including politicians, human rights activists and security guards employed by NATO member states. With many fearing for their lives at the hands of the

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338 Migration Data Portal (2021) Environmental migration.
339 IDMC (2021) Myanmar.
340 IDMC (2021) Afghanistan.
341 UNAMA (2021) Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Mid-Year Update: 1 January to 30 June 2021.

Taliban, Kabul airport was overwhelmed with thousands of people who had made the difficult journey there in the hope of boarding a plane. As the 31 August departure deadline for NATO loomed, the Taliban—now in place as Afghanistan's de facto government—took steps to prevent many from leaving the country as the airport itself became increasingly unsafe, as evidenced by two bomb attacks on 26 August by ISIS militants that killed more than 60 Afghans and 13 US soldiers. In the last two weeks of August, well over 100,000 people had been evacuated to safety, including tens of thousands of Afghans,[342] though at least 250,000 others at potential risk of reprisals for having worked with the US remain in the country.[343] Others who worked with other foreign governments, companies and aid organisations could also be at risk.

Internal displacement within Afghanistan intensifies ...

While there has been much discussion about the possible direction the new Taliban government might take, particularly with regard to human rights and gender equality, in the immediate term the country has had to contend with a worsening displacement crisis. In addition to over 3.5 million IDPs in the country as of the end of 2020, including some 404,000 displaced by conflict and another 46,000 by disasters,[344] the intensification of conflict in 2021 led to the internal displacement of more than 570,000 people by the end of August.[345] Many lack adequate housing, access to services, or health care. IDPs are especially vulnerable amid warnings of a worsening humanitarian catastrophe that could leave an even higher proportion of the country malnourished and at risk of starvation.[346] In addition to conflict, a series of environmental disasters including landslides, floods and droughts have devastated crops and deepened hardship, creating a further driver of displacement.[347]

Graphic 15. Afghanistan - 570,482 internally displaced people, Jan 1 to Aug 9 2021

Nearly 80% of forcefully displaced people are **women & children**

336,000 (59%) **children** under 18

117,034 (20%) **women**

117,154 (21%) **men**

84,075 families displaced

1. Kunduz
98,737 displaced

2. Bamyan
90,790 displaced

6. Faryab
25,752 displaced

3. Badghis
53,028 displaced

5. Takhar
33,376 displaced

9. Baghlan
22,140 displaced

8. Kunar
23,987 displaced

Kabul

4. Nangarhar
38,175 displaced

10. Wardak
19,727 displaced
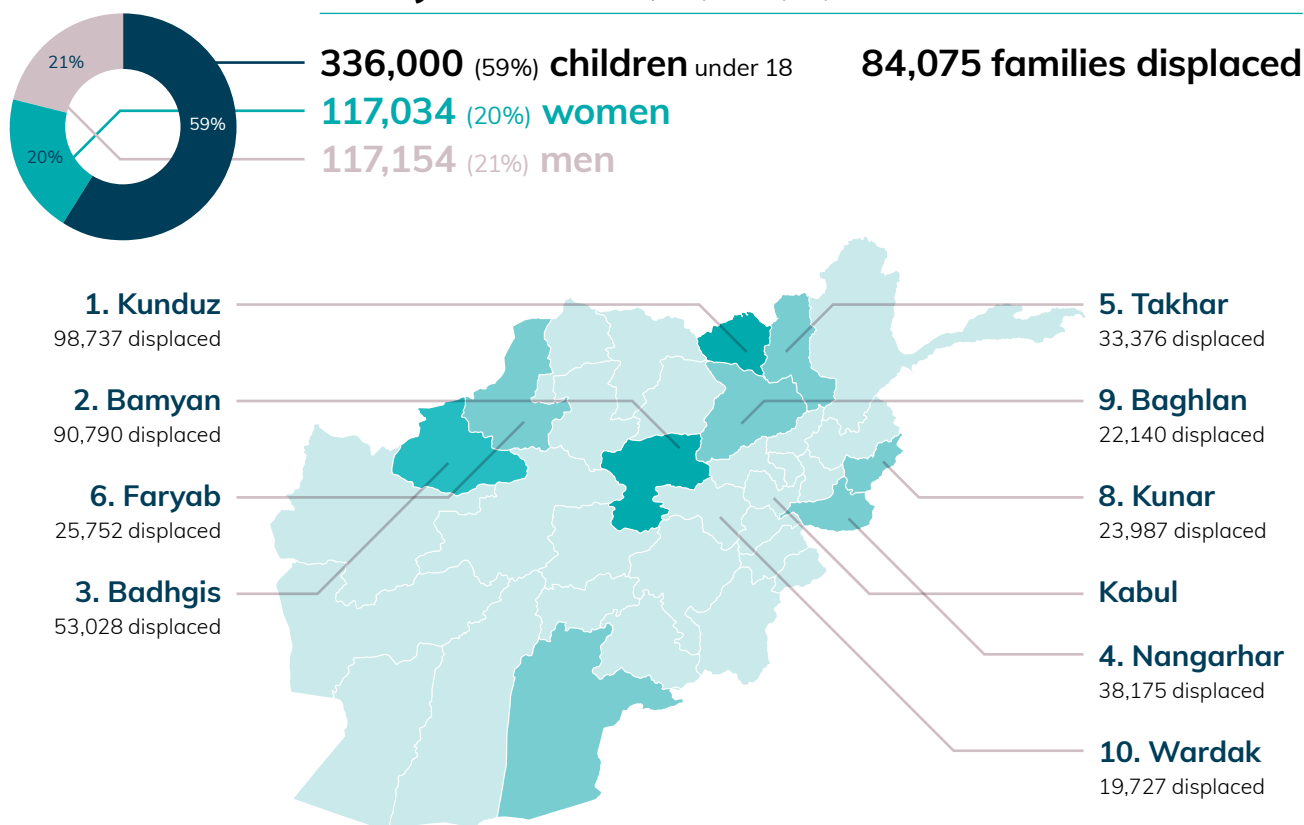
Source (adapted) and credit: Al Jazeera Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis

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342 Roberts, G. & Culbertson, A. (2021) Afghanistan: How many people have been evacuated by each country? Sky News.
343 Leatherby, L. & Buchanan, L. (2021) At least 250,000 Afghans who worked with U.S. haven't been evacuated, estimates say. The New York Times.
344 IDMC (2021) Afghanistan.
345 UNHCR (2021) Afghanistan situation external update—01 September 2021.
346 McVeigh, K. (2021) Afghanistan could start to run out of food by September, UN warns. The Guardian.
347 Nguyen, H. & Vallentine, J. (2021) Afghanistan: when migration is the only lifeline available all efforts must be ensured to provide safe passage. MMC.

... as hundreds of thousands return from Iran ...

Deteriorating economic conditions in Iran in the wake of Covid-19 and growing hostility within the country towards the Afghan population living there have driven an increasing number of returns to Afghanistan. Close to 860,000 Afghans returned from Iran in 2020, an unprecedented figure, with more than a third of them deported by Iranian authorities.[348] Despite the crisis unfolding within Afghanistan, even more Afghans have been returning from Iran in 2021.[349] Between 1 January and 24 June 2021, an estimated 584,249 people returned to Afghanistan, a 67 percent increase from the same period in 2020. Of these, more than half (313,226) were forced returns, while the remainder (271,023) were spontaneous returns. Another 6,523 returned from **Pakistan** in the same period in 2021.[350] With many faced with unemployment and destitution, their prospects in the deteriorating context of Afghanistan are uncertain and will add a further dimension to Afghanistan's complex humanitarian crisis and mixed migration dynamics.

... while others seek sanctuary abroad

For decades, millions of Afghans have lived as refugees outside their country, with 1,435,026 registered refugees in Pakistan and 780,000 in Iran at the end of August 2021.[351] In addition to the more than 2.2 million formally recognised refugees, however, are over 3 million others either residing with a different status or without documentation. There are concerns that the Taliban's victory and the prospect of a deepening humanitarian emergency in Afghanistan could, in an extreme scenario, prompt some 515,000 more people to leave the country by the end of the year.[352] Tens of thousands were reportedly fleeing the country every week in the last months before the fall of Kabul, crossing the border into Iran and Pakistan as well as **Tajikistan** and **Uzbekistan**.[353] This process has continued since the Taliban's takeover, with reports from refugee specialists in Iran that as many as 7,000 people were crossing the border into Iran irregularly every day by the end of August. Many are members of the Hazara minority, a community subjected to brutal mistreatment when the Taliban was previously in power and a regular target of the insurgency in recent years.[354] The evolution of Afghanistan's refugee crisis will therefore be determined in no small part on the Taliban's policies towards women and girls as well as towards

minorities and other groups specifically targeted by the previous Taliban regime before it was ousted in 2001.[355]

At the time of writing (mid-October 2021), prospects of a positive outcome seem far from certain. Afghan girls and women are confronted with an ever-shrinking civic and political space as restrictions on education, work, and participation have steadily tightened, prompting UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to castigate the Taliban for their "broken" promises.[356] Meanwhile, the Shia Hazara minority—targeted for many years by Taliban insurgents—continue to face the threat of further violence and insecurity. Despite evidence of recent atrocities carried out by Taliban fighters against community members, including the torture and killing of nine Hazara men in early July 2021,[357] since taking power Taliban officials have sought to reassure the Hazara community that they will be protected under the new regime. While many Hazaras will be sceptical of these promises, given the Taliban's longstanding treatment of the community and the proliferation of different groups within the movement, even with these commitments in place their security remains under threat due to the continued presence of Islamic State-Khorasan in the country.[358] So far, the Taliban government has been unable to prevent the group from launching further attacks against Hazaras, including the deadly bombing of a Shia mosque in Kunduz in October 2021 that killed or wounded at least 100 people.[359]

While many of those flown out of Afghanistan during the evacuation period in August 2021 will be resettled in Europe or North America, the large majority of new refugees in the coming months will likely leave the country on foot into the two countries already hosting the largest numbers of Afghans: Iran and Pakistan.[360] Others will fly there or to other significant destination countries such as India and Turkey. Pakistan has already been offered significant amounts of aid to accept refugees temporarily while they undergo security checks to clear them to continue their journey to Europe or the US. Other countries, such as Uzbekistan, have explicitly closed their borders to Afghans seeking to enter their territory, though Uzbekistan remains open to accepting refugees in transit to Europe provided assurances are put in place.[361]

348 Mehrdad, E. (2021) As deportations soar, Afghan returnees struggle on home soil. The New Humanitarian.
349 IOM (2021) Record cross-border migrant returns contribute to bleak humanitarian outlook for Afghanistan in 2021.
350 IOM (2021) Return of undocumented migrants—Weekly situation report: 18—24 June 2021.
351 UNHCR (2021) Afghanistan situation.
352 Sayed, N., Sadat, F. & Khan, H. (2021) Will the Taliban's takeover lead to a new refugee crisis from Afghanistan? Migration Policy Institute.
353 MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Report: Asia—Q2 2021.
354 Wintour, P. (2021) Afghanistan's neighbours offered millions in aid to harbour refugees. The Guardian.
355 Sayed, N., Sadat, F. & Khan, H. (2021) Will the Taliban's takeover lead to a new refugee crisis from Afghanistan? Migration Policy Institute.
356 Al Jazeera (2021) UN chief slams 'broken' Taliban promises made to women, girls.
357 Amnesty International (2021) Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men – new investigation.
358 Mutch, T. (2021) Afghanistan's Hazaras Get Mixed Messages from the Taliban. Foreign Policy.
359 Beaumont, P. (2021) Shia mosque bombing kills dozens in Afghan city of Kunduz. The Guardian.
360 Sajjad, T. (2021) Where do Afghanistan's refugees go?. The Conversation.
361 Wintour, P. (2021) Afghanistan's neighbours offered millions in aid to harbour refugees. The Guardian.

However, many challenges remain for these new refugees. Alongside the increasingly inhospitable environment in Iran, reflected in its repeated deportations and previous reports of Afghans being robbed, tortured, and even killed by border officials, as well as Pakistan's apparent reluctance to accept more Afghan refugees in its territory, those wishing to continue on to Europe face a difficult and hazardous journey. While the crisis has driven up fees for human smugglers, raising the cost of migration,[362] governments have also taken action to deter arrivals. This includes **Turkey**, where— against a backdrop of increasing anti-refugee sentiment—authorities constructed a three-metre high concrete wall this year to contain the growing number of people at its border with Iran.[363] In **Greece**, meanwhile, where the border with Turkey has been fortified with a 40-kilometre wall and extensive surveillance, officials declared that the country would not become a "gateway" for Afghans seeking sanctuary and called on the European Union to mobilise a unified response.[364] While the EU has promised significant financial support to countries neighbouring Afghanistan to host new arrivals, it has been noticeably more reticent with any commitments to resettle refugees in Europe.[365] In the months preceding the Taliban takeover, many EU countries were still deporting failed Afghan asylum seekers back to Afghanistan, on the basis that it was a safe country for return. Only on 11 August, days before the fall of Kabul, did Germany and the Netherlands announce a temporary moratorium on expulsions.[366] Less than a week before, both countries along with Belgium, Denmark, Greece and Austria had written to the European Commission to argue that "stopping returns sends the wrong signal and is likely to motivate even more Afghan citizens to leave their home for the EU".[367] Some reports suggest that those previously returned to Afghanistan could now be at heightened risk of being targeted by the Taliban.[368]

Resettlement of Afghans in third countries

Since tens of thousands of at-risk Afghan nationals were airlifted out of the country in August 2021, there has been considerable uncertainty about where the evacuees will be resettled. At present, a number of countries have made significant commitments, including several NATO members heavily involved in the occupation of Afghanistan over the last two decades:

- The **United States** has committed to resettle some 65,000 Afghans by the end of September 2021 and a further 30,000 by September 2022.[369]

- **Canada** has committed to resettle around 20,000 Afghan nationals, including women's rights activists, LGBTQ+ people, and journalists.

- The **UK** has pledged to accept 5,000 Afghans in the first year and a maximum of 20,000 in the long term, with women, children, and others at risk of persecution in Afghanistan prioritised.

- **Australia** has committed to accept 3,000 Afghans within its annual intake of 13,450 refugees.[370]

- The **EU** has not provided an overarching commitment for resettlement, a reflection in part of the widely divergent views of different member states on the issue. In the initial weeks after the fall of Kabul, its main focus appeared to be on strengthening its own borders and promoting durable solutions for displaced Afghans in neighbouring countries. Some countries have individually committed to accept some resettlements, including 150 in **Ireland**. Others, such as **Austria**, have stated that they will not accept any resettlements.

- Other countries such as **Costa Rica** and **Mexico** have agreed to accept smaller numbers of Afghans as well.

Rohingya refugee crisis deepens

The persecution of Myanmar's Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority, has been ongoing for decades and since the early 1990s more than 1 million have been forced to flee their home country to escape often deadly violence. However, the intensification of attacks against the community since 2015 has meant that the majority of refugees have been uprooted recently, with most displaced by a brutal campaign of genocidal attacks launched by the Tatmadaw (Myanmar's army) in August 2017. The largest Rohingya population are based in Bangladesh, where around 890,000 registered refugees are based, of whom some 740,000 have arrived since August 2017.[371] Significant numbers of Rohingya have

362 MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Report: Asia—Q2 2021.
363 Euronews (2021) Turkey builds a border wall to stop refugees from Afghanistan.
364 Fallon, K. (2021) Greece will not be 'gateway' to Europe for Afghans fleeing Taliban, say officials. The Guardian.
365 Von der Burchand, H. (2021) EU plans big cash offer for Afghanistan's neighbors to host refugees. Politico.
366 AFP (2021) Germany and the Netherlands halt deportations to Afghanistan. The Guardian.
367 Siebold, S. & Chalmers, J. (2021) Six EU countries warn against open door for Afghan asylum seekers. Reuters.
368 MacGregor, M. (2021) Afghans deported from Europe at risk from "barbaric regime". InfoMigrants.
369 The New Arab (2020) Afghans resettled unevenly across US states following first wave of evacuations.
370 Human Rights Watch (2021) What's next for Afghans fleeing the Taliban?.
371 UNHCR (2021) Refugee response in Bangladesh.

also migrated to Malaysia, where the largest Rohingya refugee population after Bangladesh (102,960 as of the end of July 2021) are based.[372] Others are in India, Thailand and, to a small extent, Indonesia.

Fires, floods, and landslides displace thousands in Cox's Bazar

The majority of Rohingya in **Bangladesh** are concentrated in Cox's Bazaar, including the more than 600,000 residents of Kutupalong, an area of just 13 square kilometres and currently the world's largest refugee settlement. Given the rapid growth of its population since 2017, the settlement is characterised by inadequate shelter, limited provision of basic services such as sanitation, and squalid living conditions that were creating serious health challenges even before the pandemic. A sharp spike in Covid-19 infections in May 2021 also led to a lockdown imposed in five camps within Kutupalong, restricting the movement of around 100,000 Rohingya.[373] The refugee settlements have also been afflicted by a rise in gang violence, with armed clashes in early October 2020 killing at least eight people and injuring hundreds of others.[374]

These challenges have been exacerbated by multiple disasters in 2021, including a series of devastating fires. The most serious incident, on 22 March, resulted in the deaths of at least 11 refugees, the destruction of some 10,000 shacks, and the displacement of 45,000 residents. Given the population density of the camp and the construction of shelters in highly flammable materials such as bamboo and plastic sheeting, there is a high risk of similar tragedies occurring in the future.[375] The location of the settlements also leaves them exposed during the monsoon season, when heavy rains bring flooding and landslides. At the end of July the camp was submerged by floodwater, destroying almost 6,500 shelters and displacing around 21,000 Rohingya. As with the fires, the scale of the damage is partly attributable to the prohibition on the construction of more permanent shelters in the camp, leaving residents more vulnerable when disasters do occur.[376]

Thousands relocated to Bhasan Char

Bangladeshi authorities have for a number of years threatened to move up to 100,000 Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char, an island formed from silt around 30 kilometres from the coast. In the face of serious humanitarian concerns around the welfare of the refugees relocated there, since December 2020 thousands of Rohingya have been moved to the island, with around 18,000 in place by June 2021. Despite the government's claims that these resettlements were voluntary, dozens of refugees who have subsequently attempted to leave the island have been arrested.[377] Reports emerged of torture, physical abuse and intimidation by security forces of refugees on the island,[378] while at the end of May 2021 around 4,000 staged protests against living conditions during a visit by UN representatives.[379] The following month, the island was hit with an outbreak of diarrhoea that affected at least a quarter of the population and led to the deaths of several children, reflecting the lack of basic health and sanitation services available on the island.[380]

Graphic 16. Map of Bhasan Char

Source: Google Earth

372 UNHCR (2021) Figures at a glance in Malaysia.
373 Karim, N. (2021) Bangladesh orders lockdown in Rohingya camps as Covid-19 cases jump. Reuters.
374 Amnesty International (2020) Bangladesh: Rohingya refugees' safety must be ensured amid violent clashes in Cox's Bazaar.
375 Islam, A. (2021) Fire becomes new fear for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. DW.
376 Ganguly, M. (2021) Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh at risk during monsoon. Human Rights Watch.
377 Siegfried, K. (2021) The Refugee Brief—4 June 2021. UNHCR.
378 Human Rights Watch (2021) Bangladesh: Rohingya refugees allegedly tortured.
379 Al Jazeera (2021) Rohingya protest against living conditions on Bangladesh island.
380 Ganguly, M. (2021) Rohingya refugees facing medical crisis on Bhasan Char. Asia Times.

Onwards migration to Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia

Significant numbers of Rohingya, driven by desperation, the desire for a more secure existence, and, in some cases, to reunite with family members elsewhere, attempt to travel to Thailand (though mostly as a place of transit), Malaysia, and Indonesia by sea. The journey, typically undertaken through human smugglers, is fraught with danger and there have been regular reports in recent years of Rohingya being tortured, extorted and killed by smugglers. Rohingya women and children are especially at risk of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. Boats are often stranded at sea for protracted periods, with repeated incidents where Thai and Malaysian authorities have pushed back vessels to prevent Rohingya from disembarking in their territory.[381] Some travel to Indonesia, particularly as Malaysia (the primary destination for most Rohingya) has become increasingly inhospitable, even if they ultimately plan to head on to Malaysia from there: one vessel carrying 81 Rohingya washed up on a deserted island off the coast of Aceh in June 2021 after more than 100 days at sea. Nine other passengers had died during the journey.[382]

The hazards of this route appear to be increasing, with UNHCR reporting that 2020 was the deadliest year on record for Rohingya travelling across the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, with 218 dead or missing out of the 2,413 known to have attempted the journey—making it eight times more dangerous than in 2019. The death toll was attributable in part to the tightening of border restrictions in the wake of the pandemic: with Thailand, Malaysia, and other countries becoming less willing to allow entry to boats in distress, Rohingya were left stranded at sea for long periods.[383]

Increased risk of deportations from India

Under the nationalist and right of centre Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a raft of anti-Muslim policies have been put in place that impact not only on the country's Muslim minority, but also certain groups of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, including Rohingya. With around 16,000 officially registered in the country, though the actual numbers may be as many as 40,000, the Rohingya population have been specifically targeted for arrest and deportation by authorities. In March 2021, more than 150 Rohingya were detained by police in Jammu, with the Supreme Court ultimately rejecting their appeal to remain in the country, despite the clear protection risks they would face back in Myanmar.[384]

Rohingya have been presented by the BJP as a threat to national security, with alleged links to extremist organisations such as ISIS.

Despair deepens in the wake of Myanmar's military coup

More than 600,000 Rohingya remain in Rakhine state in Myanmar, including some 130,000 confined to open-air detention camps in deplorable conditions since 2012 in what amounts to "crimes against humanity of persecution, apartheid, and severe deprivation of liberty".[385] With limited access to education, health services, or adequate housing, their situation has deteriorated further since the outbreak of Covid-19, with security forces using the pandemic as a pretext to escalate their harassment of community members. The coup in February 2021, when the country's democratically elected government was deposed by the military, has raised concerns about the future prospects of those Rohingya still in Myanmar, as well as the likelihood of return for the hundreds of thousands of refugees living abroad, given the leading role of security forces in the atrocities perpetrated against them. The political upheaval had also internally displaced some 230,000 people by the end of June, predominantly members of other ethnic minorities based in Kayah, Kayin, northern Kachin and Shan states, amid intense fighting between military forces and armed groups.[386]

Refugees struggle to access Covid-19 vaccines

While there has been much discussion around the inequitable provision of vaccines at a global level, with the majority of adult populations in Europe and North America now having received two doses, within Asia and other regions where supplies have been limited there are also sizeable gaps in access between citizens and refugees. In India, for instance, amidst acute national shortages, refugees were largely side-lined in the first months of the national vaccine programme.[387] In Bangladesh, meanwhile, Rohingya were initially excluded from vaccine distribution, with UNHCR reporting at the beginning of June 2021 that "not a single vaccine" had been administered among the estimated 900,000 refugee population, despite an apparent surge in infections and the vulnerability of many residents there.[388] Only in August did the rollout of vaccinations begin in earnest, with the Bangladeshi government announcing that 65,000

381 Amnesty International (2020) Malaysia/Thailand: Launch urgent search and rescue missions for remaining Rohingya at sea.
382 Llewellyn, A. (2021) Months at sea: Boat carrying Rohingya washes up in Indonesia. Al Jazeera.
383 Al Jazeera (2020) 2020 was "deadliest" year ever for Rohingya sea journeys: UNHCR.
384 Siddiqui, Z. (2021) India's top court paves way for Rohingya deportations to Myanmar. Reuters.
385 Human Rights Watch (2021) Myanmar: Events of 2021.
386 Al Jazeera (2021) UN says 230,000 displaced by Myanmar fighting; Regencia, T. (2021) Myanmar coup displaces thousands as global refugee numbers rise. Al Jazeera.
387 Milko, V. and Ghosal, A. (2021) Refugees pushed to back of the line amid vaccine shortages. AP.
388 UNHCR (2021) UNHCR urges stronger support for refugee vaccinations in Asia.

refugees would be vaccinated in the first round of the programme.[389]

The lack of provision across Asia to refugees has not only been condemned as unethical but also counterproductive, given the importance of ensuring that high-risk groups such as refugees in overcrowded camps are inoculated, both for their own wellbeing and that of wider society. However, there have been some signs of a shift in attitudes among some countries in the region. Pakistan, for instance, announced in May that it would be including Afghan refugees in the country in its national vaccination programme.[390] Other countries, such as Indonesia, have since followed suit with vaccination drives specifically targeting their refugee population.[391]

Labour migration brought to a halt by Covid-19

At the beginning of the pandemic, millions of migrant workers were quarantined, deported, or forced to leave their host countries after losing their employment, with many reportedly owed unpaid wages or unable to pay their debts to lenders back home. With new, more contagious variants of Covid-19 now taking hold of Asia and tight border restrictions remaining in place, large numbers of migrant workers are still unable to return to their host countries to resume work, forcing some into destitution. The decline of remittances from abroad, a vital source of income for relatives of migrant workers, has also had a knock-on effect in local communities.

South Asian migrants stranded at home due to travel restrictions ...

One barrier is the lack of vaccines available in sending countries, meaning that migrants are unable to travel to other countries for work due to entry requirements there. In **Nepal**, a country where almost a quarter of GDP derives from remittances,[392] some 35,000 migrant workers were still unable to leave as of July 2021 despite having had their work permits authorised because they were still not inoculated. Migrant rights groups have criticised the prohibition of unvaccinated workers in Gulf states as discriminatory, given the absence of widely available vaccines in Nepal. In **Bangladesh**, where only a very

small portion of the population have been vaccinated, at least 90,000 people were in a similar predicament.[393]

... while in host countries migrant discrimination rises alongside new infections ...

Migrant workers have suffered discriminatory treatment by governments since the outbreak of Covid-19, including in the subsequent waves of infections that spread across Asia from the end of 2020. In **Thailand**, in response to the identification of a cluster of cases among migrant workers in the fisheries and seafood factories of Samut Sakhorn, authorities forcibly quarantined infected and uninfected people together in dormitories, exposing many unnecessarily to the virus. A travel ban was subsequently imposed on migrants, who were then effectively forced to quarantine in their accommodation and workplaces. Public statements by Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha blaming migrant workers for the spike in cases contributed to a further rise in anti-Burmese sentiment, in the process making migrants more reluctant to access testing and treatment.[394] At the same time, some positive measures emerged as Thai authorities sought to engage migrants in formal registration processes to avoid undocumented migrants moving clandestinely to evade detection, potentially spreading the virus. At the end of December 2020, the government announced that undocumented migrants from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar would be eligible for a two-year work visa if they registered online and undertook a health check.[395]

In **Malaysia**, meanwhile, migrant workers from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Nepal have been targeted with crackdowns, often in the name of public health. Authorities have also continued to deport thousands of undocumented migrants in the midst of the pandemic, with the expulsion of some 7,200 Indonesians announced in June 2021.[396] Human rights groups have highlighted that these policies are counterproductive, particularly as the fear of arrest may deter some migrants from accessing a Covid-19 vaccine. While in February 2021 the government had announced that undocumented migrants were still eligible and would not be arrested while attempting to secure vaccination, by June this policy had been reversed, with police launching a crackdown to round up undocumented migrants, reportedly to "help" them access vaccines. However, mass detentions of migrants have been shown to accelerate the spread of the virus, as was evident during

389 Al Jazeera (2021) Bangladesh begins COVID vaccination drive for Rohingya refugees.
390 UNHR (2021) UNHCR welcomes Pakistan's inclusion of Afghan refugees in its COVID-19 vaccination programme.
391 Llewellyn, A. (2021) In COVID hit Asia, mixed messages on refugee vaccinations. Al Jazeera.
392 World Bank (2021) Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)—Nepal.
393 Bhagat, S.V., Sharma, B. & Hasnat, S. (2021) South Asian migrant workers are stranded as they wait for vaccines. The New York Times; and The Kathmandu Post (2021) Policy to deny entry to unjabbed workers is discriminatory, rights groups say.
394 Vandergeest, P., Marshke, M. & Duker, P. (2021) Migrant worker segregation doesn't work: COVID-19 lessons from Southeast Asia. The Conversation.
395 Wongsamuth, N. (2020) Thailand offers work permits to undocumented migrants to curb COVID-19. Reuters.
396 Reuters (2021) Malaysia to deport thousands of undocumented Indonesian migrants.

previous crackdowns in May 2020.[397] The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia subsequently condemned the repeated framing of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers as a threat to national security and public health, calling on the government to reconsider its approach.[398]

In **Singapore**, meanwhile, the migrant population has borne the brunt of Covid-19 infections, with extensive PCR and serology tests revealing in December 2020 that around 47 percent of all migrants had contracted the virus over the previous nine months. This situation was driven in large part by the cramped and unsanitary conditions of the worker dormitories where they were quarantined.[399] While authorities took some steps to improve living conditions and to ensure migrants could access medical support, foreign workers continue to face stringent restrictions. More than a year after the beginning of the pandemic, when the number of new infections in Singapore had greatly diminished and Singaporeans were able to travel, shop and socialise, migrant workers were still largely barred from leaving their workplaces or accommodation to make trips elsewhere.[400] The impact of living in a more or less permanent state of lockdown has exacted a heavy toll on their mental health.[401] Following a number of incidents of suicide and self-harm among migrants, the Ministry of Manpower has rolled out some counselling programmes to support migrants struggling with anxiety and announced in August 2021 that plans were underway to begin relaxing some of the restrictions imposed on the foreign workforce.[402]

... and in India, migrants again leave the cities ...

In March 2020, the sudden imposition of a national lockdown at the beginning of the pandemic sparked the departure of more than 11.4 million migrants across India from cities back to their villages[403]—an unprecedented act of reverse urban-to-rural migration. Since many were employed informally or as day labourers, without protections or welfare benefits of any kind, the new restrictions left them unable to earn income or continue paying their rent. The result was chaotic scenes of crowded train stations and long lines of migrants walking home. Some died during the journey: more than a quarter of road deaths during lockdown were of migrant workers attempting to make their way home.[404]

A year later, as the highly contagious Delta variant spread across the country, driving up infections to a peak in early May, migrants again decided to leave in large numbers amidst growing fears about the dangers of the virus.[405] The imposition of a second weeks-long lockdown in April 2021 drove another mass exodus from Indian cities, with more than 800,000 leaving Delhi alone between 19 April and 14 May.[406] For many migrants, 2021 has proved even harder than the previous year as unemployment remains high and savings are now depleted after the first lockdown, pushing them deeper into debt.[407]

... while repatriated Filipino migrants contemplate migration again

Meanwhile, in the **Philippines**, the pandemic has affected the livelihoods of the millions of Filipinos who normally work abroad, the majority in the Gulf. A total of 549,841 Overseas Filipino Workers were deployed in 2020, a 75 percent decrease from a peak of 2.16 million in 2019 and the lowest number in 30 years. At the same time, there were a record 791,623 Returning Overseas Workers repatriated to the Philippines, with around two-thirds (67 percent) of these returning as a result of Covid-19. With many of those who have returned now confronted with prolonged unemployment, reduced household income, and other barriers to integration, almost half (48 percent) of 8,322 migrants surveyed by IOM in between September and December 2020 reported that they intended to migrate abroad again in future.[408] This appears to be corroborated by a subsequent uptick in departures: while still far below pre-pandemic levels, labour migration from the Philippines has nevertheless picked up in 2021, with some 60,000 Filipinos on average leaving the country every month in the first half of the year.[409]

Australia's punitive asylum and immigration policies

Australia's treatment of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers has long been criticised for being in violation of international law. Despite being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, under the controversial Operation Sovereign Borders (also known as the "Stop the boats" policy) authorities continue to deny intercepted arrivals at sea the right to claim asylum in Australia itself by either turning them back to the country they departed

397 Human Rights Watch (2021) Malaysia: Raids on migrants hinder vaccine access.
398 Llewellyn, A. (2021) In COVID hit Asia, mixed messages on refugee vaccinations. Al Jazeera.
399 Illmer, A. (2020) Covid-19: Singapore migrant workers infections were three times higher. BBC.
400 Heijmans, P. (2021) Singapore keeps dorm migrants segregated even as Covid abates. Bloomberg.
401 The Economist (2021) Singapore's migrant workers have endured interminable lockdowns.
402 Mei, T.T. and Zhuo, T. (2021) Steps to ease movement curbs, boost well-being of migrant workers in the works: MOM. The Straits Times.
403 Al Jazeera (2021) Indian migrant workers at risk of being left out of vaccine drive.
404 Dutta, A. (2020) 198 migrant workers killed in road accidents during lockdown: Report. Hindustan Times.
405 Al Jazeera (2021) "Life is precious": India's migrant workers flee COVID-hit cities.
406 Goswami, S. (2021) Over 800k migrants left Delhi after lockdown announced: Govt. Hindustan Times.
407 Paliath, S. (2021) No savings, scanty jobs: Why second wave has been harder for migrant workers. IndiaSpend.
408 IOM (2021) Covid-19 Impact Assessment on Returned Overseas Filipino Workers.
409 Calonzo, A. & Alegado, S. (2021) Filipinos rushed home during the pandemic. Now they're going abroad, again. Bloomberg; and Ryan, H. (2021) Hundreds remain offshore eight years on. Canberra Times.

from or transferring them to offshore processing facilities, where they may be held for years while their claims are reviewed. An added challenge is that, following policy amendments in 2013, any asylum seekers sent offshore who are subsequently recognised as refugees face a lifelong ban on settling in Australia, so then need to be resettled in a third country. Just over 1,000 refugees have been resettled elsewhere, almost all of them in the US, another 1,000 are currently in mainland Australia, and over 200 remain in Nauru and Papua New Guinea.[410]

Numbers in immigration detention on the rise

Since 1992, Australia's migration policy had made it mandatory for anyone without a valid visa in the country to be detained until they are issued with a visa or deported from the country. A report published in 2021 by the Australian Human Rights Commission drew attention to the fact that, while in the United Kingdom, US, and Canada the numbers being held in immigration detention facilities had dropped significantly during the pandemic, in Australia the total had risen from 1,373 at the beginning of 2020 to 1,533 towards the end of the year, an increase of 11.7 percent. Furthermore, the period of detention in these centres had also increased, with the average stay reaching 641 days by March 2021—the longest on record. The report urged immediate action to reduce the number being held in these facilities to prevent their exposure to Covid-19, given the increased difficulty of social distancing in these crowded conditions. It also called on the government to close its facilities on Christmas Island,[411] where riots broke out among detainees in January 2021 in protest against the abusive conditions in which they were held.[412]

In April 2021, the Australian Medical Association published a statement urging an immediate end to the detention of refugees and asylum seekers, given the deteriorating physical and mental health many were facing. Importantly, it also called on the government to ensure they received appropriate care and support when released into the community.[413] Just before the statement was issued, in the first months of 2021, the government had unexpectedly released more than 100 refugees from holding facilities in Brisbane and Melbourne,[414] but without giving them any assistance to support their integration—despite the fact that some had been detained for the previous seven years.[415]

Dangers persist for asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea and Nauru

One of the most controversial aspects of Australia's asylum policy is its extensive use of offshore processing for asylum claims. Since July 2013, more than 3,000 people have been transferred to Nauru and Papua New Guinea (PNG) while their claims are reviewed by immigration authorities. This system has long been criticised as cruel and costly, with asylum seekers sometimes left for years in inhumane and abusive conditions.[416] While no longer held in detention centres, as was the case for the first years after offshore processing was reinstated, the approximately 230 asylum seekers still confined to Nauru and PNG face considerable dangers and have been subjected to repeated attacks, including an incident in April 2021 when an armed gang in the capital, Port Moresby stormed accommodation where asylum seekers were being housed and left four people seriously injured.[417] In October, the Australian government announced it would by the end of the year cease asylum processing in PNG, where 125 asylum seekers remain in Port Moresby.[418] Three options are now open to them, according to a joint statement: seek citizenship in PNG, await resettlement to the US, or transfer to Nauru for processing.

Refugee rights eroded further in Australia with new law

The swift passage of the Migration Amendment (Clarifying International Obligations for Removal) Bill 2021 into law in Australia in May, just weeks after it was first tabled in parliament, represents a further deterioration in the limited legal protections afforded refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in Australia. The new legislation allows the government to detain refugees indefinitely if their visa has been cancelled but they cannot be returned to their country of origin, and even to revoke recognition of a refugee's status.[419] Human rights groups have condemned the law for the lack of consultation preceding its approval and the troubling gaps it opened up in the rights of recognised refugees to protection under international law.[420]

410 Andrew and Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law (2021) Offshore processing: An overview.
411 Dinham, A. (2021) Report into COVID-19 risks in immigration detention urges shutdown of Christmas Island facilities. SBS News.
412 Rachwani, M. (2021) Christmas Island detainees riot and set fire to buildings in protest against conditions. The Guardian.
413 AMA (2021) Urgent action needed on refugee and asylum seeker mental health.
414 Eddie, R. & Dexter, R. (2021) 'We are out now': More refugees released from hotel detention in Melbourne. Brisbane Times; and Dennien, M. (2021) Almost 50 refugees released from Brisbane detention sites. Brisbane Times.
415 MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration—Asia: Q1 2021.
416 Human Rights Watch (2021) Australia: 8 years of abusive offshore asylum processing.
417 RNZ (2021) Australia needs to take action after an attack on refugees in PNG.
418 Kwai, E. (2021) Australia to Shift All Offshore Processing of Migrants to Island Nation of Nauru. New York Times.
419 Doherty, B. (2021) New law allows Australian government to indefinitely detain refugees. The Guardian.
420 Andrew and Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law (2021) Joint statement from refugee law organisations in response to the Migration Amendment (Clarifying International Obligations for Removal) Bill 2021.

After 10 months in office, the Biden administration has failed to live up to expectations it would reverse much of the Trump era's anti-migration, anti-refugee, and border control measures. Deportations, pushbacks, denying asylum-seekers access, separation of families, and prolonged detention continue to characterise the treatment of the many people trying to access the United States irregularly. In particular, a section of US legislation covering public health (Title 42) is still invoked in the context of Covid-19 to justify deportations and to restrict entry.

Photo credit: Vic Hinterlang / Shutterstock

Caravans comprising thousands of migrants moving north from the Northern Triangle into Mexico and onward towards the US made headlines in 2018 and 2019. In 2021, large groups of Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Guatemalans—and more recently Haitians—continue to try to move together, hoping to force the hand of any border control they encounter. Some 13,000 Haitians massed on the US-Mexican border in late September 2021, prompting a minor political crisis for the Biden administration as it tried to both manage irregular entries and reverse former President Trump's tougher border policies.

Section 2

The migrants' world

This section explores the experiences and context of those on the move in mixed migration. It features interviews with front-line practitioners and thematic experts as well as five first-hand accounts by refugees and migrants living in unexpected circumstances after having experienced "circumstantial migration", journeys which often did not go according to plan. This section also includes quantitative graphics and analysis drawn from MMC's unique 4Mi primary data-gathering programme, which surveyed thousands of refugees and migrants in 2021. This mix of the lived experiences of migrants and refugees, expert commentary, and statistical findings aims to situate those in mixed migration at the heart of this year's review.

From Ethiopia to Khartoum:
"I had to choose between money and safety."

I left my home country Ethiopia for political reasons. There were great tensions in Ethiopia in the early 1990's. Divisions were purely based on ethnicity, and I am Amharic myself. The situation became especially bad when the rebels from Tigray took Addis Ababa. One day, staff and a lot of students at the military academy where I had a civilian job decided spontaneously to leave for Kenya, and we coordinated this mass departure. In total, we left with around 11,000 people.

In Kenya, we coordinated as a community and planned to go back to Ethiopia to fight against the Tigrayans. We did not succeed, and after six years we decided to go to Sudan by plane.

I left Kenya for Sudan with two ideas in mind: coordinate with the opposition to combat the Ethiopian government or apply to UNHCR for refugee status and resettlement based on my political status. I went to Gedaref first when I arrived in Sudan, as I had heard that in the east in the camps it was better to get registered with UNHCR. They lost my file twice. How is it possible? After three years there I gave up on this and came to Khartoum in 2000.

In the beginning, I had no job, but later I created my own shop and started a family here, so I decided to stay. UNHCR eventually gave me refugee status and said they would update me about resettlement options later, but it never happened.

It has been very difficult for me to integrate in Sudan. I and my family are still considered outsiders. While some people are very hospitable, there are also very nasty people. We, as Ethiopians, have reached a point where discrimination is normal. For example, if a Sudanese were to steal from us, it doesn't make sense to go to the police station. The police officers will take the side of the [Sudanese] nationals and you will end up in trouble. Integration is particularly difficult from an economic perspective as well. Sudanese might tolerate you, but they will not tolerate when you are successful and have a good business. I started my own shop, and often received humiliating comments from them. A Sudanese neighbour told me once I should leave the shop to him as I am an outsider and that he would do a better job. At some point it became dangerous, as I started receiving threats. Once, someone came with a knife and that's when I decided I had to stop with the shop. My business was going well, and I had many customers, so this was a big disappointment for me.

I had to choose between money and safety. I got hired as a teacher, although I do not have the right qualifications for this. I am teaching history and family science. I feel safe and comfortable here, but I was making much more money with my shop. My earnings are not really enough to survive. If I need to, I can ask Ethiopian friends for help or a small gift, but I do it maybe once a year.

You always move because of rent. I live now in a compound together with four Ethiopian families. We have one room per family and share commodities. Sometimes a landlord forces you out by increasing the rent, which you cannot afford. This became much worse since the start of Covid. Before, landlords would tolerate it if you didn't make enough money one month. They would note down your debt and you could pay it later. Now, if you can't pay, you're out, as everyone is scrambling to make ends meet. There is also a cooking gas shortage in Sudan, and it's very difficult to find and expensive. Sometimes I see that a seller has it, but they tell me they won't give it to me as I am not Sudanese.

I don't feel very safe. The government changed after the revolution here in Sudan but there is still a risk for us Ethiopians to get arrested by the authorities. Khartoum is safer than other places in Sudan, though. In the East I think the risk to get arrested is bigger. I do feel safer in Khartoum right now than in Ethiopia. That's why I don't go back. Addis has not changed enough for me to go back.

Has my migration been successful? This is a very difficult question! Had I stayed in Ethiopia, I would have been a different person. I guess by migrating I have showed the world that the situation in Ethiopia is serious and we need help from the international community. This was the case in the '90s and is still the case now. I think by making other lives better, like in my job right now, my current situation is a success. I hope that with their education, the children will be ready to develop themselves after and to get a good life and job. I think education is the most important thing for becoming successful.

SUDAN

Khartoum

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia

Kenya

KENYA

Circumstantial migration

The concept of "circumstantial migration" emerged in 2020 to enrich migration theory and add nuance to the choice-constraint (or aspiration-capability) continuum.[1] It describes the serendipity and interplay of coincidence and context within migratory regimes. According to those who coined the phrase, "migrants' lives often take turns that result from neither decisive agency nor structural determination—and not even a combination of the two."[2]

"Circumstantial migration" is not so much a categorical designation of specific migrant groups or migration flows as an attempt to explain how migration plays out for individuals and groups as a lived experience. For the authors of the seminal research undertaken to illustrate an example of circumstantial migration—Gambian migrants in Guangzhou, South China—the context is understood to be the micro-level situations "in which chance events happen, and which contribute to determining their consequences."

The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) sees the concept as a useful descriptor of the journeys and experiences of those in mixed movements—both asylum seekers and so-called economic migrants—but it could also be applied to a wide range of displaced people and people on the move for a variety of reasons nationally and internationally. Thousands of surveys of migrants on the move conducted by 4Mi, MMC's long-term data-gathering mechanism, show that circumstantial migration is the volatile and often hazardous and unpredictable experience of many respondents. Some of the details of the findings from these surveys are presented in the 4Mi section of this review (see page 90).

Far from being able to execute clear plans of movement from origin to chosen destination, many refugees and migrants run into obstacles and opportunities, unforeseen hardships, criminality, officialdom, and multiple situations that oblige them or make them decide to change their plans. In this year's Mixed Migration Review we have included five stories (see Unexpected Circumstances' pages in Section 2) based on in-depth interviews with migrants and refugees that vividly illustrate the reality of circumstantial migration. Normalising the Extreme (page 200) details exactly the kind of obstacles, unforeseen contextual barriers, and abuse that those on the move often face. On the other hand, some irregular migrants may encounter unexpected opportunities that enable them to achieve their aims in surprising ways (Resisting the Extreme, page 209).

Circumstantial migration goes beyond the "conventional binary of origins and destination".[3] It offers us the chance to see circumstantial influences as a normal part of the migratory experience for many if not most people on the move and "invites examination of how plans and serendipities interrelate".[4]

1   Carling, J. & Haugenb, H. (2020) Circumstantial migration: how Gambian journeys to China enrich migration theory. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.
2   Ibid.
3   Ibid.
4   Ibid.

Migration through a Mexican lens

The myriad challenges faced by migrants once they reach the United States' southern border have received widespread media and cultural attention. Less well-known, despite often being more arduous and dangerous, are the ordeals migrants face earlier in Mexico, according to **Fernanda Valadez**, whose latest film explores the anguish of a mother searching for her missing migrant son.

Filmmaker Fernanda Valadez co-wrote and directed Identifying Features, *a drama released to widespread acclaim in 2020 about Mexican migrants who go missing during their journeys to the United States. Her previous films include* 400 Maletas (2014) *and* De Este Mundo (2010).

So much has been written about migration across the US-Mexico border. What did you think you could add to the migration story with your film *Identifying Features*?

When we were writing *Identifying Features*—and I say "we" because I co-wrote it with Astrid Rondero who's also a producer—we were trying to make sense of what was happening in Mexico in terms of violence. That was around 2010 to 2012. And we felt that the kind of violence we normally experience in Mexico—because we've always had drug cartels—changed in terms not only of quantity, but also in terms of quality. Researching around that violence, we felt we wanted to talk about migrants because migrants are one of the most vulnerable parts of that chain of violence. So we felt that in talking about migrants, but at the same time putting the focus on the mothers and relatives of the missing people and, in the case of our story, involving missing migrant young boys, we were approaching this phenomenon from the most vulnerable victims' point of view. Not only the migrants themselves, but also from the perspective of these activists and investigators, which is what the family of the missing people often become. In Mexico, the families of missing people have

become crucial to trying to change not only the judicial system, but also the way investigations are approached.

So, was making the film also a journey for you in understanding better the issues around migration and especially migration northwards towards the US?

Yes, but I'm also from Guanajuato, which is a state that every year ranks as one with the highest levels of emigration to the US, so migration is something that feels close to me. And in many communities in Guanajuato, there are no men, no adult men. There are children and women and old men and old women, but many of the men in the working stage of their lives have gone to the US, or at least to some other states inside Mexico. So that phenomenon always felt close to me. In Guanajuato, everyone has a relative or a friend that has crossed the border undocumented and is either still there or who has come back. We wanted to talk about migration from the perspective of the Mexican part of the journey, not so much in the US or after crossing the border, but the very difficult path of the migrants inside Mexico, which is almost an irony, because perhaps abroad or internationally, it feels like the difficult process begins once they cross the border and they are trying to

request asylum or to be granted special permission to remain in that territory. But the most dangerous path is inside Mexico.
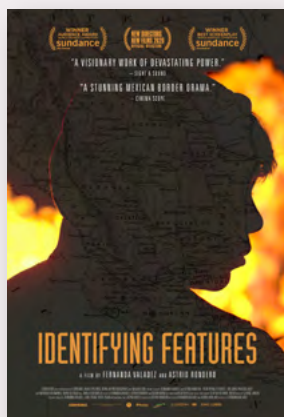
Your film follows one mother's search, but she is part of a larger social crisis. Is it the social crisis in Mexico that you are examining through the film, or are you really addressing border politics?

I think it's the social crisis. I think what is very interesting about migration is that migration is part of our essence as human beings historically and I think that remains to this day. And the thing about Latin America and Central America and Mexico in particular is that we have a social context that makes people want to leave. And not only want: many of them need to leave. Of course, there's also a cultural ingredient in some cases. For example, in Guanajuato, many people leave because of lack of opportunities, and danger because they're being recruited by cartels and their opportunities are really scarce. But it's true that some other young men want to leave because of this idea of the life they may have in America, and all those phenomena are intermingled.

> **In Mexico, the families of the missing people have become crucial to trying to change not only the judicial system, but also the way investigations are approached.**

In the last 10 or 20 years, have you seen the impact of narcos and the cartels in Mexico deteriorate public life and increase insecurity noticeably? How would you characterise their impact on your country?

I think these days in Mexico it's perhaps the most urgent issue that we have to fix. In 2010-2011, we noticed this change in the quality of violence. It's not only drugs; it's migrant trafficking and women trafficking, all kinds of sexual trafficking, and weapons trafficking, which in that case comes in from the US. Together, all this criminality and associated violence changed public life in Mexico. It was as if there was a parallel criminal state alongside the main state. The product that was being smuggled in Guanajuato—my home state and where the film was shot—was oil. In Guanajuato there is a big oil refinery, and many big pipelines going to the border pass through Guanajuato. So the cartel there specialises in the smuggling of oil and gasoline. And there was a government attack on the smugglers, and this very frontal attack, I think what it produced was

a dissemination of violence in the state. This always happens when the army confronts the cartels with full force. It's very complicated because they can remove the head of a cartel, but underneath there are dozens of people ready to take on—or to struggle within the cartel for—control of, in this case, the oil. So, in Guanajuato the violence, it's very sad right now. There are a lot of disappearances, a lot of killings, and it has to do with the control of the oil, and of course also of drugs, and cartels are struggling in that area.

> **In many communities in Guanajuato, a state that every year has the highest levels of emigration to the US, there are no adult men.**

The issue of caravans of migrants from Central America developed in the last two or three years. Can you explain that phenomenon?

When people need to leave, they will do anything in their power to better their lives, and to guarantee their security in the process. It's natural that those caravans exist because they are a response to the reality of violence inside Mexico: it's much safer to travel in groups than move independently and end up a victim of robbery, rape, or murder. A few years before the migrant caravans, we saw the "mothers' caravans"; that's the way they managed to travel from Central America to Mexico to demand that the police or the authorities solve the cases of their missing children. These were *las madres de los desaparecidos* ["the mothers of the disappeared"]. For them, it's like they have nothing else, nothing more valuable to lose. They are very bold and also desperate. They have already lost their children, so they're really willing to do whatever it takes to advance their investigations and their demands.

The US gets a lot of criticism for its tough border approach, but hundreds of thousands of undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans enter the US each year. How would Mexico react to a similar situation on their own borders? Do you have any sympathy with America's approach?

I wouldn't say sympathy. I would say I understand the complexities of any policy trying to approach and to deal with migration. What I think is, we have created a world in which merchandise can travel much more freely than people, and these are often the same people who work in the manufacturing of this merchandise, of these products. So for example, in the border regions, in Tijuana or Ciudad Juarez or in Tamaulipas, in many of these border states where the manufacturing companies are, one product—the parts, and cars, clothes, shoes, all kinds of products—can travel across the border many times before it is completed. And it's an irony that the people working in those societies where

those products are made cannot travel as freely. And what is even more ironic is that this same system that has created this complex world of free information and free trade is also responsible for the impoverishment and the extremes of our societies, the disparity. So I wouldn't say it's America's fault; it's a co-responsibility of all our societies.

Of course, Mexico has to deal with the system in which most crimes, more than 90 percent of crimes, go unpunished. In a country like that, it's impossible to have justice. How can you deal with violence when murderers walk free? That's crazy. But of course, we have to deal also with the pressure from the United States. What happened during the Trump administration was that the Mexican government was forced to change its policies towards Central American migrants. Reception and processing of asylum seekers has to take place in Mexico now, not the US. The United States threatened Mexico to force it to change its policy in exchange for trade in tomatoes and other products that are important for Mexico to export. It's complicated, of course, but I think what's in the centre of the complexities is not us as humans but merchandise and the interests of companies.

> **" We have a social context that makes people want to leave. And not only want: many of them need to leave. "**

In most films and books on cross-border journeys to the United States, it's implicit that the US is malicious and unethical in its border policies. But Mexico is an upper middle income country with good education and a long history of public institutions. Shouldn't it take some responsibility for what's going on domestically?

Of course, Mexico, with all this level of impunity, with the level of crime, with the disparities, the extreme disparities we have, is, like you say, a middle economy. It's among the 15 biggest economies in the world, so it should be, as a country, in a better position. It should provide for its people. It needs to provide education, it should provide justice, and it should provide opportunities. Of course, it's impossible not to say we are responsible for the situation of our country, but many of these phenomena we are struggling with— and I'm speaking particularly of drugs trafficking—it's a world phenomenon that cannot be addressed by one country alone. The drug business works like many other companies in terms of very complex processes all the way from production to distribution. There's a huge demand for drugs in the world, and there's also an international way for money to travel, an international way for weapons to arrive to Mexico. For example, weapons from the US travel freely to Mexico. There's this cartel now, Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación, which

is taking a lot of prominence in the last three-to-four years and is one of the cartels that is fighting for the territories in Guanajuato. They have access to weapons that only armies have. The manufacturers in the US are selling those weapons that can go through walls, through protected vehicles. The technology is [normally] only owned by national armies. But that cartel has that weapon, and it's unbelievable that they can acquire them in the United States to bring them to Mexico.

> **" When people need to leave, they will do anything in their power to better their lives and to guarantee their security in the process. It's natural that those caravans exist because they are a response to the reality of violence inside Mexico. "**

Why are there so many underage migrants from Mexico? Do many leave with their parents' consent, or are they often runaways, perhaps running away from poverty or neglectful parents or dangerous conditions?

I'm not sure if I can answer that. But what I can tell you about is the experience we had making this film. We interviewed a lot of young men we wanted to cast as possible actors, and many of them, most of them actually, had experience around migration because of living in Guanajuato and the communities they were living in. But one of them in particular, who became the character of Rico, at age 14, he made his first trip trying to cross the border at that time with his father. I think young boys, particularly boys at that age in those communities, they are considered almost full-grown men, and they also consider themselves ready to go to the border to work and contribute to their families. So that's very, very common. Many of those 14-, 15-, 16-year-old boys that we interviewed had personal experience of trying to cross the border or of their relatives [trying to cross]. Or at least they have the expectation of crossing once they finished high school or perhaps just to try to migrate. I think it's a common expectation because of that same lack of opportunities for them. Also, in most families, having a daughter or a son in college is very difficult because it implies losing an income. So those boys and those girls, but particularly the boys, they know they will have to go to work when they finish junior high or high school. So, even though the border has become increasingly difficult to cross, they think their better perspective is going to the US. The parents know, or sometimes they even encourage their kids to migrate, but also, I don't doubt there are many cases where young people leave without their parents' consent.

The official number of disappeared migrants in Mexico in 2020 was more than 73,000.[1] This is a huge figure. Even the infamous 2010 and 2011 San Fernando massacres and mass graves only accounted for a couple of hundred.[2] How do 73,000 people disappear?

Exactly. That's one of the main questions we had when we began researching, and that ignited our urgency to talk about violence in a film. What we began to suspect was that the massacres of San Fernando were all about people being subjected to kidnapping and extortion. Migrants travel with money and may have access to other money if extorted. Some get killed in the process. I think in this gang system human beings are just merchandise and commodities for the cartels. The migrants were also being subjected to forced recruitment by gangs. When we were reading, for example, that on the roads in Coahuila many professional engineers and chemists were being kidnapped, we were wondering why this particular kind of people were being taken. And if you think about it, of course, the cartels, as this almost parallel state, they have networks of communication, they have fields where they grow poppies for heroin and marijuana, and they have all these industrial processes that need people all the way to their armies. And I think the disappearances of migrants are connected to the chain of people needed in all these processes. People are being enslaved in their camps, people are being taken for sexual labour and people are taken for the armies and other people are just victims that very unfortunately were in the wrong place at the wrong time. So, there are all kinds of disappearances, I believe, in this context of organised crime.

> **We have created a world in which merchandise can travel much more freely than people, and these are often the same people who work in the manufacturing of this merchandise.**

Recent films about Latin American migration, like yours, or *Los Lobos* ("Wolves") by Samuel Kishi or *Darlin* by Isabel Castro, melt the migration statistics and numbers down to real stories and real heart-breaking detail. It changes the narrative completely. Was this part of your intention?

Well, the way I see it is that journalism has this very crucial task and mission in society to bring information that in many cases governments don't want published because that's the nature of power, the nature of

governments. The task or the mission of art is to approach all those social issues through a human and emotional perspective, and I think that compliments what journalism does: it puts individual faces on those statistics and on those facts. And I think both Samuel Kishi and myself, and everyone really dealing with these kinds of issues in film, that's what we want to do.

> **In a country like Mexico it's impossible to have justice. How can you deal with violence when murderers walk free? That's crazy.**

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1   AP (2020) Number of disappeared in Mexico rises to over 73,000.
2   AP (2014) Mexican Police Helped Cartel Massacre 193 Migrants, Documents Show.

From Afghanistan to Indonesia:
"We all have different journeys in life."
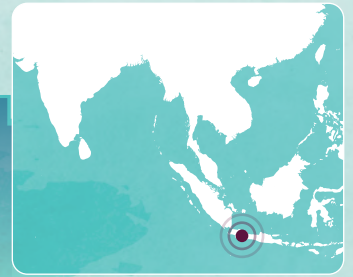
I am from Afghanistan, but I grew up in Iran as a refugee. My father was a Shia *mullah*. When the Taliban took over the country [in the late 1990s] and started killing Hazaras and those who were practicing other beliefs than theirs, my father brought us to Iran. After he passed away, my family moved to Australia, but I stayed in Iran, studying at university. Refugees in Iran do not have many job opportunities: they are only allowed to work in factories or construction. Studying in Iran is also very expensive as a refugee. Then I tried my luck to see if I could have a life back in Afghanistan, but there was nothing to do and no one there waiting for me.

We all thought we were going to die on the small, crowded boat I took from Malaysia to Indonesia. Our smugglers wanted to avoid a patrol boat but then got lost and we ran out of fuel and were stuck on the sea in pouring rain for 14 hours. People were baling out the water with baskets non-stop. The next day we were rescued by other smugglers. The whole trip cost $6,000, which I had to borrow.

First, I came to Bogor, the place with the biggest refugee community in Indonesia.[1] I was teaching English in my room, but after a year I realized there was no other opportunity for me, economically and socially, so I left for Jakarta in 2014 and have stayed here since then. I never thought I would be here for eight years. I always hoped to be resettled in Australia or go there with smugglers, but boat arrivals were forbidden, and I never got the resettlement.

I haven't made a family here and I live alone. I don't want to start a serious relationship when I am still a refugee. I just want to be resettled first and start a new life with more economic and social stability. In Jakarta, there are opportunities to make friends, build my social network and make a living. I found a lot of new friends from other countries here as well. With what is happening in Afghanistan, people usually ask me about the news. Talking to them really helps a lot. They show me that they care for me and my people, even before the Taliban's takeover.

Even though refugees are not allowed to work in Indonesia, opportunities come along. If you are active in looking for jobs, you will be able to make a living. I started multiple careers here, as an English teacher, gym trainer, model, and videographer. I started by talking to strangers at the mall. I told them that I was a teacher, and I could teach mathematics and English. Indonesian people are very friendly, and I could find some students that way.

Videography is my favourite thing to do of my different jobs. Videography is like writing. The feeling I have with my camera is like the feeling a writer has with their pen. You create something, you make a video, you share your thoughts and feelings. However I am not a professional videographer yet and I still have a lot to learn.

The lesson learned here is to not be scared. There were of course times when I thought it was impossible to continue my life, and there were times when I had to make risky decisions. For example, coming to Jakarta was very risky because the cost of living is much higher than Bogor, and what if I could not find a job? But every time I met a challenge, I told myself, "Don't be afraid. Take the risks. The solution will be on the way."

It takes a lot of courage, even to talk to people here. The good thing is the Indonesian people I met are very friendly and honest. For example, the manager of the gym in my building saw me running outside and let me use the gym for free. Back in Iran, I was not very social because most Iranian people discriminate against Afghans.

I wish I could encourage more people who are in a similar situation to mine. The problem is that living the life of a refugee for such a long time takes the courage from many people. I have talked to many refugees from Afghanistan here, but it seems like they no longer care about their lives. The situation drains them out, they don't see the point of doing anything.

I think we need to motivate ourselves no matter what situation we are in. There was a time I had nothing to do as well. I stayed at home for a few months, so I borrowed a guitar from a friend and started to practice the guitar around six to eight hours a day in my room. I don't think other refugees are lazy, they just lost their hope.

We all have different journeys in life. Sometimes, the journey is tough and not likeable, but at the end of the day, there will be a solution that is worth all the waiting and effort.

Iran
Afghanistan
Malaysia
Bogor

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1   The city of Bogor lies about 60km south of Jakarta.

Interview

No kind of home

Mohammad Ahtaram Shine never thought he would spend more than a few weeks seeking sanctuary in Bangladesh. Now, four years after fleeing for his life from his home in Myanmar's Rakhine state, he reflects on the challenges of life as a long-term and effectively stateless refugee and his yearning for his beloved homeland.

A Rohingya born in Myanmar's Rakhine state in 1996, poet, teacher, researcher, and writer, Mohammad Ahtaram Shine fled with his family to Cox's Bazar in neighbouring Bangladesh in 2017 amid a crackdown by the Burmese military.

When and why did you leave Myanmar?

On 5 September 2017, I left Myanmar's Rakhine state due to the brutal crackdown and mass killings by the military. They threatened to kill me and anyone they found in our village if we didn't leave the country. They accused all of us of being militants. We have been struggling for 70 years politically to get our rights in Myanmar, but we have failed. In 1962, the Burmese government started a systematic and preplanned political game, the so-called "slow-burning genocide", to exclude the entire Rohingya community from being full citizens of Myanmar. They persecuted us and denied our basic human rights. They prevented us from getting higher education. I finished high school in 2014 but was not allowed to go to university. Sometimes, they ambushed our homes and arrested and fined us, even though we had committed no crimes.

What is the history of Rohingya migration from Myanmar?

We have a saying that goes, "No one leaves the motherland until it becomes the mouth of a shark." It means no one chooses to leave their homeland unless things are very extreme. That's why Rohingya didn't start leaving our country before 1978. But in 1978, they started to arrest innocent Rohingya which made Rohingya people desperate to emigrate to the nearest country, Bangladesh. This was our first major migration. Later, in 1991, the Burmese government started collecting taxes and arresting innocent people again. The situation in Myanmar for Rohingya became very strained and difficult, both economically and in terms of personal security, and that's when the second major movement to Bangladesh happened. Then in 2012, the Buddhist authorities with the terrorist government murdered twelve Islamic philosophers from Myanmar's Muslim community. This sparked a complicated conflict between Muslims and other communities in Myanmar. In the following persecution and conflict, Rohingya were attacked from every side and many fled, again to Bangladesh. That was our third migration. Then since late 2016 government forces perpetrated ethnic cleansing and arrested millions of Rohingya. Many of those arrested have been killed and many others are still suffering in prison. Many people became homeless and helpless and had no choice but to become refugees. In 2017, the world witnessed the brutal and clear genocide on Rohingya. The world has now recognized 25 August, 2017 as a genocide day of Rohingya.

Did you witness any of the actions that caused people to leave Myanmar in 2017?

Yes, I witnessed them setting fire to Rohingya villages systematically one by one and accusing everyone they met of being militants and "fining" many Rohingya to get their hands on our money. They told us to leave the country. They also sent Rakhine anti-Muslim extremists as paramilitaries into our areas to kill and torture Rohingya in villages—but I did not witness that last part although I heard from other witnesses.

> " **We have been struggling for 70 years politically to get our rights in Myanmar, but we have failed.** "

What was life like in Myanmar for you and other Rohingya before you left?

They say, "If you want to know the fragrance of flowers, ask a bee. If you want to know taste of freedom, ask a prisoner. If you want to know the love of motherland, ask a refugee." Our life in Myanmar had the symptoms of heaven although we were persecuted. We enjoyed every second of our life there although there was no guarantee of security or safety. We want to return to our homeland as soon as possible despite it being a warzone. It is true that they tried to bury us. We are like seeds and we will grow again.

How are conditions where you live since you left Myanmar? What is camp life like?

In Myanmar our village life was friendly and sociable and very close-knit. People were really kind, generous and hospitable. But when we fled to Bangladesh in 2017, we got separated from our fellow villagers into different camp areas of Cox's Bazar. I live with my brothers and others from my village, but we haven't had the chance to reunite with all our community members at the same time in one place. My life is like a paralysed person's life. There is no freedom at all for Rohingya and the fence around the camp makes it like a cage.

Do you see evidence of trauma in the camp?

Mental health is the social or psychological wellbeing of a person. The stress level of a person rises when he encounters war, extreme poverty, violence, or natural disasters. Before migrating to Bangladesh, we experienced many traumatic situations, like burning homes, slaughter of babies, mass killing, sexual violence. Here we have all these memories but also now we have no occupation or income. We miss Rakhine State so much. We are isolated from our family and our community, so it's no wonder we see so much trauma and mental health issues here in the camp.

Do you ever hear of human trafficking? If yes, then who is doing the trafficking and what happens to those affected, according to what you know?

Yes, I have heard about human trafficking and have seen some events with my own eyes. There are many kinds of traffickers. They can include Bangladeshis, Rohingya Burmese people, and Rohingya diaspora. Together they have been convincing Rohingya camp residents and local Bangladeshis to go to Malaysia to register as refugees. None of the youth in the camp, either men or women, have work or education. There are no opportunities of any kind, and neither is there security or safety in the camps. That's why some people think they should migrate to other countries where they can get a chance of permanent settlement and job opportunities. They expect a better future in other countries. That's why they let their children go to Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the United States, Australia, et cetera., Females, especially, are sent to migrate for marriage although families find it very hard to pay the high cost.

> " **There are no opportunities of any kind, and no security or safety in the camps. That's why some people think they should migrate to other countries where they can get a chance of permanent settlement and job opportunities.** "

On the way, many females are sexually abused by traffickers and misused in other ways too. Male youths are brutally beaten if they can't pay the ransom quickly. Sometimes smugglers beat migrants when they fail to get off the boat when instructed. Many girls and boys perish on the boat journeys because of lack of food and water. Traffickers keep people without food to make them weak. They also keep people in small rooms, very crowded, without electricity and with few or no clothes. Females are kept separately and are sexually abused repeatedly. Sometimes they sell females to others as sex slaves or force them to marry if they are most beautiful. I have heard each trafficker has at least four or five wives.

We know all about these cases. I myself also am trying by any means to leave this camp. No matter wherever I end up or what happens to me, like most others I just want to leave.

Tell us about what you have experienced concerning migration from the camps and Bangladesh.

The desire to leave the camps is widespread. Everyone is looking for places where they will get permanent resettlement without oppression or discrimination and where they have better income and support. They go by boat or ship, even though there is tight security

blockading vessels. Because of the restrictions, many first go to India by train or foot, or back into Myanmar and then on to Malaysia. Already this year many people have migrated this way. Some others directly hired a small boat and set off from Bangladesh. Generally, females try to go to Malaysia or Indonesia because they have become engaged to marry there, but the majority of migrant boys do not have a specific place to go. They expect that they will obtain asylum wherever they reach because they know the international community sympathises with them and will provide settlement. That's why they set off without targeting any particular country.

Is it mainly young people who try to leave, or also older people and families? Do children and unaccompanied minors also try to leave?

Mostly female and male youths are trying to leave. There are also some families. Also, there have been many married men who have travelled abroad leaving their wives and children. Later, some of them try to bring their families with children and in these cases, some women and children have become victims of trafficking. Boys travelling alone are rare but there's a huge number of unaccompanied girls.

Are people successful generally when they try to leave, or are they mostly prevented?

In previous years, most people successfully arrived at their target country and a few were stopped by Indian, Bangladeshi, or Myanmar border security. But these days the Bangladesh government are trying their best to stop them by any means. Despite that, many refugees have gone secretly, by first walking through the India and Myanmar borders. Some of these people got to their destination safely without attracting the attention of governments or media. The media and reporters definitely don't get full information about the extent of migration. Probably 50 percent move completely secretly.

If people are stopped what happens to them? Are they punished or detained or what?

If Myanmar and Indian security catch or arrest them while crossing the border, they give harsh punishments, with jail sentences followed by deportation to Bangladesh. In 2018 and 2019, when the Bangladesh government stopped migrants, they did nothing and just let them return to their family. But from 2020 to now when they stop migrants, they detain them in Bhachan Char camp.

Do the smugglers discriminate between Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants / refugees?

I heard that there is not much discrimination between Rohingya and Bangladeshi on the boats, but they're treated differently in terms of what they pay the

smugglers. A Bangladeshi only needs to pay 30,000 takas ($350) but a Rohingya refugee needs to pay at least 250,000 takas (almost $3,000). A lot of the smugglers are criminals, but not all of them—some are just facilitators who help organize things. But those who run the boats, they are often human traffickers.

Generally, it costs a large sum of money for Rohingya to migrate and they pay it by selling gold, by taking out a loan or borrowing from neighbours, or getting diaspora people to help. At first, they have to pay 50,000 or 100,000 takas ($480 or $960) as an advance. When they get to Thailand or Indonesia or Malaysia, they pay the rest. If someone delays in paying after they arrive in Malaysia, the traffickers start torturing them in various ways. And, if they are stopped by the authorities, they never return the advance.

> **I am trying by any means to leave this camp. No matter where I end up or what happens to me, like most others I just want to leave.**

Have you tried to migrate?

I really want to migrate, but my family didn't allow me to migrate by boat because it is the most risky and dangerous way. I once wanted to migrate by plane with a fake Bangladeshi passport, but I failed because it costs too much. I don't have any way of raising such a large sum. Fake passports cost at least 500,000 takas ($4,800).

Does anyone believe that it's safe to go back to Myanmar?

No one feels that Myanmar is a safe place for Rohingya even though many are dying to return to that unstable region. No one is genuinely working for a possible repatriation with full basic rights. Humanitarian agencies are only working to get more funds from the international community to earn money through refugees. And human right groups are not taking any immediate action against the Myanmar government mainly because they see it as a Muslim community's issue. They are just playing with us. Because of all this, people are thinking it would be better to go to Myanmar and accept whatever the government there offers. Most people are saying that they would at least be able educate their children and become an owner of their own home if they return as opposed to staying in camps endlessly.

Are there still many Rohingya in Myanmar who did not come to Bangladesh? How are they living there?

There are some Rohingya in Myanmar, but they hardly survive under the hand of the dictatorship there, where

it is like an open prison. The Bangladesh government is not giving them asylum and the Myanmar government does not let them move freely from one town to another. They also do not get facilities to do business. They do not even have a hospital for medical treatment. They are living as a fish without water. They are living as birds without a nest. They are walking as a disabled without a supportive stand. You know, they are living by paying taxes to Arakan Army. Every new day, a Rohingya is killed there. Their lives in Myanmar are not safe at all. So many are trying to migrate and risking their lives.

Have the United Nations or other agencies been trying to persuade Rohingya to go back to Myanmar? Do you trust the UN or other big agencies and authorities around the issue of returning to Myanmar?

In 2019, there was an agency that tried to persuade Rohingya to go back in Myanmar, but nobody agreed. We don't trust anyone about going back, especially the UN because they failed to provide our rights according to their agreement with Myanmar on a previous repatriation. Our repatriation is not succeeding because of China and Russia and their veto power.

Myanmar authorities have said it was safe for you to return to Myanmar, the same authorities who were instrumental in forcing you to leave the country. What do you think about that?

There are some strategies on this point. They are trying to avoid international pressure and want to hide their crimes. The political game of the Myanmar government can also be called dirty politics. They don't have transparency. Also, many states have become war zones since the recent military coup. So, the talk of it being safe is nothing but rumours and propaganda. But of course we want to return to our homeland if our demands are satisfied. Not only me but also all of our community are waiting to be repatriated if and only if our demands are fulfilled. Repatriation along with the fulfillment of our demands is a general wish of many people.

> **If you want to know taste of freedom, ask a prisoner. If you want to know the love of motherland, ask a refugee.**

Do you think you will be refugees for a short or long time?

When we took the decision to flee, we thought it might be very short-term. We mainly intended to escape a few days until the situation became calm, but we did not expect to become refugees. We did not expect that we would stay even six months. Otherwise we would

never have fled even if we faced death at the hands of the military.

If the situation is not resolved, do you think more people will take desperate measures to migrate?

In a community, there are different kinds of people: some are mature, some are educated, some are passionate, and some are impatient. We can say that the impatient may create some problems because they will try to return without waiting for a long-term solution. But they will not be successful as they will be very few.

Do you feel there is a risk that the situation of the Rohingya refugees will be forgotten by the world?

It makes no different whether the international community forgets our crisis or not because we know very clearly that they will do nothing for us. They are experts at playing with Muslim minorities and there is no time in history that they have ever solved a single refugee's crisis anywhere. Somehow, I do trust Bangladesh, and Turkey and Malaysia, that they will never forget us and will always support us and intervene in our crisis. I want to appeal to the international community and the Bangladesh government to have an alliance with camp-based civil society groups to reduce smuggling, human trafficking, and child marriage, and to educate Rohingya children. I want to mainly ask the international community to help us for a voluntary repatriation with our rights. I also want to appeal to the international community to pressure the Myanmar government to restore our justice and freedom.

> **No one feels that Myanmar is a safe place for Rohingya even though many are dying to return.**

From Cameroon to Mali:
"I couldn't have dreamed of anything better."

Mali had never been in my plans. I come from Mokolo in the extreme north of Cameroon, but am now a naturalized Malian citizen. I arrived here in July 2006.

The main reason I left Cameroon was because I was a footballer. I played in various clubs in Cameroon and in Gabon but wanted to go to Europe because talent is more marketable there. Leaving my child and his mother behind, I first went through Nigeria and Benin to Togo. I tried to play but there it did not pay enough. Through a recruiter, I then played for a season with a first division club in Benin. That's where I met someone I knew from Cameroon called FN, and it's with him that I travelled the rest of the journey to Bamako.

First, FN and I went to Niger, where we joined the Aigles d'Agadez football club to earn a bit of money before heading on to Algeria after a year. A few months later we went on to Morocco. But in 2005 they were chasing down migrants there, acting as Europe's policemen. We lived in the forest in flimsy huts the police kept destroying. To eat, we would rummage through garbage bins or beg. Then they sent us back to Algeria, from where we were also deported.

When Algeria deports people, it puts them in prison. If you are caught in Algiers, they take you from town to town and hold you in prisons until quotas are filled, at which point you are taken to the next town. The last one [before the border] is Tamanrasset, where there is a large *refoulement* centre where people are held for up to two or three weeks. It's more of an open-air jail. There are no mattresses, you sleep on cardboard boxes, the showers are mixed with the toilets, women and men are not separated. You are given two loaves of bread and a litre of milk for two days. Then they put you in closed trucks, as if you were animals in cages, and take you to the border. When they stop, it's only for a minute or two to pee. During one stop, FN fell asleep and we almost left him behind.[1] I will never forget these things.

We were taken to Tinzawaten, a desert border settlement in the far northeast of Mali. From there, we had to beg smugglers to take us to Kidal because we had no money. It is only thanks to God that we did not die on that journey. From Kidal, we travelled to Gao and then on to Bamako. Even there it was not easy because we had no contacts.

For a while I lived in a "ghetto" in Bamako. This was an abandoned building with about eight rooms and there was no water or electricity. Migrants of all nationalities who had been deported were living there. There were eight, ten or fifteen people per room and we split the rent. People got sick and some died without any support. There were a lot of police raids. The neighbours used to call the police, calling us criminals.

There was no one to speak on our behalf. So in November 2006 we decided to form an organisation to assist deported Central Africans living in Mali, called ARACEM.[2] People were suspicious of us at first and thought this project was just a way to make money to migrate. But we built up trust and found partners. Today ARACEM is a reception centre that takes care of people, whether they are in transit or returning. The assistance we provide is protection in the broadest sense. It includes reception, accommodation, food, health, etc. This is the most positive thing I have had in my life.

I have always remained a footballer at heart. Ten years ago I even created a football team here in Bamako, to give young people a chance, because I said to myself if I didn't have this chance, why not try to help these young people because today there are opportunities. It's true that I couldn't achieve my own dream, but I would like to help other young people to achieve theirs. The team didn't work out in the end because there were too many bad people. But two years ago, I finally created a club in Cameroon and it's still going well. It's very important to me to give a chance to young people who want to succeed.

As for me, I now have a family with children who go to school. I couldn't have dreamed of anything better.

Giving advice is complicated because if you advise a young person to stay put, you have to give them solutions to make a life for themselves. I would say, be determined in what you do because when you have objectives and you find yourself facing obstacles, you must not give up. Know that you can make your life everywhere, not only in Europe.

1   FN now plays football with a minor club in southwest France.
2   Association des Refoulés d'Afrique Centrale au Mali

Interview

Exodus redux

The conflict that broke out in Ethiopia's Tigray region last year has triggered a fresh movement and new routes of migration from neighbouring Eritrea, explains **Meron Estefanos**, who reckons that country's "brutal" dictatorship and extensive national service obligations have prompted half the population to flee. And for those that reach Sweden, whose citizenship Meron holds, they won't find the "happy multicultural society" many make it out to be.

Meron Estefanos is a Swedish-Eritrean human rights activist, journalist and the co-founder of the Stockholm-based International Commission on Eritrean Refugees. She hosts "Voices of Eritrean Refugees", a weekly radio program. Her work related to the kidnap-for-ransom of Eritreans in Sinai, was the subject of a 2013 documentary film entitled Sound of Torture.

How would you characterise the regime in Eritrea, and why is it persisting after all these years? When do you think it'll change?

First off, I do not believe that this regime can change. It is way too late for anything to change because the damage has been done, and probably half of the population has fled. It is hard to understand the regime. Mainly it's one man that rules everything. And so whatever mood he's in, that's where the decisions follow. I mean, look at it right now, when the whole world is suffering because of the pandemic, Eritrea is the only country that rejected the PPE that was donated to African countries. And now with Covax, African countries are struggling to get vaccines, and Eritrea is the only country that rejected the vaccines because our leader does not want to talk to the World Health Organization director, Dr. Tedros [Adhanom], who is Tigrayan.

At the geopolitical level, who is supporting Eritrea? How is it able to survive?

Eritrea is desperately poor, but you have to understand, at least 35 percent of the income comes from remittance from outside, from the diaspora. The government have their way of controlling the people abroad. Because if you are an Eritrean living abroad you have to pay two percent of your income [as a] tax [to the state of Eritrea], wherever you are in the world. Of course, they have the backing of UAE and Saudi Arabia. Nobody knows what the relationship is.

Do you think there are *mixed* migration flows from Eritrea, or should all people coming from Eritrea be regarded as refugees or asylum seekers?

Often what I see with Eritrean refugees is that they do not know about their rights, so they do not know how to categorise themselves. Some might say, "I left my

country because there is no work". But why isn't there work? If a woman flees, it is because her husband is in the military, and she cannot afford to feed her kids. When an unaccompanied minor, a seven-year-old child, flees by himself, it is because he sees his father is in the military, his grandfather is in the military, his older siblings are in the military. He knows that in a few years, that is his life too. Therefore, the kids are so realistic, even though they cannot describe in words why they are leaving. Whether we like it or not, it is the political situation that is making these people leave. So I do not believe there are economic migrants, no. If half of the population are still fleeing, even though there is a shoot-to-kill policy at the border, that should tell us something because people are saying, "It's better I get shot at the border than dying inside the country. It is better that I die in the Mediterranean Sea than dying with the regime and becoming a slave for the rest of my life."

> **" Whether we like it or not, it is the political situation that is making these people leave Eritrea. So I do not believe there are [Eritrean] economic migrants. "**

What about the conscription laws? Weren't they being reviewed and stopped a few years ago? What happened to that?

Conscription never stopped. In recent years the Eritrean president's advisor has been traveling a lot to EU countries and promising that they are going to end the national service, and that they were going to reduce it to a year and six months like its original plan.

Right now, it is indefinite. It has not stopped. My brother has been in the military for more than two decades. He was only 15 when they took him. He had only two weeks of military training and was then sent to war with other children of the same age.[1] He was the only one that came out alive from that group that was sent to war at that time. Through all these years, we were begging him to flee, that he should leave like everybody else. Instead, he said, "No way. I am getting discharged; I am leaving the country legally. There is no way I am fleeing, after all this." When the peace deal came, finally my brother thought, "Oh, finally now we are getting discharged." Thus, when the military had a meeting with the conscripts, all the conscripts were asking the same thing: 'Okay, now it's peace, do we go home, are we going to get discharged?" Guess what they told

them. They said, "Nope, now you're needed more than ever." So my brother, at last understood that he was just wasting his life waiting to be discharged, so he finally fled to Tigray [in northern Ethiopia].

Now because of the conflict there, my brother has fled from Tigray. When he reached Uganda, the smugglers that smuggled him out wanted more money, and they held him hostage for a week. This just happened three weeks ago.[2] I had to use all my connections and friends. I think they understood the consequence waiting. I had to threaten them, and at last they got him out.

Until recently, some European countries tried to recategorise Eritrea as a country where asylum seekers could be returned to. Can you tell us more about this?

There was this Danish report some years ago that was very controversial.[3] It was a commission that visited Eritrea, and they came back and said it was not so bad after all, then later on, all the writers of the report resigned because they said, "We didn't say that." So everything they said was actually written in the opposite. It was a sham. And that report was supposed to be discarded but it wasn't. Then unfortunately, you have countries like Israel that are still using the Danish report as a valid report.

Eritrea is still under a brutal dictator, and a very oppressive government. Nothing has changed, so I don't see what has changed for people to think it's OK now to send Eritreans back to Eritrea, like what Denmark is planning.[4]

President Isaias Afwerki sees Eritrea, the country, as his personal belonging. He feels, "I freed this country", even though it is a lie. He didn't free the country alone because there were 65,000 martyrs during 30 years of struggle for our liberation, for Eritrean independence [from Ethiopia]. In my family, four of my uncles were martyred for Eritrea. My dad lost four of his brothers.

During the war for independence, when they were rebels, Isaias killed most of the educated ones. The majority of those that were highly educated were killed by his inner circle, starting from the 1970s and the '80s. So he kept eliminating people as he was leading the liberation movement. He also kept his old habits even after independence. Most of the higher officials that liberated Eritrea with him, have now either disappeared or died in prison. I really don't understand his way of thinking. The only thing I understand is that this man

1 Ethio-Eritrea war (1998-2000)
2 During late May 2021
3 Danish Immigration Service (2014) Eritrea – Drivers and Root Causes of Emigration, National Service and the Possibility of Return. Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process. See also: The Local (2014) Danish report on Eritrea faces heavy criticism; HRW (2014) Denmark: Eritrea Immigration Report Deeply Flawed.
4 TRT World (2021) Denmark passes law to deport asylum seekers outside Europe despite outcry.

hates people. His only mission is to destroy the country and its people. He is saying, "I'm going to destroy you before I go, before I die."

In the past, UNHCR has used figures as high as 5,000 people leaving Eritrea each month. What's your assessment now of how many people are leaving these days?

Now the number fleeing Eritrea is a lot because of the Tigray conflict. So now what Tigray did is, it has created a new movement of migration. Because first, the border is being controlled by Eritrean troops. So it was easy for a person in Asmara to pay a fixer and tell him, "Get me to Ethiopia." If I pay $2,000, I can get to Addis easily or to Mekele in Tigray and from there I can take a bus. And so the only way out recently was through Tigray. Eritreans are fleeing via Ethiopia, to Sudan, but not to Khartoum the way they used to do before. So now, the migration has shifted. So my assessment is that the numbers arriving in Sudan, and in Ethiopia are at their highest ever for Eritreans. Everybody from the age of 30 has left the country, up to 55 or 60. So if you look at the Eritrean military who were stationed in Tigray, for example, you will see people 20 and under, or 50 and above. So that important age, the golden age, they have disappeared from the country.

> **If half of the Eritrean population are still fleeing, even though there is a shoot-to-kill policy at the border, that should tell us something, because people are saying, 'It's better I get shot at the border than dying inside the country'.**

What is happening in Eritrea right now, there is a clandestine protest of parents. Eritrean parents are protesting by sending all their kids abroad. Because when the Tigray war started, and even before it started, they started rounding up the 15-year-old kids that could not go to school because they closed down the school because of Covid for over a year. Therefore, children are playing outside when they do not have anything to do. This became a good way to abduct these children and send them to war. So at least 40 percent of the soldiers in Tigray are child soldiers. For this reason, there are no 15-year-old kids left in the country. Now parents are afraid that they're going to go after children aged 14 and 13 and 12. All the parents in our area, they will talk together and organise themselves. Before, nobody trusted his neighbour. Parents used to decide alone and sent their kids without telling anyone. Now, people are organising and discussing about this and saying, "Let's send our kids together so that nothing happens to them on the way. It's safer if they are a larger group." That is how they feel.

Thus, when parents are organised like that, that means the migration is going to continue because right now, the rate, as you see, we Eritreans have been one of the largest refugee-producing countries, just like Syria and others, per capita, of course.

Young Eritreans are making use of "the zero down-payment" plan that the smugglers give. This plan gives one the option of paying once he reaches his destination. So, for this reason, most of the youngsters do not even discuss with their parents or anybody, they just flee. As I mentioned, now parents are involved, it adds more migration than ever before. Therefore, what we see from Eritrea is people are fleeing like never before. People are arriving in Uganda like crazy too. The migration to Uganda has increased a lot in the past three or four months. If you look at the people that are crossing to Uganda, these are people from the Hitsats and Shimelba refugee camps in Tigray, the two camps that were destroyed.

So you think the ongoing exodus from Eritrea is higher than it was even 10 years ago?

Much, much higher, yes. And this is very underreported in the international news because the thing is, everybody that's arriving in Ethiopia, they cannot ask for asylum. So that's why it's not documented. So I have many friends right now in Addis that feel unsafe, and don't know what to do. They don't know where to seek asylum. Some are opposition figures, who have been criticising the Eritrean government. And now they are in Addis, and they don't know what to do, and they are so afraid. So they're just locked in a room and afraid to go outside, because basically, the Eritrean government is everywhere in Ethiopia right now because they're running all the borders, the checkpoints in all sides in Ethiopia right now, it's being run by Eritrean soldiers. There's a daily round-up in Addis, and it's done by Eritrean soldiers.

So Eritrean soldiers are the ones helping Abiy [Ahmed, Ethiopia's prime minister] in Oromia, in Benishangul-Gumuz region, in Tigray, and at the border of Sudan. This has been taking place since the conflict with Tigray started [in November 2020]. So slowly, Eritrean soldiers have been moving into Ethiopia, so there is virtually no military in Eritrea right now. Everybody's in Ethiopia.

I am interviewing many soldiers who have deserted recently, and they are telling me that Eritreans are conducting most of the war in Tigray. Because the agreement between the Eritrean president and the Ethiopian prime minister is that the Eritrean soldiers first liberate some villages and cities in Tigray and then the Ethiopian soldiers enter the village and then control the city or the village that the Eritreans liberated. Ethiopia has now become the new smuggling hub, which Khartoum used to be. Now Addis is the migration hub. If you want to go to Libya, you will get there from

Addis. The same people will take you to Moyale, and then they will separate into groups. Those that cross to Uganda and others going to Libya are separated, even though inside Libya and crossing the Mediterranean is still very dangerous for them.

The smugglers, of course, have people that work under them. They're good at spreading rumours and claiming the road to Libya has opened, or the sea crossing has started, or this smuggler or that smuggler is really good, his road is much safer, spreading this kind of misinformation. Concerning the refugees that came from Hitsats and Shimelba, there is a new kind of smuggling from Uganda to Libya, because there are too many Eritreans in Uganda. Therefore, the smugglers have now started a trip from Uganda straight to Libya.

Concerning ransom payments in the past and today, why were they so much higher for kidnapped Eritreans? And who were paying the ransoms?

When the kidnapping in Sinai started, it was $2,000 per person. People were not even talking about it because it was small amounts, and so families wouldn't even share this with anybody. But then it rose to $4,000, $8,000. When I started to get involved it was $8,000, and then rose again up to around $20,000 per person. Later it became crazy. In some places they were asking $65,000 and the highest it went to was $70,000 for one person. When it comes to the Sinai kidnapping, the majority of ransoms were paid by Eritrean refugees in Israel from the money they get from doing domestic work and construction.

Those Eritreans in Israel save money by sharing: eight or ten people sharing a very small room and they have no expenses at all. Because they are working 16, 18 hours a day, six days a week. So they do not spend, they keep their money. In addition, they are afraid to put their money in a bank, because the Israeli government was taking 20 percent of their salary, and because they can get it [their money] only when they leave the country for good. Therefore, for many reasons, they have hard cash. The ones in Israel have cash at hand, and so they are the ones that have been saving and paying the majority of the ransoms.

I still get phone calls from family members. Just last week, somebody in Sweden was calling me, and her brother had left from Uganda and was telling her he's kidnapped somewhere on his way to Libya. And what else can the family do but to pay the ransom that was demanded? Because there's no one to turn to. We know that paying ransoms will mean more people will get kidnapped, but how do you say to your loved one, "Sorry, I'm not going to pay for you"? If my brother was

kidnapped in Sudan instead of Uganda I would have paid because they are more ruthless in Sudan— they would have just taken him to Libya or just sold him or killed him.

In relation to African migrants and refugees being kidnapped, you once said, "No one cares about Africans." Can you explain what you meant?

For me, it's purely racism. I will give you some examples. When I was reporting on the Sinai kidnapping, at least 2,000 Eritreans were arriving on a weekly basis in the Sinai, and a large number were being kidnapped. This was around 2012. And at that time, there were several incidents of kidnapping of Westerners. The first case was two Americans that were in the area, they got kidnapped, and they were released within 48 hours. The American government and Egyptian government had some kind of deal. I do not know if they paid ransom or whatever, but they got them released. So it makes you wonder, how is it possible that they can free these people within two days? Moreover, for all the years have I been talking to the State Department and other government authorities there was no interest about saving Eritreans.

> **" Eritrea is still under a brutal
> dictator. Nothing has changed, so I
> don't see why people think it's OK now
> to send Eritreans back to Eritrea,
> like what Denmark is planning. "**

Then a Norwegian woman was kidnapped, and an Israeli man was kidnapped, but they also were released because of intervention. Nevertheless, once Eritreans are outside their country the international community has an obligation, I believe. If you see somebody is drowning, you have to rescue, that is your duty to rescue that person, right? What about me, as a Swedish citizen. When my cousin was kidnapped and I tried to report it I did not get any help from the Swedish authorities. But if I was white Swedish, and let's say my cousin was kidnapped in Egypt, of course, I would have received help, even if the cousin is not a Swedish citizen.

Look at Alan Kurdi.[5] What better example do you need? When we saw the body of Alan Kurdi, everybody, the whole world reacted. Why? Because he was a white kid, he was a light-skinned kid. However, how many babies have we seen drowning in the Mediterranean Sea in the South Zone? I mean Eritrean babies have drowned on their way to Italy, but we have not seen any kind of outrage because it is just that people are literally used

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5   Alan Kurdi was a three-year-old Syrian refugee who drowned off the coast of Turkey in September 2015 together with his mother and brother. Images of his lifeless body washed up on a beach went viral globally and intensified international attention on the so-called "refugee crisis."

to dehumanising the darker skin. You feel less sympathy for the darker skin than you do for the light skin. Unfortunately, that is the reality. So to me, this is purely racism, this is about people that do not mean anything. Eritrea is not an important country; we don't have any resources that other countries care about. Even the UN did not do anything about the kidnapping. One of the biggest problems at that time was the UNHCR denying that there was kidnapping. It took them three, four years to admit that there was a kidnapping happening in Sudan. That itself is racism.

You are involved with the International Commission on Missing Persons. Isn't it better to focus on the living than trying to identify those who died? Why are you interested in that?

I am involved because I get many phone calls from mothers whose sons disappeared in 2002, 2005, 2007, and just because it happened 14 years or 15 years ago, the parents never give up because they need closure. Do you remember the case of the ghost boat?[6] It was late June in 2014: 197 Eritreans and 43 Sudanese left from Libya. No one knows what happened to them, till this day, nobody knows. We now presume they drowned, but it was a strange case because nothing was found, no bodies or debris from the boat, just nothing. But we have the names of all those on board.

> " **What we see from Eritrea is people are fleeing like never before.** "

What's really unique with this case is normally boats do sometimes disappear and families give up, but with this case, what's weird is they keep getting phone calls from people that claim, "your loved ones are in Tunisia", or "your loved ones are in this country or that country". So I searched for them for almost a year, and I also went to Tunisia, six months after they disappeared. We heard that they were in detention in Tunisia, and someone was asking their family members for money to release their loved ones. I saw the whole of Tunisia, from north to south, from east to west, drove everywhere, visited every detention centre, and we could not find them. However, there was one smuggler that was involved, and we heard that he had come to Italy, and from Italy, he got to Germany, and asked for asylum in Germany. I left a message for him on my radio program saying, "I know you're in Germany, I know you are involved in this boat, and I need to speak to you, so if you hear this message, please call me on this number." And I left my number in my program. And surprisingly, the smuggler called me. Italy decided to prosecute him after he did the interview with me, and he did another interview with an Italian journalist, and so he got extradited from Germany

to Italy. And guess how much they gave him? He got only two years. He served his time, and he is a free man living in Italy right now. But we still know nothing about the ghost boat and the passengers. This International Commission on Missing Persons is important: we cannot just forget those who disappeared or died.

There seems to be a contradiction in the asylum decisions of many European countries who give Eritreans asylum. It is as if they are saying, "we'll give you asylum, but first you have to walk across Africa to come to us." But they won't help them come to Europe.

Yes, it's like a lottery: if you manage to go through all this suffering, and then you win the lottery, then you get the prize of asylum. However, that is also not the whole story. Integration is not going so well. For example, in Sweden, there is a study that they do every year on new arrivals and about integration. I look at the report, and I sometimes laugh, because it is always claiming that Eritreans are the most integrated refugees in Sweden. But really, it depends on how you look at integration. I mean the way the government looks at integration is just, the one that gets a job the fastest, he is integrated. Even though Eritreans have been coming to Sweden for more than 100 years. For the last 40 years or 45 years, most Eritreans [in Sweden] work in one of two jobs: as cleaners or as carers in retirement homes. At the same time, the majority of Eritrean refugees, 10 years [after arriving in Sweden], still need a translator to translate things for them, because they don't go to school, they don't speak the language. So that's not really integration to me, but for the government, it's good enough because they're not on welfare or anything. They come, within two weeks, three weeks, they already have a job, and they start contributing to this society. In addition, many newly arrived mothers and fathers have their children taken away by social services. I get many phone calls about this problem. Sweden is not the happy multicultural society people think it is and you see a lot of discrimination. Somehow the system is very judgmental to parents that are non-Swedish. Automatically there is that generalisation of belief, "You are an immigrant, of course you are probably a bad parent that's going to hit your children" etc. All these traumatised refugees that have gone through hell, they need psychological help. Now, okay, it's free to go to see a psychologist, but if you don't know the language, you are going to depend on a translator. A majority of the women and men that were raped in Libya or in Egypt, they do not talk about their problems. So often what happens is when there are holidays, that's when they commit suicide. So we have a very high rate of suicide. And to me, that's a failure of the European system that's receiving us.

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6   For a 10-part investigation into this episode, see: Reidy, E (2014) Ghost Boat. Medium.com

It's a very unjust system, and right now, with the right wing growing... Although I have always felt Swedish having grown up here, I'm not feeling it anymore, I'm in the process of looking for a country to move out of Europe, actually to go to Africa. I'm fed up with the racism here.

Can you see rising discrimination linked with the rise of the Swedish Democrats?

Yes, the Swedish Democrats. But it's not just them. Look at with the pandemic, the way it was managed. Sweden was being hailed as though they did something great, but what happened is, so many of those that died were immigrants. If you look at the rate, it wasn't Swedish that died, the majority were immigrant communities.

> **"Ethiopia has now become the new smuggling hub, which Khartoum used to be. If you want to go to Libya, you will get there from Addis."**

If you go to restaurants in the city, you will see more control, like there are controls that come and check if the tables are separated and things like that. But if you go to those areas where there is only immigrants, the restaurants there, nobody comes and checks them. So you will see it like normal, that there is no pandemic, that's how it looks like if you go to the restaurant in the ghetto area or low-income area, then nobody really cares, nobody comes and checks on them, if they have separated the seats, if they are really ready to manage the Covid situation in the country. So it just shows you there's a lot of neglect when it comes to schooling, when it comes to all other things. What we see is a big segregation right now. And I've always defended Sweden, but me, even me, I'm feeling it. And the first time in my life, I'm imagining now a life outside of Sweden, even though my dad is here, my brother is here, this has always been home, but it doesn't feel like home.

Why should Europe be the solution to Africa's refugee problems caused by wars and governance failures? Isn't there a strong argument for African refugees to remain in Africa?

Yes, but African solutions to African problems don't exist because of the mess that Europeans left. If we go to each country in Africa, whatever conflict that they have, it comes from what the colonisers left behind. Also, who's supporting different groups, and who's dealing with the repressive governments? There is a new colonisation in Africa by Europeans right now. When you are paying different regimes to keep people away so that they don't come to Europe, you're colonising people's movement. For me, it's a new modern way of colonising people. When you think the EU has been

giving aid money to Eritrea until 2021! The EU knows the situation in Eritrea and even though they have the Cotonou Agreement, where you're not supposed to fund a country that does not respect human rights, they are ignoring their own rules when it comes to keeping refugees and migrants away. And by giving aid money to Eritrea, you're just prolonging the suffering of my people. So you cannot tell me, "Oh, we're not involved!" You are, because you are feeding him [Eritrea's president] money, and that money is sustaining the regime. It's not going to go to my people. It never goes to the people. It's just empowering these dictators in Africa, that's what I see. And so for that reason, I do not believe it's African problems, it's a European problem. And secondly, as long as these countries are a signatory of the Refugee Convention, they have no right to tell me we're not to seek asylum. Everybody has a right to seek asylum where they feel safe. And this is what people are forgetting: that it's everybody's right, whether it's in Europe or in Africa, I should be able to seek asylum where I feel safe.

What would happen if you returned to Eritrea, what would happen to you?

I would get killed, of course. I wouldn't arrive in my home, and they would take me from the airport, and I don't know where they would take me, I would just disappear.

> **"Eritrean babies have drowned on their way to Italy, but we have not seen any kind of outrage because people are used to dehumanising the darker skin."**

Missing migrants, respecting the dead, and extraordinary forensics

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), at least 75,000 people have died globally since 1996 while migrating, more than 40,000 of them since 2014.[1] In the Mediterranean, almost 23,000 have gone missing since 2013.[2] These are conservative estimates: everyone expects the real figures to be considerably higher.[3] More accurate figures are impossible to come by, however, because many cases are not reported and because of the "extraordinary difficulty in gathering accurate information and data."[4]

IOM set up its **Missing Migrants Project** in 2014 to provide the first centralised database of reported migrant deaths and disappearances around the world. The project also publishes a range of reports whose topics include the identification of missing migrants and the challenges and coping mechanisms of their families. With this project, IOM has joined a growing movement of rights organisations, university forensics departments, government bureaux, and thousands of families of migrants who are committed to giving the missing—who are presumed dead in most cases—respect and dignity.

This is a process that starts with identification. Identification is at the heart of the work and the heart of the problem. One of the central challenges is the forensics, as the following initiatives illustrate.

In 2009, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, working with committees of families of missing migrants, NGOs, and governmental institutions from the countries that sit along the migrant corridor connecting Central America, Mexico, and the United States, launched the **Proyecto Frontera** (Border Project).[5] The aim was to identify migrants and their remains in Central America, Mexico, and at the US-Mexico border. As of 18 March June 2021, the project had documented 1,436 cases of missing migrants and created 3,780 genetic profiles from their relatives. But to date, just 242 of the 1,353 have been identified, illustrating how difficult the work is.[6]

Operation Identification is a related project run by the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State University since 2013 to make it easier to identify and repatriate unidentified human remains found along or close to the South Texas border.[7]

A **Forensic Commission** was created in Mexico in August 2013 to investigate crimes against migrants.[8] The aim was to identify the mortal remains found in mass graves in connection with three massacres of migrants perpetrated between 2010 and 2012 in northern Mexico (San Fernando massacres) and to facilitate their repatriation to their countries of origin in a dignified manner.

After a fishing trawler sank off the coast of Libya in April 2015 with hundreds of migrants on board, Italy's top forensic pathologist, **Cristina Cattaneo**, led efforts to identify those entombed inside the ship's hull once the vessel had been raised from the seabed a year later.[9] Initially the fatalities were thought to number 800, the most ever recorded in a single migrant disaster. But further investigations showed there were 300 more bodies inside the ship.[10] Catteneo pioneered new forensic methods, prompting dozens of universities and scientific institutions to approach her and her team to learn from their experiences. Working in conjunction with the Laboratory of Forensic Anthropology and Odontology of the University of Milan, which Catteneo directs, their grim but compassionate task continued until at least December 2020,[11] as the ICRC worked to locate relatives of the identified dead across Africa and inform them of the fate of their loved ones.

1   IOM (2021) Migrant deaths and disappearances. Migration Data Portal.
2   IOM (2021) Migration within the Mediterranean. Missing Migrants Project.
3   In 2018, an investigation by the Associated Press determined that IOM had vastly underestimated the number of missing migrants, which it calculated to be at least 56,800 since 2014. Hinnant, L. (2018) Missing migrants, lost and dead: AP methodology. AP.
4   Citroni, G. (2019) Clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing migrants: Exchanging information along migratory routes . ICRC
5   EAAF (n.d.) Proyecto Frontera.
6   Ibid.
7   Texas State University Dept of Anthropology (n.d.) Operation Identification.
8   Citroni, G. (2017) The first attempts in Mexico and Central America to address the phenomenon of missing and disappeared migrants. International Review of the Red Cross.
9   Nadeau, B. (2017) Giving Dead Migrants a Name. Scientific America.
10   Hinnant, L., Thomas, T. & Larson, K. (2018) 300 uncounted dead: 2015 migrant shipwreck yields new clues. AP News.
11   Africa Rivista (2020) La patologa milanese che dà un nome ai migranti annegati.

In 2018, the ICRC launched its own **Missing Persons Project** aimed at improving the global response to the issue of missing persons by creating a community of practice, identifying best practices, and setting technical standards.

Also in 2018, experts gathered in Greece adopted the **Mytilini Declaration for the Dignified Treatment of All Missing and Deceased Persons and their Families**. Additionally, that year the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances launched a process that culminated in 2019 with the adoption of the **Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons**.

Today the momentum and commitment to respect and name missing migrants and those who have died is stronger than ever, but with refugees and migrants facing extreme risks in so many situations on land and sea the work is immense and only increases.

From Ethiopia to Somalia:
"Now I am the manager of a barber shop."

I am 35 years old, from the Amhara region in Ethiopia. I arrived here in Bossaso [a port city in Somalia's autonomous Puntland State] in November 2019. I have been here almost one year and ten months. I had a barber shop in Gondar [a city in the Amhara region] and I was earning my income from that work and it was relatively good for me and my family. But then my business collapsed and I became jobless because of political instability in Ethiopia. I tried to find another job, but I failed to get one. After a while, my friend came to me and he suggested that I go through Somalia to Saudi Arabia, where I could get a good job to feed my family. So I decided to move to Somalia and to migrate to Saudi Arabia.

I came alone to Bossaso and my family stayed in Gondar. First, I took a bus to Jijiga [the capital of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State] and then a truck to Wajaale [a town on the Ethiopia-Somaliland border]. In Ethiopia, the travel was quite stable but after I crossed the border to Somalia I started walking and sometimes used an overcrowded truck with a lot of other migrants. It was very dangerous and risky. I walked days from Garowe to Gardo, and so many days from Gardo to Bossaso. I had no water, no food. It was very expensive for me because I didn't have enough money.

I came here with no money. My plan was to cross the sea to Yemen and then travel to Saudi Arabia. The first month after my arrival in this city was not good. I had no one to help me, I had no shelter and no money, even for food. I was living on the side of the road and was begging to get something to eat from the local people. It was very rough and I was very desperate. I had very many challenges, but I was receiving a little assistance from my fellow migrants. I did not know the language also and had no friends or family to help me.

Fortunately, and unfortunately at the same time, I failed to get money [for the journey to Yemen] from my family and friends because of the economic and political problems back home. I tried to get work, but I did not get it at first. One day, I walked to the city and I found someone from Gondar who told me that one of my relatives was in Bossaso. That

man was working in a barber shop owned by a Somali man. I told him that I was looking for a job and fortunately because I had a barber shop back home I was very good at it. He told me to join them and eventually I become a permanent employee. I was planning to get some money that could get me to Saudi Arabia, but after a month of work I realised that this job could sustain both me and my family back home, so I decided not to go anywhere else and stayed here to feed my family.

Now I live with the friends I work with in the barber shop. They come from same city as me; that's why I live with them. My living conditions are very good because I receive a monthly salary. I have a good number of clients and people especially request my services and they prefer me to cut their hair. Now I am the manager of the barber shop. I work from morning to midnight, and I receive a good salary from it.

The local people are good and friendly people, and I have reliable security in the city. I have friends from all sectors of society because I deal with them all time, from elders, to police, government officials, business people and ordinary people. I feel secure here. People here are very flexible and very helpful. If I have a problem, I ask them to help and they help me all the time. They are very open with no discrimination. I've survived so far with no [outside] assistance. But now I work and I earn money from my work, so I'm able to sustain myself.

My dream is to bring my family here because of the war in Ethiopia. I am planning to bring them here and to start on my own business. My dream is to start my own barber shop here and to open other branches in this city and in the other city in this region.

When I first got here, I thought that I would end up with nothing and was worrying about my future, but now I am successful, and I'd like to tell my fellow migrants not to make that risky journey to Saudi Arabia, but to start finding jobs here. Here they can get jobs. They should not give up looking for jobs, they should be patient.

SUDAN

ERITREA

YEMEN

ETHIOPIA

DJIBOUTI

Bossaso

Amhara

Wajaale

Jijiga

SOMALIA

From Venezuela to Colombia:
"If a door closes, a window opens."

I knew I needed to migrate. I left Venezuela about four years ago mainly for economic reasons. I was studying for two degrees at private universities. I worked, but my job didn't give me enough money to pay for college. It just became impossible for me to afford both eating and studying. I also had a son.

Everything was scarce. If we ate, I couldn't buy a pair of flip-flops because I would spend my entire paycheck on that. You couldn't buy a soda because the soda costs more than a chicken. If you went to a park, you had to spend more than a paycheck.

I originally planned to go to Peru, because it was better-off economically. People would tell me that over there I could make good money and it was better for sending remittances to your family. But I didn't have enough resources to get to Peru, or acquaintances there. I was completely alone. Then one of my neighbours migrated to Colombia and he helped me to come here to Barranquilla.

I migrated by myself, travelling all the way by bus or car. My first time crossing the border into Colombia I was very afraid, because I didn't know anybody. In that moment, your life depends on a bunch of people you don't know. They can do whatever they want with you, because nobody notices. That was the most horrible experience of my life.

I met someone here, who became my partner, and after a year we began planning to go to Peru, to where my father had moved in the meantime. But as we were organising the trip, I discovered I was pregnant, so we decided to stay.

In the beginning, my life in Colombia was very hard. During my first months here, I was very depressed. I cried every day because I had left my son behind in Venezuela. The only job I could get, making juice in a fruit store, paid just 8,000 Colombian pesos ($2) for half a day's work. I knew that at that rate I wasn't going to make it, and at that time you wouldn't hear of organisations that were helping migrants.

Venezuelan diplomas are worthless here. I've had plenty of work, as a waitress, cleaning houses and making desserts for a restaurant, but although I sent my CV everywhere, I found no formal job. Potential employers always ask me if I was Venezuelan. Before I got my permit, they would ask me if I had my paperwork and since my passport had expired, they would never call me back. Even now that I am regular, I see no real difference with regard to finding a job. In terms of healthcare, it is easier, they treat you better when you go to a hospital, like a citizen, you notice the difference. But for work it hasn't helped me much.

So when one organisation [that was offering a few weeks' work conducting interviews] asked for all my documents, I had a feeling that this was going to be my great opportunity. Every night I prayed and when I spoke with my mum, I remember I told her: "Mum, if I don't get this job, I'm never going to have a chance in life." When I got the job, researching urban migration, it was more than just an opportunity: it was the chance to believe in myself again, to feel useful again.

Barranquilla has given me a lot. It gave me my family, I have my home here. There are also things here that we could not access in Venezuela: here, with a little money, you can go to the park and buy an ice cream; you can't do that there. Even if you don't have health insurance, if it's an emergency, they will assist you. If I ever want to go back to Venezuela, it will be very difficult because I feel that I could not adapt anymore.

I have many dreams right now. I would like a job, a formal job. I want it with all my heart because my husband didn't study and he doesn't have many opportunities, he is a recycler. I feel that I at least have a little more knowledge, but I have the disadvantage that I am Venezuelan. I feel that if I had a formal job, with all my benefits, I could progress, we could progress as a family.

I don't consider my migration as a failure because look at all the beautiful things I have: my family, my daughter, we have a roof over our heads, we have food. I have been able to support my family back home. Despite everything, I also feel like I have been able to integrate into society. The only thing I would need to be completely happy is to have my mum and my son here with me.

I don't allow feelings of anguish and failure to overcome me. If you feel that you are here for a goal, you can do it. If a door closes, a window opens. It's all about searching and searching.

Baranquilla

PANAMA

VENEZUELA

GUYANA

COLOMBIA

SURINAME

FRENCH GUIANA

ECUADOR

BRAZIL
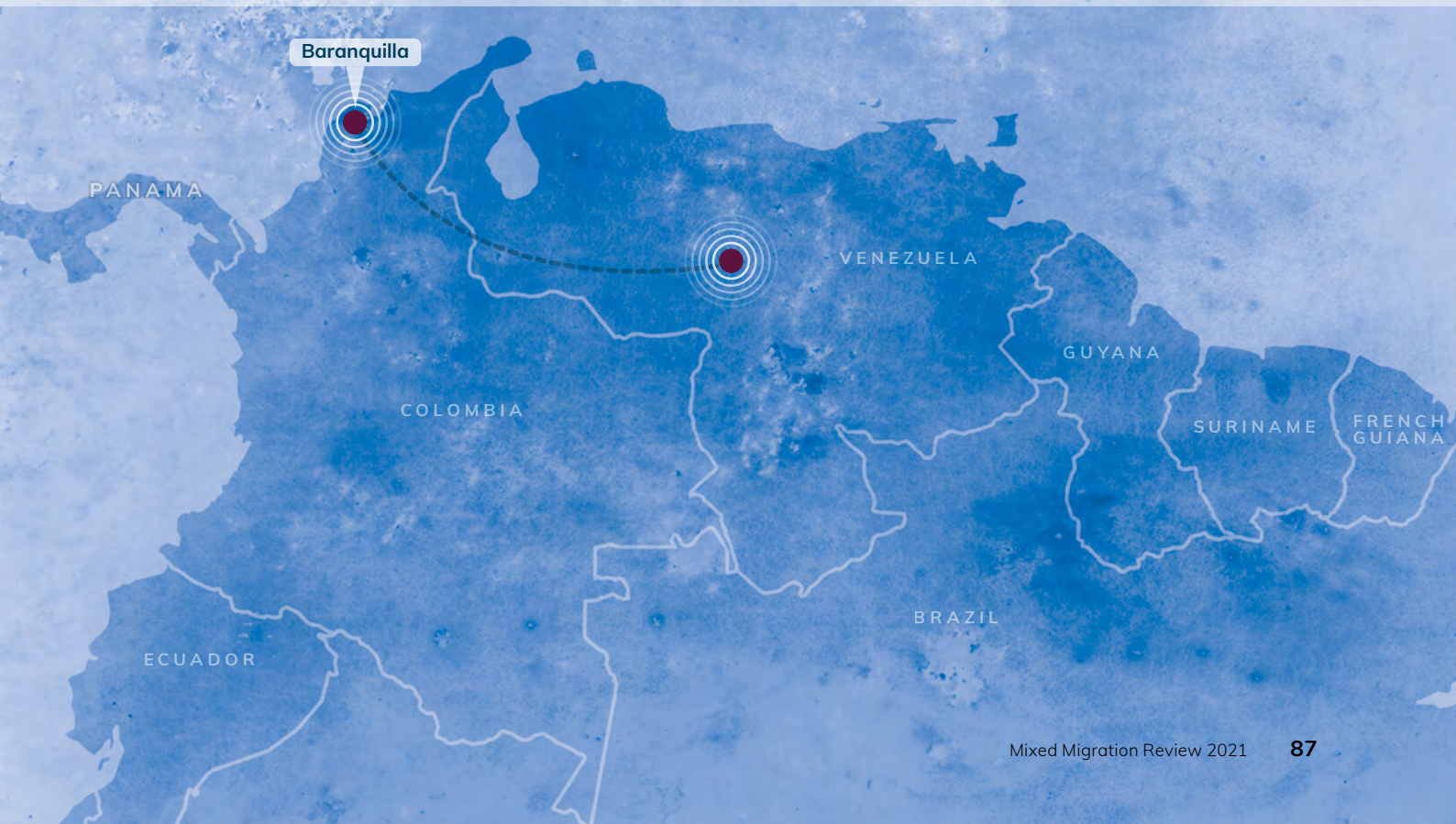
Mixed migration in the context of Asia

The term mixed migration emerged in the early 2000s in recognition of the complexity of many migration movements encompassing people with varying legal statuses, vulnerabilities, and recognition under international law.[1] Twenty years later, the term is used across all regions of the world. However, it is probably more widely known or applied in some regions than others. While there has been a strong focus on mixed migration in the form of smuggler-facilitated irregular migration journeys across sub-Saharan and North Africa, how it manifests itself in other specific regional contexts such as Asia has received less attention.

Migration is an inherent aspect of societies across the vast and diverse region that is Asia. Migration in Asia is characterised by a number of features, including the strong dependency of middle and high-income economies on cheap migrant labour, prolonged and protracted humanitarian crises with no durable solutions in sight, and the current and emerging impacts of climate change. Many countries in Asia are major emigration countries, with emigration rates of over 10 percent, much higher than for example in sub-Saharan Africa. Migration in Asia is also occurring in the absence of comprehensive regional and national protection frameworks for both refugees and migrants; a relatively large number of states in Asia have not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Considering the specificity of the Asia context, can the mixed migration concept be applied in the same way, and does it need to in order to have a global application? Further, how far can or should regional dynamics redefine the term, and how much flexibility should be given to a regional redefinition? Also, what specific opportunities exist for better utilisation of the term, particularly in regions such as Asia, where it is newer and less well-known?

In response to these questions, as well as others, MMC Asia has commissioned research to unpack mixed migration in the specific context of Asia. The research is based on 38 key informant interviews with stakeholders in Asia, MMC's 4Mi data, and a comprehensive analysis of existing literature. The following is a preview of some of the key issues the study are focusing on.[2]

1. **Migration in Asia is multi-directional.** Cyclical migration commonly takes place when people migrate for temporary periods of time before returning—or being returned—to their countries of origin. In these cases, structural issues upon return, such as political

and economic insecurity, remain key drivers often propelling re-migration. Debt is a cross-cutting theme and an underestimated driver of migration, a motivator to remain in destinations or to re-migrate upon return, particularly in contexts where reintegration is hampered by security and safety concerns. This will be explored through a case study on cyclical migration in the contexts of Nepal and Afghanistan, in particular.

2. **Urban migration is a reality in line with the increasing phenomenon of urbanisation across Asia.** Expensive environments, like big cities such as Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur, confront new arrivals with the need for survival, which often pushes them to work in irregular, precarious, and dangerous situations with limited legal protections. The protection risks associated with irregular work result in vulnerability to exploitation and fear of arrest and detention; such risks also hinder access to essential services such as health, education, and justice. The complementary role municipalities can play to compensate for absent national legal protection frameworks deserves better understanding and will be explored through a case study focusing on Bangkok, Thailand.

3. **Migration in Asia is a process rather than the result of a sudden decision.** For example, the onward movement of Rohingya from Bangladesh to Malaysia clearly indicates how migration dynamics change along the route and over time, which can have implications on protection status and level of vulnerability. The third case study focuses on the impact of regional policies on changing vulnerabilities of people on the move, and how people's decisions, options, awareness of protection risks, and the contexts they find themselves in during various stages along their journeys determine their vulnerability.

4. **Climate change is increasingly linked with migration in Asia.** While Asia is one of the hardest hit regions by climate change, there is a need to alter the current simplistic narrative that climate change solely and automatically leads to displacement or migration. Various factors influence the decision to move within the existing options, including internal and cross-border migration, temporary and permanent labour migration, or even regular and irregular migration. This is explored further in the research through a case study on labour mobility and climate change in the context of the Pacific.

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1   Sharpe, M. (2018) Mixed Up: International Law and the Meaning(s) of "Mixed Migration". Refugee Survey Quarterly.
2   The full research will be available here once released: https://mixedmigration.org/resources/

5. **Trafficking, smuggling, and exploitation are often conflated terms within Asia.** While distinctions between these terms are important, the quest for clarity around these concepts often contrasts with the experiences of people on the move, for whom the lines between definitions may be arbitrary. For example, while in some contexts access to justice for victims of trafficking may be well established, migrants who have entered a state irregularly with the assistance of smugglers and who have experienced abuses and exploitation may not have access to justice, although they may face similar needs. Further, the need for protection cannot automatically be derived from the category of a person, nor can the categorisation of a person allow the observation that a person has no protection needs. For example, regular migration does not necessarily protect against exploitation, which is widespread in Asia and may or may not amount to human trafficking. This debate is explored in the report as it is particularly relevant to the context of Asia where inter- and intra-regional labour migration is so prevalent.

4Mi: Primary data collection on mixed migration

4Mi

4Mi is MMC's flagship data collection project. Regional teams in West Africa, North Africa, East Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America collect and analyse data on mixed migration through interviews with refugees and migrants about their motivations and aspirations, protection concerns, and experiences along mixed migration routes. Launched in 2014, 4Mi today consists of a network of around 135 enumerators in 15 countries. Targeting known gathering points for refugees and migrants on commonly used routes, 4Mi enumerators use questionnaires to conduct in-depth structured interviews on a continuous basis. 4Mi also conducts short-term, topic-specific surveys. To date, the 4Mi teams have conducted more than 86,000 interviews, all surveys combined. In 2021, MMC launched a new data visualisation portal, 4Mi Interactive, making much of our data publicly accessible, and allowing users to apply their own filters and create graphics.

More information about 4Mi is available here:
https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/4Mi-Introduction.pdf

4Mi in the MMR 2021

The 4Mi data presented in this year's Mixed Migration Review are presented in two parts, and reflect two key themes of MMC analysis this year. The first relates to the decision to migrate: how is the decision made? What influences that decision? What options are explored? And why do people ultimately decide to leave?

The second relates to smuggling, a topic of central concern to the study of mixed migration, and which is influencing policy decisions, but where information is far from complete and misunderstanding widespread. The analysis focuses on how smugglers are used, the role they play, and how they are perceived.

The decision to migrate

The analysis on decision-making is based on 5,202 interviews conducted between 2 February and 29 June 2021 with refugees and migrants who were on the move or had been in the country of interview less than two years.[1] We selected nationality groups where we had samples of over 100 respondents. West and Central Africans were grouped together for reasons of space, being the group of nationalities with most consistent responses. The analysis indicates where there is variation within this group.

Afghans
n=328
| 227 Male | 101 Female |

Interviewed in Indonesia (213),* Greece (111), Italy

Hondurans
n=345
| 260 Male | 85 Female |

Interviewed in Mexico

Eritreans
n=214
| 156 Male | 58 Female |

Interviewed in Italy, Libya, Sudan (89),* Tunisia (78)*

Sudanese
n=280
| 239 Male | 41 Female |

Interviewed in Italy, Libya (90),* Niger and Tunisia (127)*

Rohingya from Myanmar
n=289
| 167 Male | 122 Female |

Interviewed in Malaysia

Venezuelans
n=1,541
| 462 Male | 1,079 Female |

Interviewed in Colombia (1,041),* Peru 9496),* Mexico

Ethiopians
n=240
| 151 Male | 89 Female |

Interviewed in Italy, Libya, Somalia (89),* Sudan (88),* Tunisia (78)*

West / Central Africans
n=1,965**
| 1,230 Male | 735 Female |

Interviewed in Burkina Faso (207),* Italy (142),* Libya (472),* Mali (353),* Niger (358),* Sudan, Tunisia (393)*

*The number of respondents per country of interview is indicated if 100 or more, or in small samples, if they take up no more than 20% of the sample.
**213 Cameroon; 341 Côte d'Ivoire; 293 Guinea; 239 Mali; 210 Niger; 669 Nigeria.

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1   Except Greece and Italy, where, due to long stays in camps, respondents are likely to have been in the country for more than two years before reaching some locations of interview. Therefore the selection criteria is modified to less than two years in the city or town of interview.

Smuggling

The analysis around smuggling makes use of the same dataset, but focuses on place of interview rather than origin, so that the analysis relates to the route taken. It again considers locations where 100 or more interviews took place. The analysis is based on 7,501 interviews.

Afghans in Indonesia n=212
| 159 Male | 53 Female |

Hondurans in Mexico n=345
| 260 Male | 85 Female |

Venezuelans in Peru n=496
| 145 Male | 351 Female |

West & Central Africans in Burkina Faso n=340
| 212 Male | 128 Female |

From Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

East Africans in Sudan n=178
| 117 Male | 61 Female |

From Eritrea (90)* and Ethiopia (88)*

East Africans in Tunisia n=100
| 84 Male | 16 Female |

From Eritrea (78)* and Ethiopia (22)*

Afghans in Greece n=111
| 63 Male | 48 Female |

Rohingya in Malaysia (from Myanmar) n=289
| 167 Male | 122 Female |

Venezuelans in Colombia n=1,041
| 314 Male | 727 Female |

West & Central Africans in Mali n=745
| 487 Male | 258 Female |

From Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire (115),* Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea (129),* Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

West & Central Africans in Niger n=714
| 478 Male | 236 Female |

From Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

West & Central Africans in Tunisia n=394
| 226 Male | 168 Female |

From Cameroon (94),* Côte d'Ivoire (120),* Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria.

West & Central Africans in Libya n=467
| 279 Male | 188 Female |

From Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria (284)*

West & Central Africans in Italy n=140
| 186 Male | 24 Female |

From Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali (37),* Niger, Nigeria (57)*

*Number of respondents indicated where it is either 100 or, for smaller samples, more than 20% of respondents.

Focus on Libya

This year's section on smuggling ends with a focus on Libya, where respondents were asked some targeted questions on human smuggling. The dataset includes 332 respondents from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria (218).

Limitations of 4Mi data

A lack of official statistics on the size and composition of the target population, coupled with the difficulties in accessing a very diverse, hard-to-reach and highly mobile population, means that we cannot conduct random sampling and our data cannot be generalised to the overall population of refugees and migrants (4Mi uses a combination of purposive and snowball sampling). We do not provide estimates of the volume of migration flows or of the prevalence of particular incidents along routes, but our large dataset and efforts to reach a diverse sample means we can provide useful insights, highly indicative of the actual mixed migration trends and dynamics. With regard to gender, 4Mi strives to adhere to a policy of at least one male and one female enumerator in each data collection location.

Data collected during the Covid-19 pandemic has been successful, but not without limitations. MMC conducts face-to-face interviews and in-person recruitment when safe to do so. Otherwise—as has been the case in most locations throughout the pandemic—interviews are by phone and participants recruited via third parties or social media. Conducting research through remote activities means that MMC has only been able to interview respondents with access to a phone.

Finally, 4Mi data is self-reported. It depends on respondents' recall, and the information they choose to share. This may vary according to a range of factors, including the personality, profile, and circumstances of the respondent, the location and environment in which the survey takes place, and the rapport between the enumerator and the respondent. 4Mi continuously reviews and improves its methodology. For more information, see the MMC website: www.mixedmigration.org/4mi/

4Mi

The decision to migrate

The decision to migrate is rarely straightforward, even for those who flee in search of international protection. It is often a decision that involves a number of factors and different influences. One key finding is that **people leave for more than one reason:** across our sample of 5,202 respondents, 56% gave more than one reason for leaving.

People leave the same country for different reasons. This may be down to circumstances but may also be influenced by an individual's values, aspirations, or character traits: Afghans are in the majority fleeing violent conflict and insecurity. However, Afghans in Greece more frequently also mentioned personal or family reasons (54%), economic reasons (49%), and access to services (53%), compared to the Afghans interviewed in Indonesia (20%, 17% and 7%, respectively). These

different motivations may explain the different routes taken. Reasons for leaving can differ according to gender: across our samples, women reported personal and family reasons (such as marriage, family reunification, divorce, or ill-health in the family) far more often than men (for example 47% of Rohingya women compared to 28% of Rohingya men).

Economic factors are often a reason for leaving even among people leaving countries affected by armed conflict and insecurity. 79% of Hondurans mention conflict and insecurity, and 66% report economic factors. West and Central Africans predominantly reported economic reasons (79%), but 29% of Cameroonians and 40% of Malians still also reported conflict and insecurity.

Why did you leave?

Afghans
328 interviews

Violence, insecurity and conflict	Rights and freedoms	Economic reasons	Personal or family reasons	Environmental factors	Access to services / corruption	Culture of migration	Other
68%	55%	27%	31%	0%	23%	5%	1%
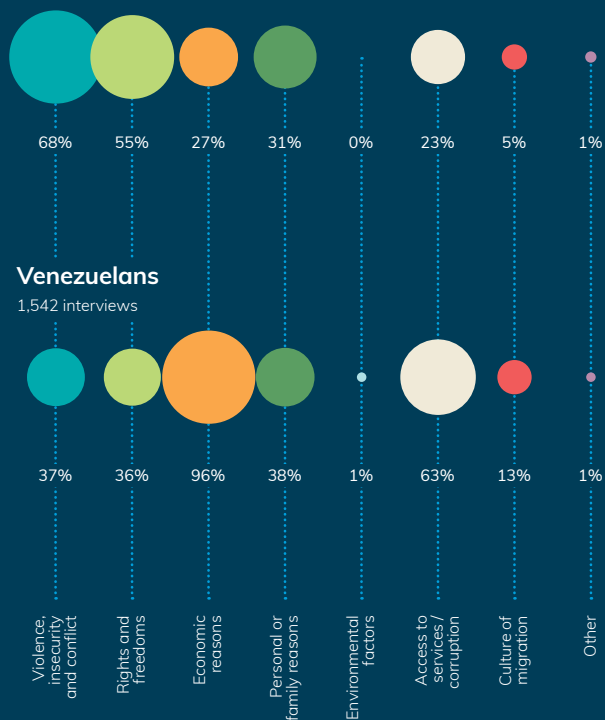
Rohingya
289 interviews

| 77% | 80% | 16% | 36% | 5% | 17% | 5% | 0% |
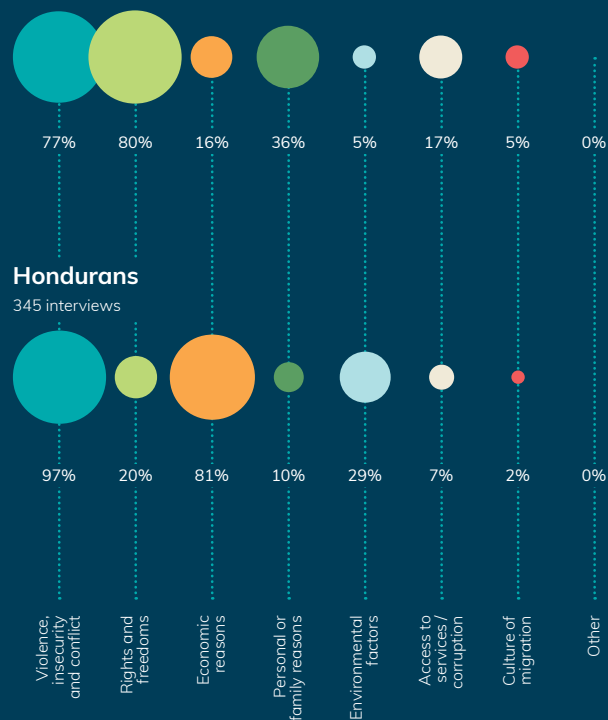
Venezuelans
1,542 interviews

| 37% | 36% | 96% | 38% | 1% | 63% | 13% | 1% |
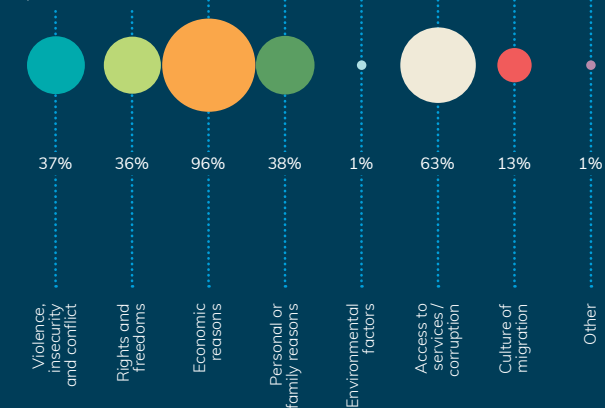
Hondurans
345 interviews

| 97% | 20% | 81% | 10% | 29% | 7% | 2% | 0% |
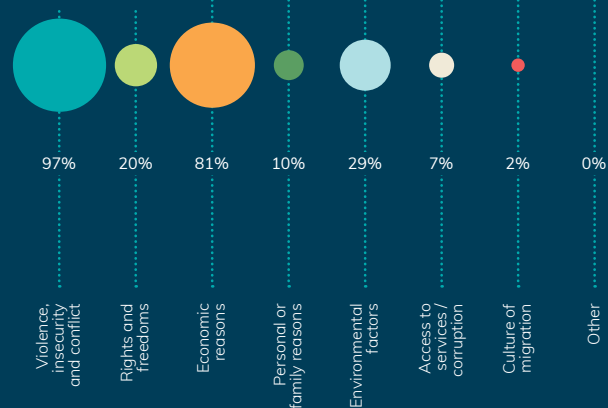
Digging deeper into the motivations for leaving

The range of reasons for leaving are not easily captured in overarching categories, and it is important to further break down these drivers. Probing those who reported insecurity and conflict, we see that many again have more than one reason, and that **places where there is ongoing violent conflict seem to be places where general insecurity and crime are also causing people to leave**. Among West and Central Africans, armed conflict was common overall, although Guineans and Ivorians reported unrest and crime more often than armed conflict, and Nigerians reported crime more than conflict (59% compared to 54%).

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is not uncommon as a driver across the sample, and far more frequent among women (52% of Afghan women compared to 22% of Afghan men; 53% of Rohingya women compared to 40% of men; 42% of West and Central African women compared to 4% of West and Central African men). SGBV and domestic violence are reported to a similar degree among some groups, but not others, suggesting different causes and perpetrators. This is a topic that warrants further exploration.

Eritreans
214 interviews

Violence, insecurity and conflict	Rights and freedoms	Economic reasons	Personal or family reasons	Environmental factors	Access to services / corruption	Culture of migration	Other
17%	71%	58%	17%	1%	15%	8%	2%
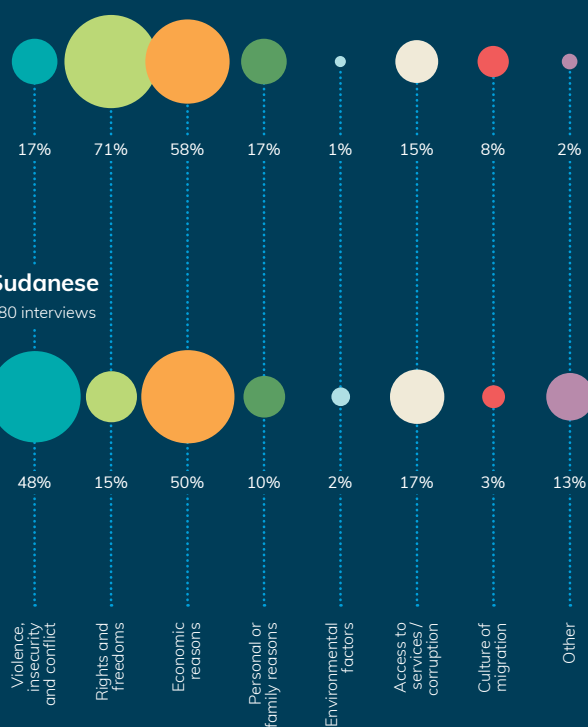
Ethiopians
240 interviews

Violence, insecurity and conflict	Rights and freedoms	Economic reasons	Personal or family reasons	Environmental factors	Access to services / corruption	Culture of migration	Other
43%	13%	64%	5%	1%	6%	4%	0%
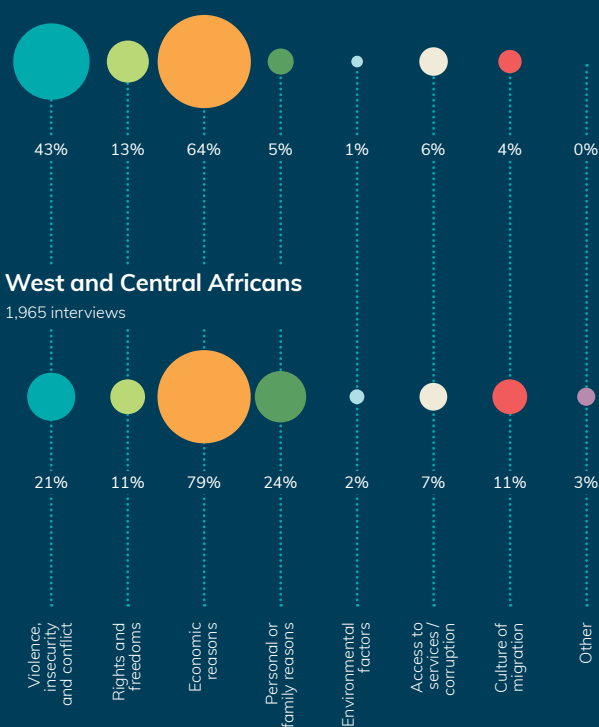
Sudanese
280 interviews

Violence, insecurity and conflict	Rights and freedoms	Economic reasons	Personal or family reasons	Environmental factors	Access to services / corruption	Culture of migration	Other
48%	15%	50%	10%	2%	17%	3%	13%
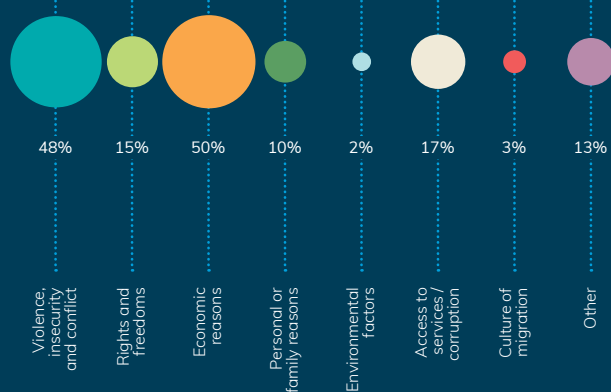
West and Central Africans
1,965 interviews

Violence, insecurity and conflict	Rights and freedoms	Economic reasons	Personal or family reasons	Environmental factors	Access to services / corruption	Culture of migration	Other
21%	11%	79%	24%	2%	7%	11%	3%
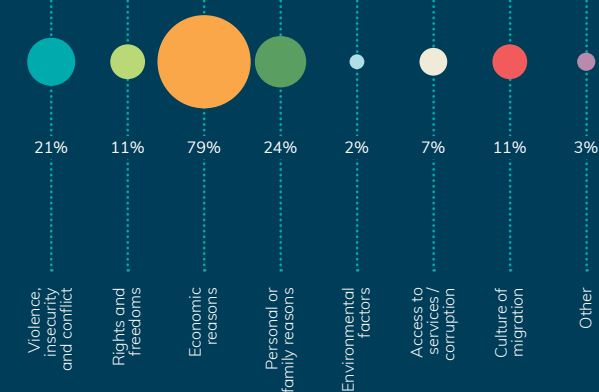
Note: Respondents are asked 'For what reasons did you leave your country of departure?' and can provide more than one answer. Results for 'Don't know' and 'Refused' are 2% or less and not shown.

What kind of reasons relating to violent conflict and insecurity?

Afghans
223 interviews

War, armed conflict, terrorism	Crime, general insecurity	Sexual and gender-based violence	Domestic violence	Political unrest / riots
85%	86%	31%	16%	46%
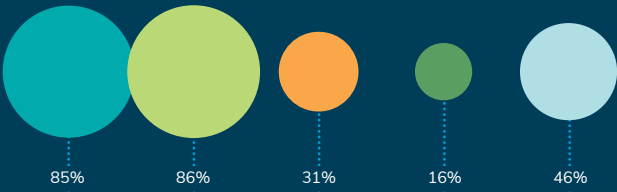
Rohingya (Myanmar)
223 interviews

War, armed conflict, terrorism	Crime, general insecurity	Sexual and gender-based violence	Domestic violence	Political unrest / riots
82%	90%	45%	8%	93%
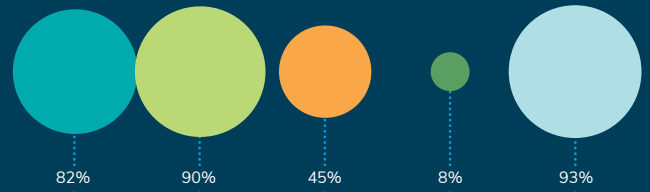
Venezuelans
576 interviews

War, armed conflict, terrorism	Crime, general insecurity	Sexual and gender-based violence	Domestic violence	Political unrest / riots
18%	93%	5%	4%	53%
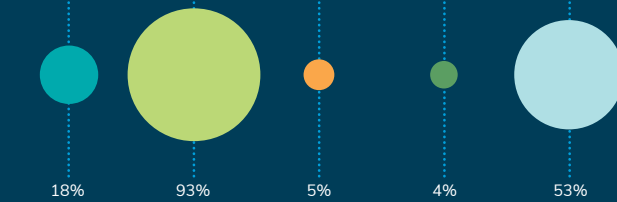
Hondurans
271 interviews

War, armed conflict, terrorism	Crime, general insecurity	Sexual and gender-based violence	Domestic violence	Political unrest / riots
4%	97%	5%	4%	21%
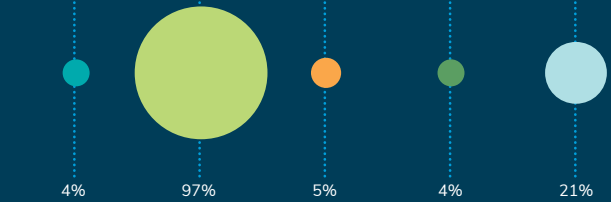
Ethiopians
104 interviews

War, armed conflict, terrorism	Crime, general insecurity	Sexual and gender-based violence	Domestic violence	Political unrest / riots
67%	54%	1%	6%	28%
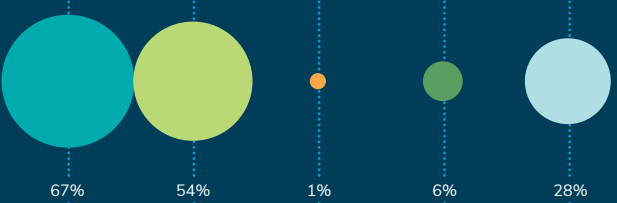
Sudanese
134 interviews

War, armed conflict, terrorism	Crime, general insecurity	Sexual and gender-based violence	Domestic violence	Political unrest / riots
78%	55%	21%	5%	34%
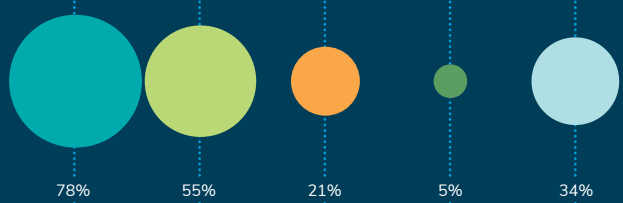
West and Central Africans
404 interviews
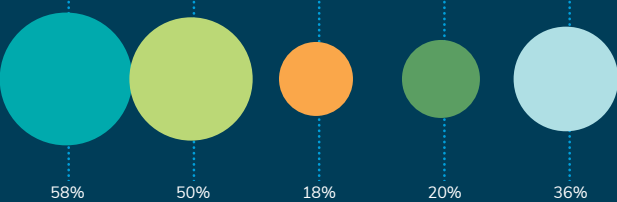
War, armed conflict, terrorism	Crime, general insecurity	Sexual and gender-based violence	Domestic violence	Political unrest / riots
58%	50%	18%	20%	36%

Note: Respondents can provide more than one answer. Results for 'Other' are 2% or less and not shown. Data only shown where more than 100 respond to the question.

When asked **what particular challenges relating to rights and freedoms** drove the migration decision, most respondents talked about lack of freedoms and government repression. However religious discrimination was a key driver among Rohingya and Afghans, and much more so among Afghans in Indonesia than in Greece (the majority of Afghans in Indonesia are Shia Hazaras, in contrast to a more diverse Afghan population in Greece). 64% of Eritreans reported forced conscription. West and Central Africans' responses were remarkably consistent, despite the different countries of origin, most commonly reporting lack of freedom and repression. Across all nationalities, women more often reported sexual discrimination than men.

Looking more closely at **the economic factors driving the decision to move,** 58% reported not earning enough in the job they had (the other options being unemployment and difficulties doing business). Men report this more often than women. Hondurans reported unemployment more often (64%) than not earning enough. In line with strict controls on economic activities and limited opportunities for a private sector in Eritrea, Eritreans reported difficulties doing business more than other nationalities (52%).

63% of Venezuelans reported lack of access to goods and services / corruption, far more than other nationality groups, and the majority of them reported at least three related reasons, most common being **access to goods and basic services (94%), and health facilities (84%)** – reflecting the lack of services observed in Venezuela. A very small proportion of West and Central Africans report lack of access to services / corruption, but those who do more frequently report corruption. Among both Venezuelans and West and Central Africans, however, women more often mentioned access to education and health than men.

What personal and family reasons?

Afghans (n=102)

Family reunification	61%
Get married	16%
Ill-health in the family	8%
Join friends	46%
Other	4%
Refused	16%

Venezuelans (n=587)

Family reunification	79%
Get married	1%
Ill-health in the family	24%
Join friends	26%
Other	7%
Refused	0%

West and Central Africans (n=464)

Family reunification	27%
Get married	20%
Ill-health in the family	8%
Join friends	38%
Other	30%
Refused	6%
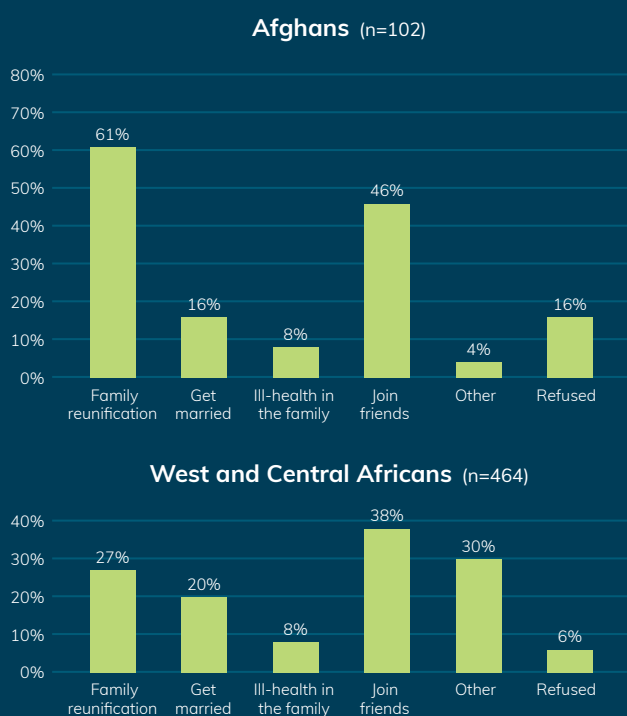
Note: Respondents can provide more than one answer. Data only shown where more than 100 respond to the question.

Among the groups reporting personal or family reasons, family reunification is a main reason, particularly among Venezuelans, and more so among Venezuelans in Colombia, where the ties between the two countries are stronger and the movement more frequent, than in Peru, where the journey is more difficult and people are more likely to move if they have a specific opportunity. Afghans report both family reunification and joining friends.

West and Central Africans report a wider range of reasons across the sample, and 'other' is common (often referring to family conflict, divorce, or death in the family).

While not many people talk about more cultural reasons for leaving, it is interesting that 13% of Venezuelans do (more women than men). They mainly say that they were influenced by everyone else leaving (92%). The other group reporting cultural reasons more often are from West/Central Africa (mainly Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali), and while often saying that they too left because people around them were doing so, they also more often say they left to try something new (59% and 66%, respectively).

Is Covid-19 driving movement?

While the majority overall do not consider Covid-19 to have been a reason for making the journey, a large proportion still do consider that it was a factor, including a majority of Venezuelans, almost half of Hondurans, and one-third of West and Central Africans. While not so much a direct driver of movement in itself, **Covid-19, and the related measures to contain it, primarily act as stress multipliers, impacting on other drivers, mainly economic reasons for leaving** (mainly among Latin American respondents: 44% of Hondurans and 50% of Venezuelans). 23% of Venezuelans reported the impact of Covid-19 on access to services, and 17% of Rohingya reported impact on insecurity and conflict, and rights and freedoms. Fewer than 12% mentioned Covid-19 having an impact on other drivers (fear of the virus, insecurity and conflict, rights and freedom, access to services, personal and family situation).

Was Covid-19 a factor in the decision to leave?
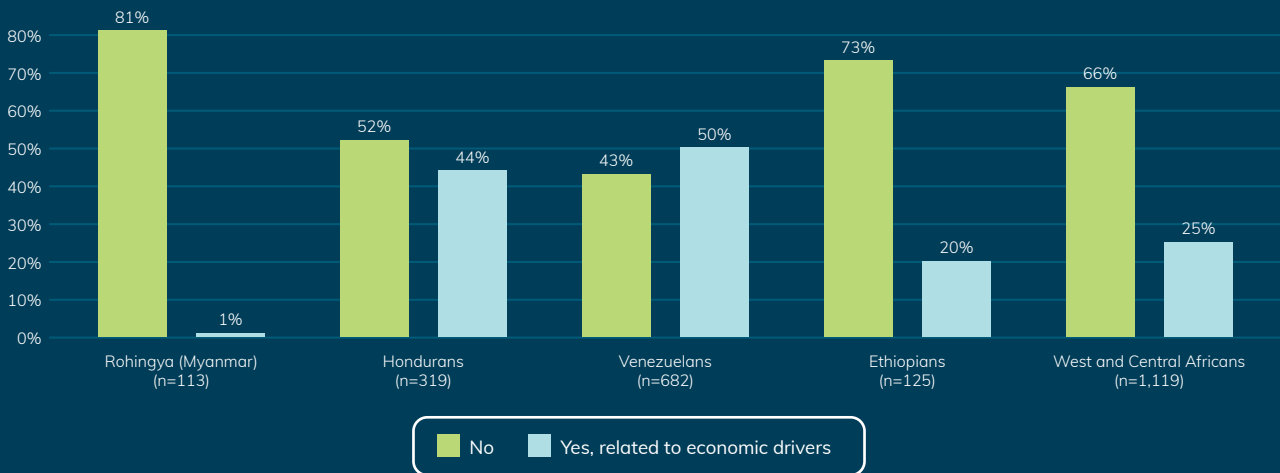
Note: Question is only asked of people who began their journey after 1 April 2020. Only showing groups where more than 100 people responded. Respondents can provide more than one 'yes' answer: the full list of answer options are 'No', 'Yes, fear of the virus', 'Yes, related to insecurity, conflict, and violence', 'Yes, related to rights and freedoms', 'Yes, related to economic drivers', 'Yes, related to access to services', 'Yes, related to personal or family reasons', 'Yes, other', 'Don't know', 'Refused'.

The role of climate change and environmental issues

Environmental issues prove to be more of a factor than they seem. Only among Hondurans does a substantial proportion of respondents mention environmental issues as a driver of migration when initially asked why they left (29%). However, when directly asked if environmental issues were a factor, far more people say yes. This confirms that **climate change and environmental issues are often more in the back of people's mind when thinking about why they left, and that they are not often seen as the direct reason for leaving, but interact with other drivers**. Hondurans tend to report the impact of environmental factors on living conditions and even threats to their survival; Rohingya and Afghans report threats to their survival, with Rohingya also frequently reporting the impact of environmental factors on conflict. In Afghanistan, this is likely due to drought, while in Myanmar land is a key part of the crisis affecting Rohingya. West and Central Africans (particularly respondents from Cameroon) and Ethiopians report environmental impacts on economic conditions (29% and 31%, respectively) and Sudanese on conflict (25%). In Sudan, reduced rainfall and processes of desertification reducing the availability of water resources for livestock and farming are considered to be impacting on conflicts in the Darfur region.[2]

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2   Popovski, V. (2017) Foresight Africa viewpoint: Does climate change cause conflict? Brookings.

Were issues relating to the climate or natural environment a factor in the decision to leave?

Afghans (n=328)

Answer	%
No	54%
Yes, a threat to my survival	22%
Yes, affecting my living conditions	7%
Yes, threat to my future	13%
Yes, related to conflict	9%
Yes, related to economic reasons	7%
Don't know	4%

Rohingya (Myanmar) (n=289)

Answer	%
No	36%
Yes, a threat to my survival	24%
Yes, affecting my living conditions	26%
Yes, threat to my future	32%
Yes, related to conflict	44%
Yes, related to economic reasons	11%
Don't know	3%

Venezuelans (n=1,541)

Answer	%
No	87%
Yes, a threat to my survival	4%
Yes, affecting my living conditions	5%
Yes, threat to my future	8%
Yes, related to conflict	2%
Yes, related to economic reasons	8%
Don't know	0%

Hondurans (n=345)

Answer	%
No	52%
Yes, a threat to my survival	19%
Yes, affecting my living conditions	28%
Yes, threat to my future	9%
Yes, related to conflict	3%
Yes, related to economic reasons	10%
Don't know	0%

Eritreans (n=214)

Answer	%
No	71%
Yes, a threat to my survival	4%
Yes, affecting my living conditions	3%
Yes, threat to my future	3%
Yes, related to conflict	7%
Yes, related to economic reasons	12%
Don't know	9%

Ethiopians (n=240)

Answer	%
No	46%
Yes, a threat to my survival	8%
Yes, affecting my living conditions	10%
Yes, threat to my future	7%
Yes, related to conflict	9%
Yes, related to economic reasons	31%
Don't know	5%

Sudanese (n=280)

Answer	%
No	48%
Yes, a threat to my survival	3%
Yes, affecting my living conditions	7%
Yes, threat to my future	3%
Yes, related to conflict	25%
Yes, related to economic reasons	11%
Don't know	8%

West & Central Africans (n=1,966)

Answer	%
No	50%
Yes, a threat to my survival	8%
Yes, affecting my living conditions	10%
Yes, threat to my future	11%
Yes, related to conflict	9%
Yes, related to economic reasons	29%
Don't know	3%

Note: Respondents can provide more than one 'yes' answer. Results for 'Yes other' and 'Refused' are all below 1% and not shown.

What alternatives do people try?

People mainly choose to migrate the way they do because they cannot see any other option: a majority said they saw no alternative to migrating the way they had. Among those who did see other options (more frequently among Venezuelans and West and Central Africans), most had tried at least one.

Among the alternatives that were tried, most related to livelihoods. West and Central African respondents had tried a wider range of options, and quite often reported internal migration to a city, which is also ultimately likely to be a strategy to improve livelihoods.

Do you think there were other options?

	No	Don't know	Yes
Afghans (n=328)	63%	17%	20%
Rohingya (Myanmar) (n=289)	60%	17%	22%
Venezuelans (n=1,541)	50%		50%
Hondurans (n=345)	72%		28%
Eritreans (n=214)	71%	12%	17%
Ethiopians (n=240)	65%	11%	24%
Sudanese (n=280)	70%	11%	19%
West & Central Africans (n=1,966)	58%	10%	31%

Note: Refusals are 1% or lower and are not shown.

Legend: ■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes

What options did you try?

Venezuelans (n=768)

Option	%
Nothing	3%
Regular migration	4%
Flee to a place of safety in my country	1%
Move to a new city	3%
Move in with family or friends	9%
Look for another job	42%
Start a business	70%
Continue education	5%
Sell assets	15%
Borrow money	7%
Other	4%

West & Central Africans (n=600)

Option	%
Nothing	5%
Regular migration	11%
Flee to a place of safety in my country	10%
Move to a new city	30%
Move in with family or friends	9%
Look for another job	45%
Start a business	21%
Continue education	6%
Sell assets	8%
Borrow money	7%
Other	2%

Note: Respondents can provide more than one answer. Results only shown where 100 people or more responded.

Influences on the decision to leave

While a majority of all respondents say that someone or something influenced their decision to leave, 42% still say that they were not influenced at all, indicating that **the decision to migrate is an individual one, and often taken independently of others**. The proportions vary substantially, however, across population groups.

Compared to others, it is notable that only a minority of Rohingya and Honduran respondents say that there was any influence. Among all population groups, women more often said they had been influenced by something or someone than men.

Yes, something or someone influenced my decision to leave.

	Men	Women
Afghans	44% (n=227)	76% (n=101)
Rohingya	14% (n=167)	42% (n=122)
Venezuelans	61% (n=462)	64% (n=1,079)
Hondurans	23% (n=260)	34% (n=85)
Eritreans	44% (n=156)	59% (n=58)
Ethiopians	40% (n=151)	44% (n=89)
Sudanese	31% (n=239)	49% (n=41)
West & Central Africans	59% (n=1,231)	74% (n=735)
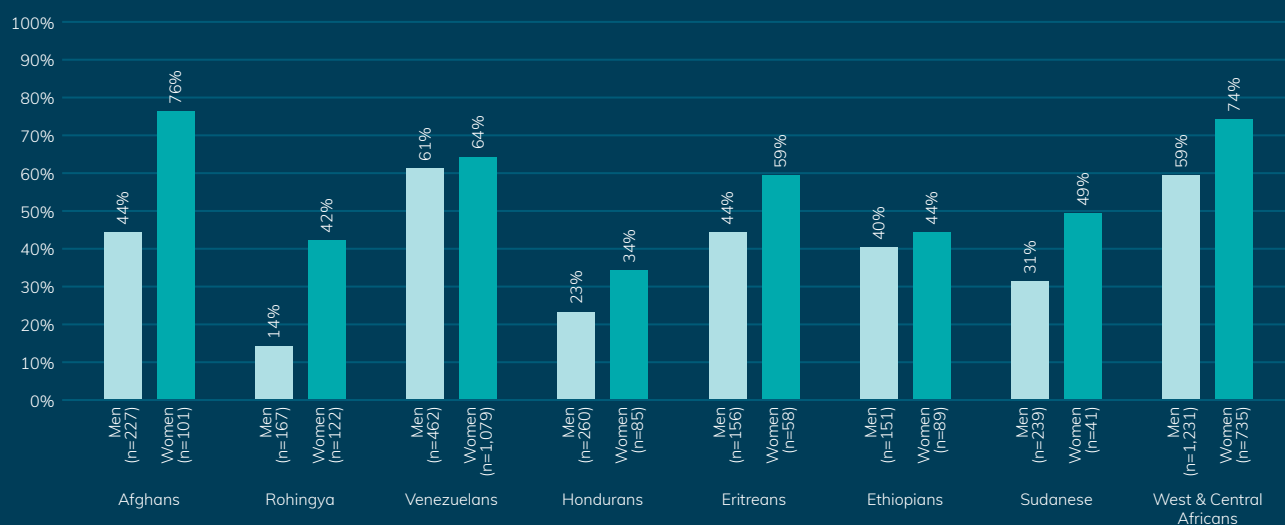
Note: Answer options are yes, no, refused. Refusals are below 1% and not shown.

So who or what does influence people to decide to migrate? Family dominates, particularly family who are already in another country. This is especially the case among West and Central Africans, Eritreans, and Afghans. Venezuelan respondents more frequently mention their children than other nationalities (42%), and parents are quite important for Venezuelans (28%), Afghans (29%), and West and Central Africans (30%). Eritrean and Ethiopians more often report friends and family in Eritrea (48%) and Ethiopia (37%), respectively. Smugglers are not as influential as often portrayed by policy makers and in the media (the exception being among Nigerians, at 30%, with 45% of Nigerian women mentioning smugglers, and only 12% of Nigerian men), and neither are returned migrants. While social media is reported quite often among Afghans (39%), it is much less common among other groups, and mainstream media is rarely reported.

Who or what influenced the decision to migrate?

Afghans (n=178)

Category	Value
Spouse	31%
My children	14%
Parents	29%
Friends/family in country of departure	21%
Friends/family in another country	47%
Returnees	2%
Smugglers	2%
Mainstream media; films; books	6%
Social media	39%
Other	3%

Venezuelans (n=972)

Category	Value
Spouse	33%
My children	42%
Parents	28%
Friends/family in country of departure	17%
Friends/family in another country	33%
Returnees	5%
Smugglers	0%
Mainstream media; films; books	0%
Social media	1%
Other	3%

Eritreans (n=102)

Category	Value
Spouse	19%
My children	3%
Parents	10%
Friends/family in country of departure	48%
Friends/family in another country	54%
Returnees	22%
Smugglers	7%
Mainstream media; films; books	2%
Social media	10%
Other	2%

Ethiopians (n=100)

Category	Value
Spouse	12%
My children	7%
Parents	18%
Friends/family in country of departure	37%
Friends/family in another country	35%
Returnees	15%
Smugglers	3%
Mainstream media; films; books	2%
Social media	21%
Other	3%

West & Central Africans (n=1,268)

Category	Value
Spouse	12%
My children	3%
Parents	30%
Friends/family in country of departure	28%
Friends/family in another country	55%
Returnees	18%
Smugglers	18%
Mainstream media; films; books	1%
Social media	13%
Other	2%

Note: Respondents can provide up to 3 answers. Only showing results where 100 people or more responded.

Smuggling

Smuggling, like the decision to move to another country, is a more complex phenomenon than is often portrayed in media or policy debates. MMC's 4Mi data show that smuggling takes many forms, individuals' experiences vary, and smugglers play different roles in different places.[3]

Definition of smuggling

MMC uses a broad interpretation of the terms 'smuggler' and 'smuggling', one which encompasses various activities—paid for or otherwise compensated by refugees and migrants—that facilitate irregular migration. These include irregularly crossing international borders and internal checkpoints, as well as providing documents, transportation, and accommodation. This approach reflects refugees' and migrants' perceptions of smuggling and the facilitation of irregular movement. Our interpretation is deliberately broader than the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants definition. However, this does not imply that MMC considers all activities it includes in its broad understanding of smuggling to be criminal offences. MMC prefers to use the term 'human smuggling' instead of 'migrant smuggling' as smuggling involves both refugees and migrants.
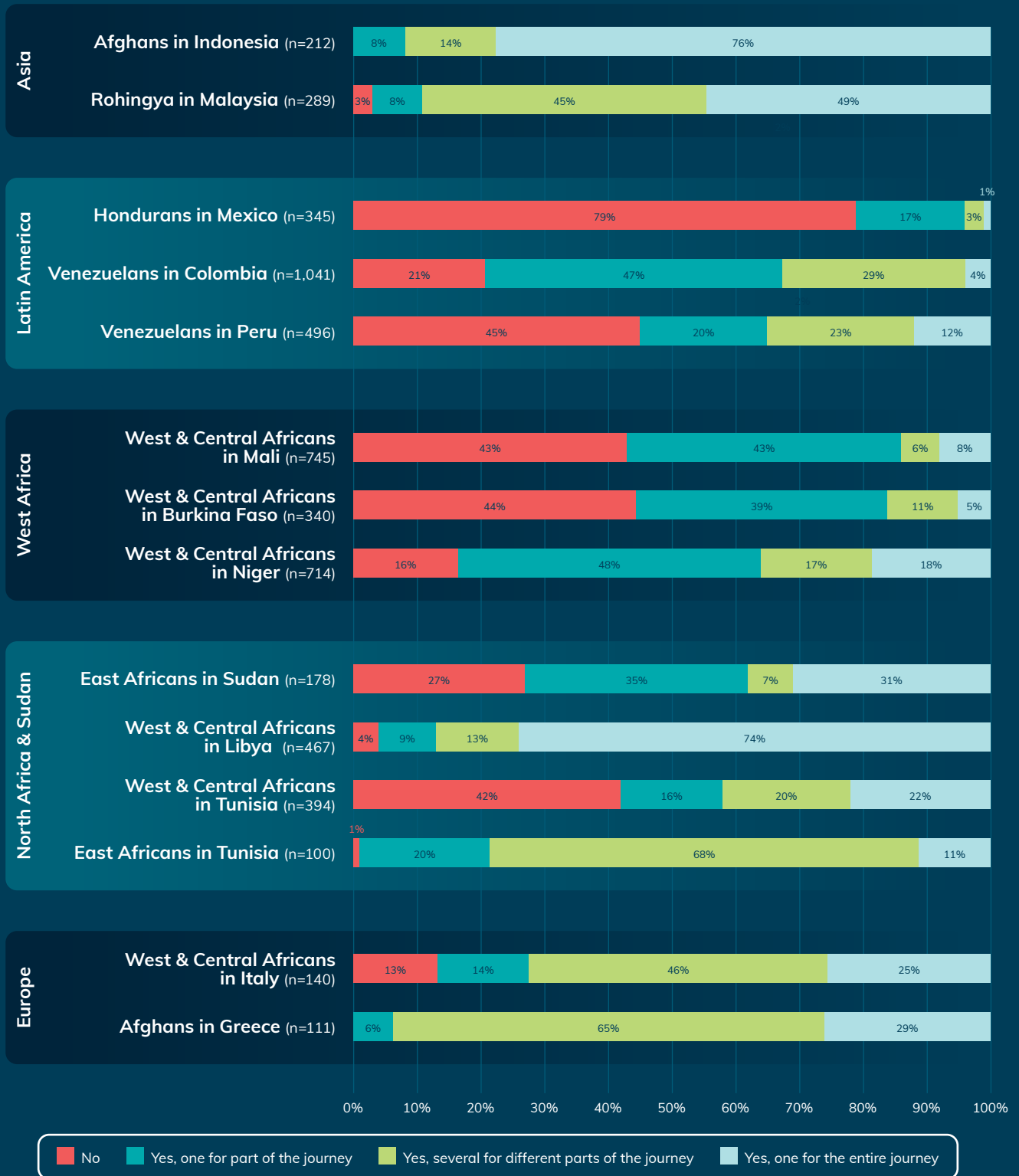
Who uses smugglers?

The majority of 4Mi respondents analysed here use smugglers, although the **use varies by route.**

Respondents in Asia—Afghans who travelled to Indonesia and Rohingya who reached Malaysia—almost all used a smuggler, but while Rohingya were split in their use of smugglers (using one or several along the journey), a majority of Afghans used one smuggler for the whole route. In contrast, in Latin America, Hondurans in Mexico had generally not used a smuggler at all, and Venezuelans in Peru less frequently said they used a smuggler (45% said no) than those interviewed in Colombia (21% said no). This is likely because respondents do not consider the agents used to reach Peru as smugglers. In West Africa, a majority of West Africans say that they used a smuggler, despite most respondents coming from ECOWAS countries, and in theory being able to move freely within the ECOWAS zone (with valid papers). Use of smugglers is higher among people interviewed in Niger, which counted a larger proportion of non-ECOWAS respondents (20%), but which perhaps more importantly is further along the route towards North Africa and Europe, and in line with MMC's broad definition of smuggling, this is where people might start to engage smugglers to prepare for the journey north. In North Africa, 96% of West and Central Africans in Libya report using a smuggler (and most frequently one for the entire journey) compared to 58% in Tunisia, suggesting very different journeys. In contrast, almost all East Africans in Tunisia had used a smuggler (99%). The long journey to Europe, for both Afghans and West and Central Africans, appears to be more fragmented than other journeys: use of smugglers is high for both groups, with several smugglers often used; hardly any of the respondents reached Europe without a smuggler.

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3   In 2021 MMC published a state-of-play knowledge paper on human smuggling, with key messages based on a decade of research, analysis and data collection. The data presented here, among other data, informed the development of this paper, which is available here: https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/181_MMC_Key_Messages_Smuggling_and_Mixed_Migration.pdf

Did you use a smuggler?

Asia

Afghans in Indonesia (n=212)
| 8% | 14% | 76% |

Rohingya in Malaysia (n=289)
| 3% | 8% | 45% | 49% |

Latin America

Hondurans in Mexico (n=345)
| 79% | 17% | 3% | 1% |

Venezuelans in Colombia (n=1,041)
| 21% | 47% | 29% | 4% |

Venezuelans in Peru (n=496)
| 45% | 20% | 23% | 12% |

West Africa

West & Central Africans in Mali (n=745)
| 43% | 43% | 6% | 8% |

West & Central Africans in Burkina Faso (n=340)
| 44% | 39% | 11% | 5% |

West & Central Africans in Niger (n=714)
| 16% | 48% | 17% | 18% |

North Africa & Sudan

East Africans in Sudan (n=178)
| 27% | 35% | 7% | 31% |

West & Central Africans in Libya (n=467)
| 4% | 9% | 13% | 74% |

West & Central Africans in Tunisia (n=394)
| 42% | 16% | 20% | 22% |

East Africans in Tunisia (n=100)
| 1% | 20% | 68% | 11% |

Europe

West & Central Africans in Italy (n=140)
| 13% | 14% | 46% | 25% |

Afghans in Greece (n=111)
| 6% | 65% | 29% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Legend:
- No
- Yes, one for part of the journey
- Yes, several for different parts of the journey
- Yes, one for the entire journey

Note: Refusals are 1% or lower and are not shown.

Smugglers' role as a source of information

We saw when looking into the decision to leave that smugglers are not often mentioned as among the most important influences on that decision—at most, 18% of respondents consider them an influence (among West and Central Africans, with Nigerian women as a notable exception, for whom smugglers are the most important influence on the decision to migrate).

Rather, smugglers are more frequently cited as a source of information before departure, but even then by only one-third of respondents, or fewer. This suggests that **smugglers do not play a large role for most people in their preparations to leave.** Even where a majority of respondents report using smugglers for their entire journey (Afghans in Indonesia and West and Central

Africans in Libya), smugglers are not considered to be key sources of information before setting off (36% and 28%, respectively). The data suggest that **the decision to use a smuggler is most often made independently of interaction with smugglers.**

It is during the journey that smugglers more frequently prove to be a source of information. For almost all the groups who most frequently used a smuggler, smugglers are the first- or second-most commonly cited source of information during the journey (Rohingya interviewed in Malaysia, Venezuelans in Colombia, West and Central Africans in Niger and Libya, and East Africans in Tunisia), indicating the level of dependence on smuggler(s).

Smugglers as a source of information
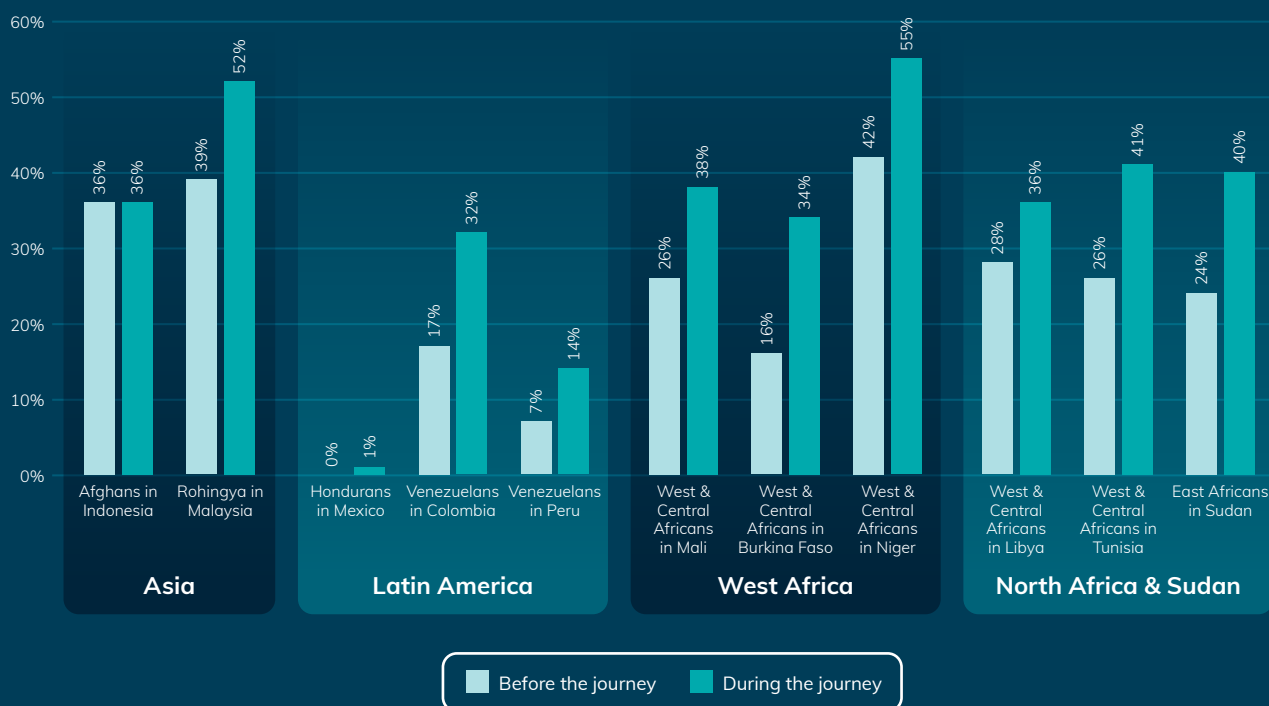
Note: These questions are contingent on the respondent saying that they accessed information before their journey or on their journey, and as such 'n' varies for each sample. (Across the full sample, 74% say they accessed information before the journey, and 63% during the journey.) The samples include people who did and did not use smugglers. Other answer options include friends, family, authorities, migrants, diaspora, returnees, travel agents, employment agents, online community, other.

What do smugglers do?

4Mi respondents indicate that smugglers undertake a number of activities, not all of which would be considered as the crime of smuggling or related crimes (see also page 101, and the box on MMC's definition of smuggling).

People generally use smugglers for more than one activity, with Afghan respondents in Greece and Indonesia, and respondents in Tunisia, generally reporting more than three. Those reporting the least number of activities are Venezuelans in Colombia and West and Central Africans in Burkina Faso.

The main activity remains that of facilitating border crossing, but again the extent of this varies across routes, with West and Central African respondents in Mali, Tunisia and Libya least frequently mentioning border crossing (45%, 56% and 66%, respectively). Note the very different kinds of journey to Tunisia between West and Central Africans (where 56% used a smuggler to

facilitate border crossing) and East Africans (where 89% used a smuggler to be able to cross a border). Many West and Central Africans can fly direct to Tunisia and obtain a visa on arrival. They therefore do not use smugglers to facilitate the border crossing directly, but will often work with someone to organise and facilitate payment for the journey, who could be included within the broad understanding of 'smuggler'.

The other activities for which a smuggler is used differ according to route: 88% of Afghans in Indonesia report the provision of documents, the only group to report something other than the facilitation of border crossings most frequently. 53% of Afghans in Greece reported food or water, and West and Central Africans in Mali reported accommodation and in-country transportation almost as frequently as border crossing (44%, 43%, 45%, respectively).

Respondents using smugglers for border crossings
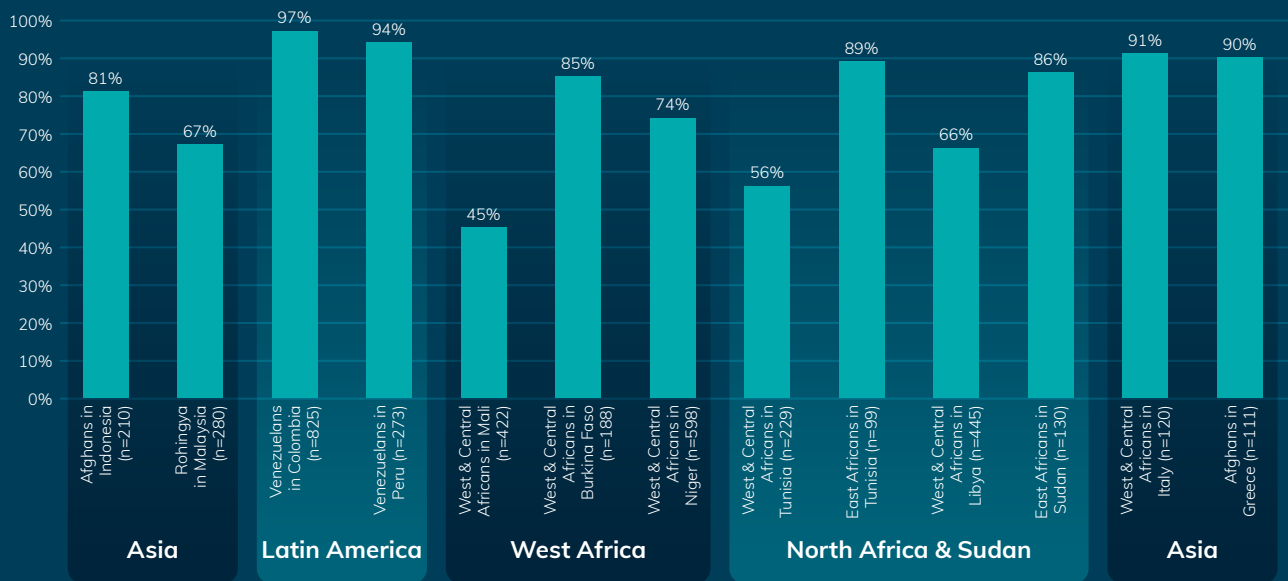
Note: The other answer options are provision of documents; dealing with authorities; accommodation; in-country transportation; food or water; facilitation of money transfer; medicine; access to phone/internet; introduction to other smugglers; help finding a job; facilitation of release from detention; other; refused.

The role of smugglers in violence against refugees and migrants

Undoubtedly, human smuggling is often accompanied by violent and exploitative practices that show a blatant disregard for fundamental rights. The data throughout the last decade at least, repeatedly shows smugglers are among the key perpetrators of violence against refugees and migrants on the move, even though—depending on routes and nationalities—a considerable group of respondents does not necessarily feel misled, and considers that smugglers have helped them achieve their goal of migrating to another country (see below).

Overall, among a total sample of 8,544 people who reported a dangerous location on their journey, 46% indicated smugglers as perpetrators of a range of serious incidents including death (through criminal neglect, overcrowding of trucks and boats etc. or outright murder), physical violence, sexual violence, robbery and extortion. Within the total sample, including people who did and did not use smugglers, this means smugglers rank as the third most common perpetrators of abuse along the journey, after criminal gangs (72%) and armed groups/militias (48%). In some contexts, these groups may overlap: smugglers have been found in some cases to closely collude with criminal gangs, including human traffickers, as well as exploitative state officials.

There are notable differences by location or population. For example, 91% of Eritreans indicate that smugglers are the perpetrators of incidents in dangerous locations,

making them the most common perpetrator. In Asia, too, smugglers are the most common perpetrators, while in West Africa they rank seventh, and in East Africa, government officials are named as the most common perpetrators of violence and abuse.

At the same time, in many situations, smugglers are the only recourse refugees and migrants have to cross borders to find safety. Research has shown that many of those choosing to use smugglers are aware of the dangers of journeys and the fact that smugglers themselves may be perpetrators of abuse. An absence of alternative options for crossing inhospitable and risky terrain, lakes and seas, or negotiating clandestine or bribed border points leaves refugees and migrants with little choice. Many smugglers, for a fee, provide exactly that service without any violence and without exploiting their 'clients'. In other words: smugglers are neither all malignant criminals nor all benign travel agents/service providers. Instead of such a simplistic dichotomy, smugglers can be placed along a spectrum, and this is reflected across 4Mi data: as observed below, most survey respondents state that smugglers helped them to achieve their goal of migrating to another country—a crucial step towards finding protection or fulfilling their life aspirations—while at the same time frequently citing them as among the primary perpetrators of protection violations, along with other groups such as criminal gangs and certain state officials.

Who are the likely perpetrators of abuses?

n= 8,555
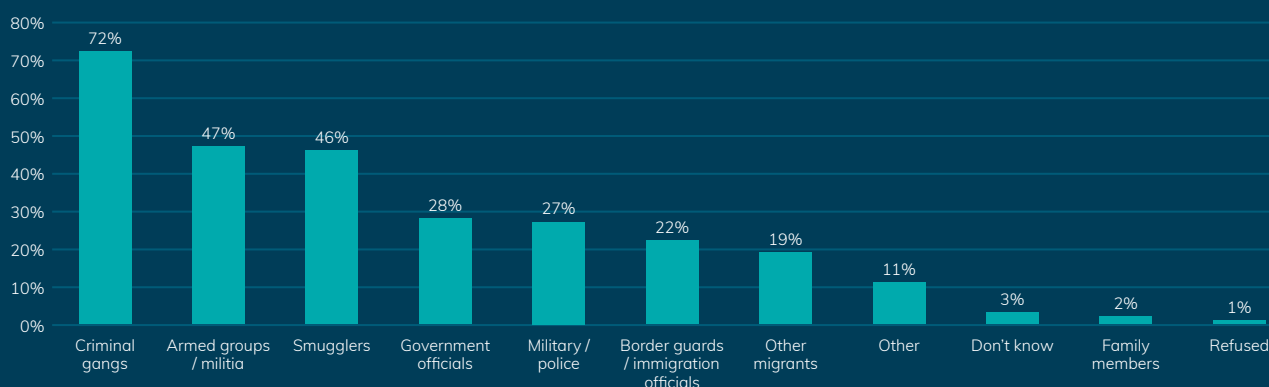
Note: All 4Mi respondents are asked about dangerous places on their journey (including those who did not use a smuggler). For each place they mention, they are asked who are the perpetrators of abuse and violence in that location. Respondents can report multiple locations and multiple perpetrators for each location. This dataset is larger than that used for the rest of the analysis on smuggling here, and includes data collected across 4Mi between late 2019 and June 2021.
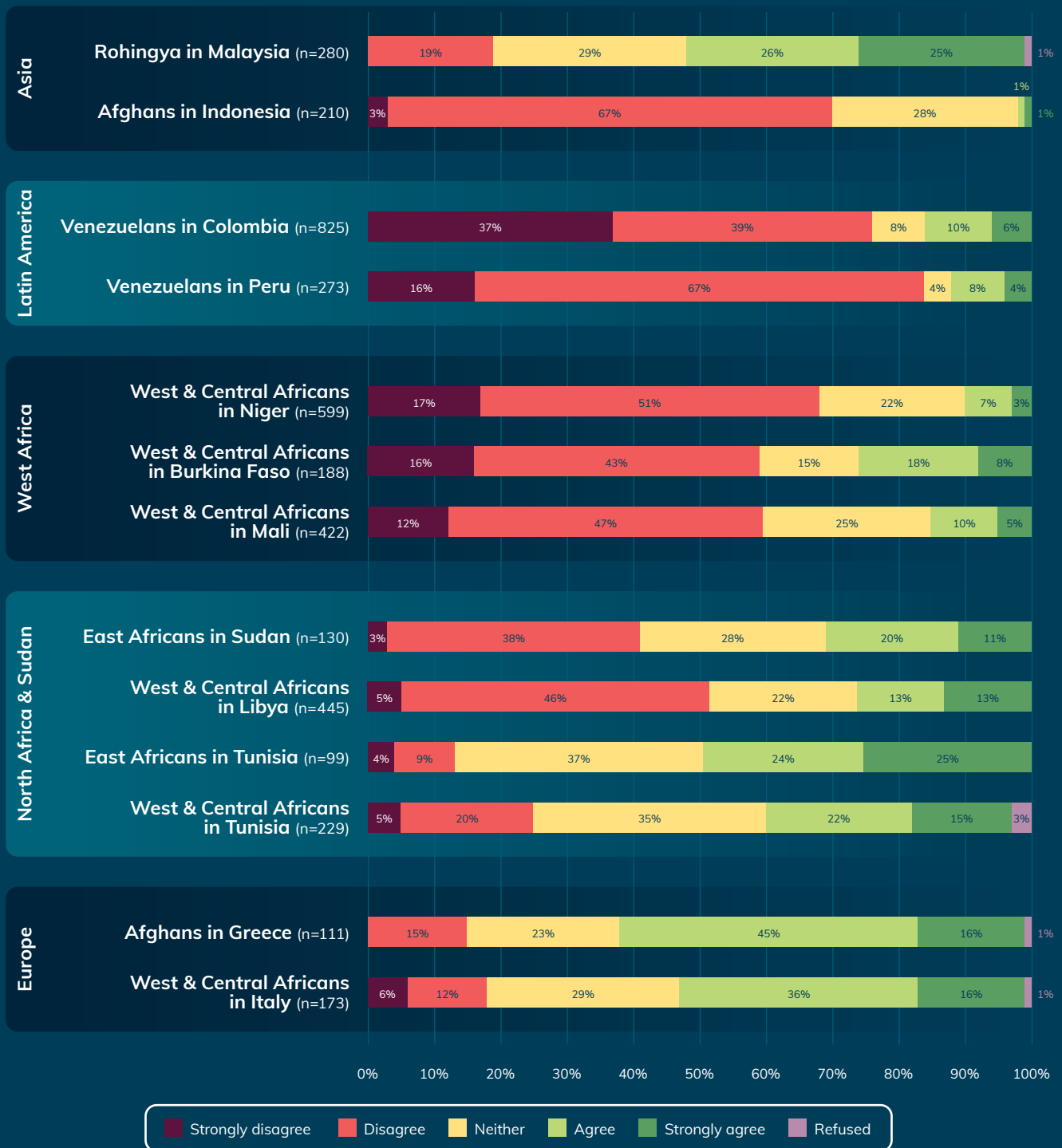
4Mi

What do refugees and migrants think of smugglers?

Do people feel misled by smugglers?
Just as people's use of smugglers varies, so does their perception of them. In Latin America, most respondents do not consider themselves to have been misled by smugglers (83% and 76% disagreed in Peru and Colombia, respectively). A majority also disagree in West Africa (between 59% and 68%) and among Afghans in Indonesia (70%).
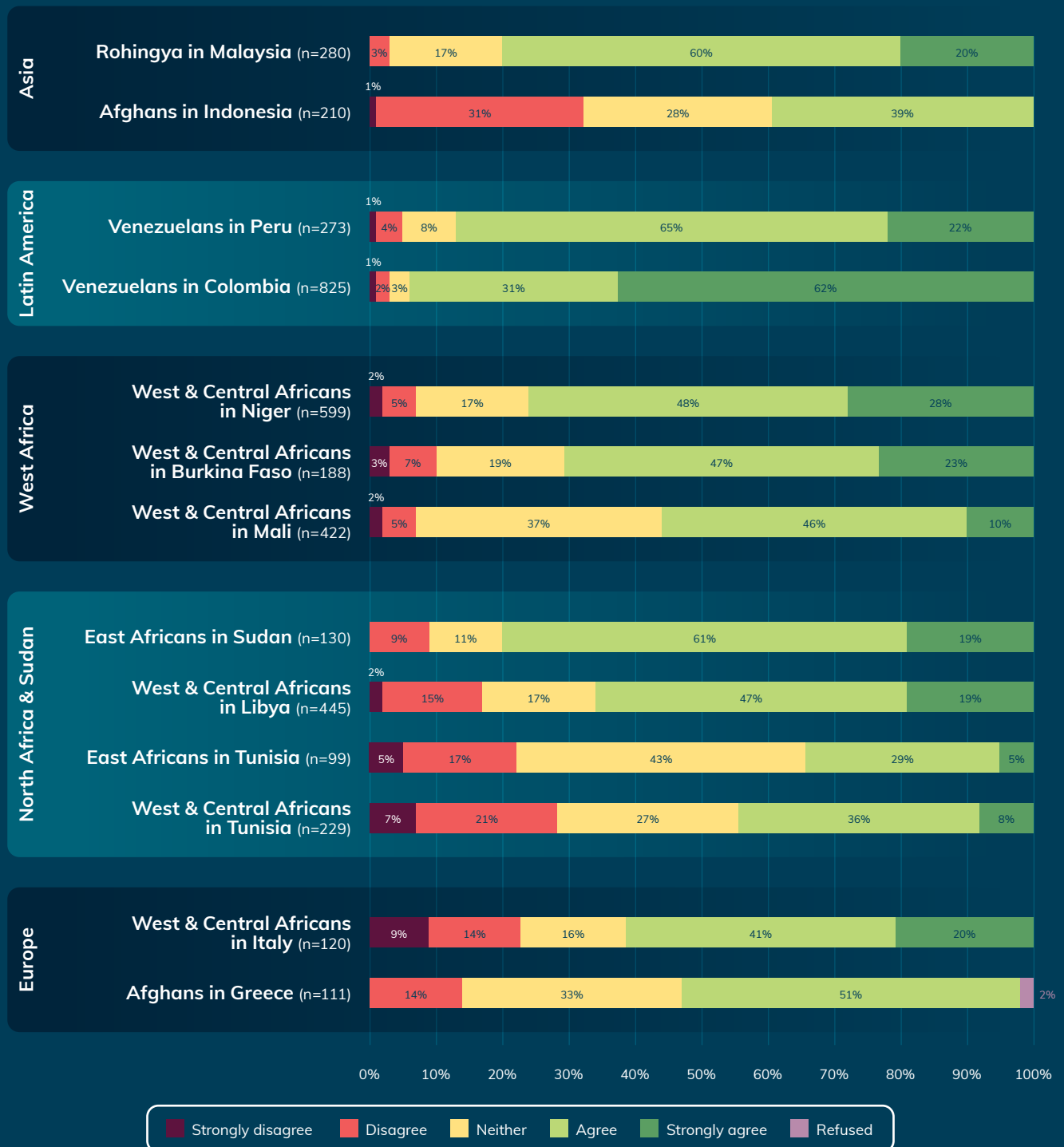
Do you agree? "I was intentionally misled about the journey by my smuggler or smugglers"

Asia

Rohingya in Malaysia (n=280): 19% | 29% | 26% | 25% | 1%

Afghans in Indonesia (n=210): 3% | 67% | 28% | 1% | 1%

Latin America

Venezuelans in Colombia (n=825): 37% | 39% | 8% | 10% | 6%

Venezuelans in Peru (n=273): 16% | 67% | 4% | 8% | 4%

West Africa

West & Central Africans in Niger (n=599): 17% | 51% | 22% | 7% | 3%

West & Central Africans in Burkina Faso (n=188): 16% | 43% | 15% | 18% | 8%

West & Central Africans in Mali (n=422): 12% | 47% | 25% | 10% | 5%

North Africa & Sudan

East Africans in Sudan (n=130): 3% | 38% | 28% | 20% | 11%

West & Central Africans in Libya (n=445): 5% | 46% | 22% | 13% | 13%

East Africans in Tunisia (n=99): 4% | 9% | 37% | 24% | 25%

West & Central Africans in Tunisia (n=229): 5% | 20% | 35% | 22% | 15% | 3%

Europe

Afghans in Greece (n=111): 15% | 23% | 45% | 16% | 1%

West & Central Africans in Italy (n=173): 6% | 12% | 29% | 36% | 16% | 1%

Legend: Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly agree | Refused

In contrast, we see that the majority of 4Mi respondents who used smugglers on the journey to Europe—whether they come from Africa or Asia—consider that the smuggler misled them. This is also true for Rohingya in Malaysia. While we cannot speculate on how refugees and migrants were misled, analysis of conditions on these routes, and in Europe and Malaysia, suggests that perhaps respondents do not feel that the journey or the experience reflected what smugglers told them.

Do you agree? "The smuggler or smugglers I used helped me in achieving my goal of migrating to another country"

Asia

Rohingya in Malaysia (n=280): 3% | 17% | 60% | 20%
Afghans in Indonesia (n=210): 1% | 31% | 28% | 39%

Latin America

Venezuelans in Peru (n=273): 1% | 4% | 8% | 65% | 22%
Venezuelans in Colombia (n=825): 1% | 2% | 3% | 31% | 62%

West Africa

West & Central Africans in Niger (n=599): 2% | 5% | 17% | 48% | 28%
West & Central Africans in Burkina Faso (n=188): 3% | 7% | 19% | 47% | 23%
West & Central Africans in Mali (n=422): 2% | 5% | 37% | 46% | 10%

North Africa & Sudan

East Africans in Sudan (n=130): 9% | 11% | 61% | 19%
West & Central Africans in Libya (n=445): 2% | 15% | 17% | 47% | 19%
East Africans in Tunisia (n=99): 5% | 17% | 43% | 29% | 5%
West & Central Africans in Tunisia (n=229): 7% | 21% | 27% | 36% | 8%

Europe

West & Central Africans in Italy (n=120): 9% | 14% | 16% | 41% | 20%
Afghans in Greece (n=111): 14% | 33% | 51% | 2%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Legend: Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly agree | Refused

Do people consider the smuggler(s) to have helped them to achieve their goal?

Even among groups where a majority felt misled, a majority still felt that smugglers had helped them in achieving their goal of migrating to another country (80% of Rohingya, 61% of West and Central Africans in Italy, and 51% of Afghans in Greece). Agreement that smugglers have helped is extremely high in Latin America, and a majority agree in West Africa, Sudan, and Libya.

Afghans in Indonesia are less enthusiastic: only 39% agree that the smuggler helped them in achieving their goal, which is remarkable given that almost all respondents interviewed on that route used a smuggler. However, this may be because the three major intended destinations for Afghans interviewed in Indonesia are Australia, Canada and the United States—only 1.5% indicate that Indonesia is their intended destination. As such, most Afghans in Indonesia have not yet achieved their goal (although our data does not tell which destination the smugglers promised to bring them to). In Tunisia as well, a smaller share of respondents find smugglers helpful in achieving their goal to migrate to another country (34% of East Africans and 44% of West and Central Africans). Again, this could probably be explained by the fact that less than 1% consider Tunisia their intended destination. In contrast, while many respondents in Europe feel misled, most do agree the smuggler helped to achieve their goal, as they may be closer to their final destination in Europe.
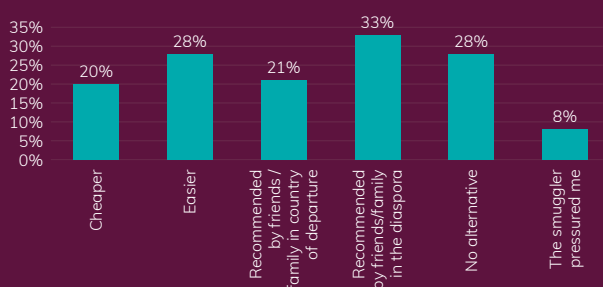
4Mi

Focus on respondents in Libya

In 2021, MMC asked some targeted questions to people who had used smugglers.[1] Here we focus on West and Central African respondents in Libya, 96% of whom reported having used a smuggler.

The reasons for using a smuggler are varied. One-third say they chose to use a smuggler upon the recommendation of someone who had already migrated. 28% say that they had no alternative. This is the same proportion who say they chose one to make the journey easier, suggesting that for many, the journey would have been not just more difficult, but perhaps even impossible, without a smuggler.

In support of the data above on the relatively minor influence of smugglers over most people's migration decisions—at least, before the journey begins—we find that the majority of respondents make contact through an intermediary, or approach the smuggler directly themselves. Still, 14% of respondents were approached by the smuggler.

Ultimately, in Libya, West and Central African respondents—despite a substantial proportion saying they were intentionally misled as seen in the previous section—describe smugglers relatively positively. 85% consider the smuggler to be a service provider or business person, and only 15% consider them to be criminals.

Why did you use a smuggler?

West & Central Africans in Libya (n=332)

Category	%
Cheaper	20%
Easier	28%
Recommended by friends / family in country of departure	21%
Recommended by friends/family in the diaspora	33%
No alternative	28%
The smuggler pressured me	8%

Note: Respondents can provide more than one answer. 'Other', 'don't know' and 'refused' all below 1% and not shown.

How did you first get in contact with a smuggler?

West & Central Africans in Libya (n=332)

I approached the smuggler	Friends / family put us in touch	The smuggler approached me	Other
35%	50%	14%	1%

Did you plan to use a smuggler?

West & Central Africans in Libya (n=332)

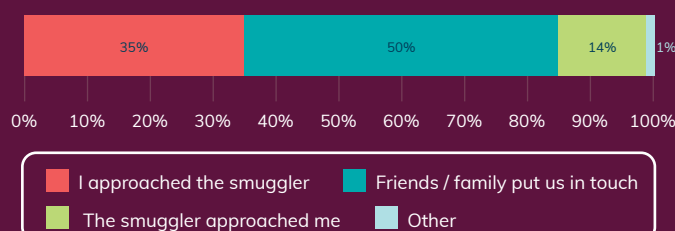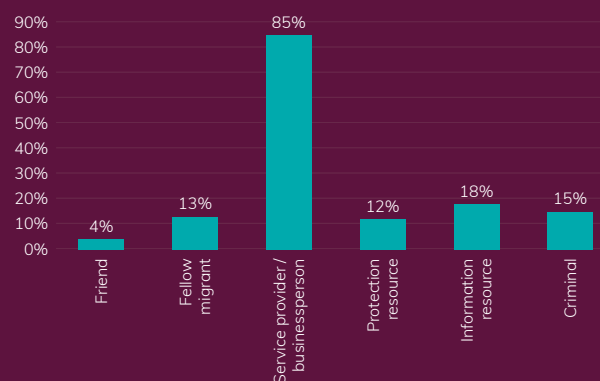| No	Don't know	Yes
18%	1%	81%
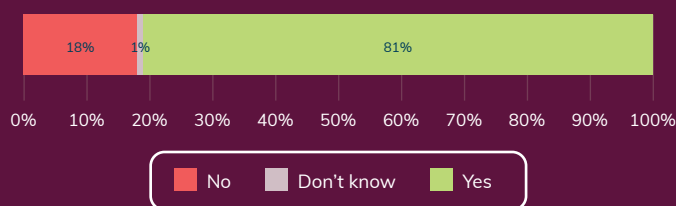
Even in Libya, where many refugees and migrants rely on smugglers to cross the Sahara, and 28% say they had no alternative, respondents do not always report planning to use a smuggler. While 81% who used a smuggler had expected to do so, that still leaves a fair proportion who ended up using one when they did not plan on it.

How would you describe your smuggler or smugglers?

West & Central Africans in Libya (n=332)

Category	%
Friend	4%
Fellow migrant	13%
Service provider / businessperson	85%
Protection resource	12%
Information resource	18%
Criminal	15%

Note: Respondents can provide more than one answer.

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1   These questions were added to our 4Mi surveys in North and West Africa, as part of MMC's partnership with UNODC in 2021, collecting and providing data on human smuggling based on 4Mi interviews for UNODC's Observatory on Migrant Smuggling.

Children attend a Covid-19 awareness campaign in an informal settlement near New Usmanpur in New Delhi. The extreme poor in urban settings are among "trapped populations", many of whom live in precarious and marginal locations and have no choice but to remain where they live, despite pandemics or other factors such as climate change and environmental stressors.

Alternative Perspectives

Essay competition prize winners

Introducing a new feature to the Mixed Migration Review, this year we publish five essays by academics and analysts under the age of 30 who are based in the Global South. These were deemed to be the most original and well-drafted of the dozens of essays submitted to MMC in response to a competition we launched to find alternative perspectives on migration issues. More than 600 people entered the competition by sending abstracts. As well as having their essays published in MMR 2021, the five winners received prize money to assist them in their studies and potential careers as Global South migration analysts and commentators.
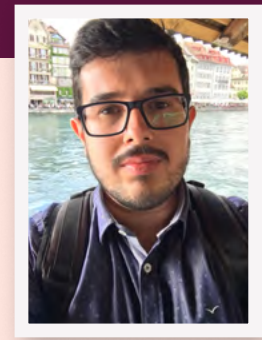
Welcome? What welcome? Securitisation and institutional xenophobia in Brazil's immigration policy

By Roberto Rodolfo Georg Uebel[1]

Introduction

This essay addresses the securitisation of the Brazilian state agenda in relation to migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The use of the armed forces in operations to host and receive migrants on Brazilian borders— especially through the ironically named Operation Welcome (Operação Acolhida, in Portuguese)—and the security- and military-inflected discourse adopted by the government of President Jair Bolsonaro when discussing migration marks a stark break from the approach to migration governance the country had taken since re-democratisation in the 1980s. The progressive milestones of that period include the adoption of the 1997 Refuge Law, the new Migration Law of 2017, and the signing of the 2018 Global Compact for Migration (GCM)—which the country left shortly after Bolsonaro's inauguration in January 2019.

The essay will also explore other aspects that involve securitised discourse in public policies and governmental and administrative actions, with elements of what I call institutional-governmental xenophobia. This hostility is reflected in the non-recognition of migrants' academic diplomas and professional records; bureaucratisation in the issuance of migration documents; slowness in granting work and residency permits and refugee status; and a lack of transparency and discrimination in access to public services. Despite these tendencies, I see grounds for hope as countervailing attitudes are also on the rise.

Securitisation of migration, migrants, and borders

Brazil's territorial and borderland diversity puts it in a privileged and nuanced situation: in the south, southeast, and centre-west regions, the borders with fellow Mercosur countries—Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay—allow Brazilian agricultural goods and other commodities to move freely towards the ports of the Pacific in Chile and Peru. At northern frontiers, another reality is present: border tensions, smuggling and human trafficking, border porosities,[2] and migration flows— many of which are irregular under the Brazilian law.

The borders with Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana—and by extension from the latter, with France and the European Union— have always been a source of concern for the Brazilian Armed Forces, the only state institution present in those borderlands until the middle of the last decade.

Map of Brazil's borderland diversity

It is precisely on the frontiers of the centre-west and northern region of the country where the main migration flows of the last ten years have occurred: first with

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2   Becker, B. K., Miranda, M., & Machado, L. O. (1990). *Fronteira amazônica: Questões sobre a gestão do território*. Brasília, Distrito Federal: Editora UnB.

Bolivians, who sought better living conditions and often found work analogous to slavery in São Paulo; then with Haitians and Senegalese, who after a long intercontinental and transatlantic migration journey entered the country via the borders with Bolivia and Peru; and more recently with Venezuelans, who are the primary target of the migration securitisation and criminalisation agenda of Bolsonaro's government.

To understand how migration is perceived by Brazilian society and, more specifically, by the Brazilian government, it is important to understand that it is inseparable from the discussion on borders, since most migration flows towards Brazil occur over land. Unlike in Australia or European countries, where immigrants travel mainly through ports, airports, and the high seas, in Brazil, the process of denial of admission, expulsion, and deportation does not necessarily take place instantaneously at checkpoints at land borders, but rather in big cities and urban centres, and does so more incrementally, through the precariousness of migrants' work, difficulties in accessing public services, and a type of segregation in spaces occupied by Brazilians, be they in the spheres of business, leisure, or even academia. Expulsion is built step by step from exclusion.

To deal with these issues, in 2018, the administration of then-president Michel Temer launched 'Operation Welcome', which was expanded by Bolsonaro, who gave responsibility for hosting and integrating migrants to the Armed Forces, and more specifically the Army, since the Navy was responsible for the medical treatment of newly arrived Venezuelans and the Air Force for their transport to destination cities in all regions of the country.

This operation ended up triggering an unprecedented process of securitising migration in which immigrants came to be seen as "threats" to national sovereignty and were treated as individuals who needed to be monitored and "welcomed" according to military approaches, i.e., with strict disciplinary, organisational, and social treatment.

Although it is not framed in the same way as the European Union's Frontex or the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 'Operation Welcome' aroused the interest of authorities in Europe—and France in particular—and the US, whose then Vice President Mike Pence visited cities in the North region and the immigrants and asylum seekers camps in the state of Roraima in 2018.[3] The interest of these external actors was driven by the possibility of Brazil cooperating in the process of blocking flows towards Central America, and therefore to the United States, and towards French Guiana, a gateway to continental Europe. The securitisation of migration in Brazil was another element of the governmental xenophobia and hostility to immigrants that would increase in the country from 2019 onwards.

Bolsonaro and institutional-governmental xenophobia

Elected with an ultra-conservative and far-right agenda, during his electoral campaign Bolsonaro also attacked all themes and actors related to human rights. Migrants were not spared from his prejudice.

One of the first actions of the Bolsonaro government was to withdraw Brazil from the GCM and aid American authorities in the deportation of undocumented Brazilians in the United States, a gesture to the Trump government offered in exchange for a hypothetical compensation and Washington's support for the admission of Brazil as a member of NATO and the OECD, something that never happened.

Despite being called "scum of world"[4] and as mostly lacking "good intentions"[5] by the Brazilian president, migrants and refugees continued to see in Brazil the possibility of rebuilding their lives, even amid the political, economic, and social crisis that the country had been experiencing since 2014, the year of the last immigration boom, when Brazil reached the mark of two million foreign resident, mostly from the Caribbean, Latin America, and West Africa.

Bolsonaro's governmental xenophobia was not only present in his speech, but also in the practices, often in a veiled way, of the institutions of the Brazilian state and federal workers. The refusal of professional bodies to recognise diplomas held by Haitians, Senegalese and Venezuelans; the unfamiliarity with immigration law demonstrated by subcontracted Federal Police workers; the difficulty in accessing public health, housing, and education services; and the lack of Portuguese language courses all offer clear illustrations of institutional and governmental xenophobia.

Meanwhile, Brazilian society at large, impacted by the political polarisation of recent years, found itself increasingly divided in its opinions. While Venezuelans were called "brothers and sisters"[6] by a more right-wing part of the population due to their opposition to Nicolás Maduro and leftist regimes, many Haitians and West Africans found themselves in a situation of vulnerability and labour exploitation by these same people.

This institutional xenophobia is compounded by the enduring colonial legacies of socioeconomic inequality,

3   US Dept of State (2018) U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, and Second Lady Pence Visit Brasilia and Manaus, Brazil.
4   Romero, S. (2016) Conservative's Star Rises in Brazil as Polarizing Views Tap Into Discontent. New York Times.
5   One Vox Press (2019) In interview, Brazilian's President says that most immigrants have 'no good intentions'.
6   Uebel, R., Brígido, E. & Ribeiro, V. (2020) Evolução da governança migratória no Brasil: desafios teóricos, mudanças normativas e ecos sociais de sentimentos xenofóbicos. Ideias.

ethnic-racial prejudice, and discrimination by gender, colour, and nationality. The Covid-19 pandemic came to aggravate the vulnerable situation of migrants and refugees in the country, generating a peculiar situation: a nation of mass immigration and emigration at the same time.

Outlook of a country of immigration and emigration

The inaction of the Bolsonaro administration in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic ensured Brazil ranked among the top three countries in the world in terms of coronavirus infections and fatalities. Migrants and refugees were particularly affected by the lack of migration and health governance. Moreover, border closures, local lockdowns, and social distancing rules, coupled with the interruption of public services for immigrants and refugees, severely affected populations on the move.

And as Brazil observed an increase in the inward flows of Venezuelans who tried their luck in crossing a securitised and closed border to escape the social pandemonium that their own country was experiencing, hundreds of Haitians and Senegalese tried to leave Brazil via its northern border with Peru in search of better healthcare and economic opportunities in Peru itself and other countries deemed more promising than Brazil—or even to return to their countries of origin.

With unemployment reaching 15 million Brazilians (14.8 percent of the population), the former "Brazilian dream"[7] or "Brazilian Eldorado"[8] has become a nightmare for both nationals and foreigners, especially migrants and refugees, who have seen their vulnerabilities increased by the pandemic and the xenophobia institutionalised by a far-right-wing government.

In addition, the cancellation of the 2021 census, already postponed from 2020, deprives researchers, public policymakers and regional governments of important data on the migration reality of the country. Today, we do not even know how many vaccines will be needed for migrants and refugees living in the country, despite being in the priority groups of the programme prepared by the Ministry of Health, whose last minister was the former chief of 'Operation Welcome'.

Light at the end of the tunnel

The Brazil of hospitality, assertive foreign policy, and defence of human rights observed in the social-democratic and progressive governments that preceded Temer and Bolsonaro now lies in the past. The country that for a decade was the preferred destination not only for people from Latin Americans and the Caribbean, but also for West Africans, Palestinians, Syrians, Japanese and Chinese, today presents itself as a nation with a flawed democracy, marked by the securitisation of migration and borders, and an increase of governmental and institutional xenophobia, hitherto unheard of, including during the military dictatorship that plagued the country for nearly three decades.

The Covid-19 pandemic aggravated vulnerabilities and interrupted the formulation and execution of more welcoming migration policies by Brazil's states and municipalities. Still, such policies are gaining strength and endorsement from governors, mayors, and civil society organisations, such as universities, research centres and other bodies, including the judiciary and the legislative branches. In contrast to the regressive tendencies of the central government outlined above, states and municipalities are beginning to organise themselves to create policies for the reception, inclusion, and recognition of migrant citizenship, incorporating guidelines from the 2017 Migration Law and addressing contemporary issues such as access to employment in the post-pandemic era, vaccination of migrants, and combating anti-migration discrimination. There are promising signals coming from the interior of Brazil even in these darkest of times.

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7   Uebel, R. & Abaide, J. (2017) Brazilian dream: a inserção estratégica do Brasil na América Latina como fator de atração de fluxos de imigração em massa nas duas primeiras décadas do século XXI. Mediações - Revista de Ciências Sociais.

8   Silva, S. & Assis, G. (2016) Em busca do Eldorado: O Brasil no contexto das migrações nacionais e internacionais. Universidade Federal do Amazonas.
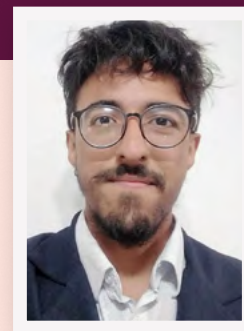
Hidden in the eye of the storm? The invisibility of environmental displacement in Colombia

By Diego Toledo[1]

Introduction

This essay offers an overview of the current situation, issues, and challenges related to forced displacement in Colombia in the context of environmental change.

Terminological ambiguity

At the outset it is important to highlight the polysemy—the coexistence of many possible meanings for a word or phrase—that exists when talking of and communicating about refugees, displaced persons, and environmental migrants.

Although the issue of environmental migration is gaining international momentum, with important statements[2] and partnerships being generated through inter-institutional, multi-stakeholder efforts and bodies—such as those being spearheaded by the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,[3] the United Nations Network on Migration, and the Platform on Disaster Displacement[4]—the polysemy and plurality of the terms point to a structural problem, generated by the lack of a political-legal consensus at the international level to address these issues. This has important methodological consequences when it comes to identifying and monitoring environmental events and migratory movements, and ultimately affects the quality and measures of protection that should be guaranteed to affected communities.

In this initial approach to the issue, it is important to note that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) recognises that there are controversies surrounding certain definitions, such as "environmental refugee" or "climate refugee", so it prefers the use of "environmentally displaced person", which is used as a starting point in this essay, and which IOM defines as:

> *Persons who are displaced within their country of habitual residence or who have crossed an international border and for whom environmental degradation, deterioration or destruction is a major cause of their displacement [of a forced nature], although not necessarily the sole one.*[5]

Since there is still a precarious understanding of precisely what an environmentally displaced person (or an environmental refugee) is, and a lack of coherence in the legal standard used at the international[6] and national levels, it will logically be difficult to determine the consequences of non-compliance with a loose and ultimately non-binding norm.[7] In this context, several questions emerge: Which state or humanitarian aid agencies should intervene? Who should assume the protection mandate? Who can be held accountable by civil society and affected communities?

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1 Diego has a B.A. in International Relations (Catholic University of Córdoba) and works as a Knowledge Collaboration Intern at HURIDOCS.
2 Some key examples include: UN General Assembly (2016) The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and UNHCR (2011) The 10-Point Plan in Action.
3 For a pertinent analysis of the GCM see: Ionesco, D. & Traore Chazalnoë, M. (n.d.) 10 Key Takeaways from the GCM on Environmental Migration. Nascent UN-led mechanisms include the International Migration Review Forum focusing on GCM implementation to be held in 2022; the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, the first migration-focused funding instrument; IOM's International Dialogue on Migration sessions; and the Migrants in Countries in Crisis initiative.
4 Details of the platform can be found at: https://disasterdisplacement.org/the-platform.
5 IOM (2014) Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Evidence for Policy (MECLEP) – Glossary.
6 For an account of the internal displacement legal regime and analysis of challenges and new horizons from the field of international law, see: Felipe Pérez, B. (2016) Las migraciones climáticas: retos y propuestas desde el Derecho Internacional. (Doctoral thesis). Universitat Rovira I Virgili, Tarragona, Spain. See also: Garcia Muñoz, C., Aguirre, A., & Álvarez Puerto, J. (2014) Desplazamiento ambiental: aportes conceptuales, metodológicos y normativos como base para su comprensión y reconocimiento en las agendas públicas (in Gonzaga, J. & Hernández, V. (eds) (2014) Cambio Climático y Desplazamiento Ambiental Forzado: Estudio de caso en la Ecoregión Eje Cafetero en Colombia.)
7 Barberis Rami, M. (2014) ¿Hacia dónde van los migrantes ambientales?. Cuadernos de Derecho Público.

Methodological challenges

As a result of decades of armed conflict and peace processes, Colombia leads the way in the design of its institutions and mechanisms for monitoring, protection, assistance, and accountability for the various crimes and offences inherent to its complex history of international humanitarian law violations.

With regard to internal displacement specifically, there are important examples of political-normative regulation.[8] Various social organisations, state institutions and international bodies are dedicated to monitoring displacement resulting from armed conflict in the country.

However, the Colombian legal regime has developed only a limited system of assistance and protection for those displaced by the climate crisis.[9] Correspondingly, new challenges arise in monitoring environmental displacement. Few organisations include this perspective.

Relevant agencies at the national level, such as the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD), report on these events, but without linking them to the socio-political fabric of internal displacement.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for its part, identifies environmental impacts through its "monitor", transcending the category into the concept of displacement.[10]

Therefore, as part of a methodological strengthening effort to compile the information set out in the next section, this essay draws from a range of sources, such as (in order of statistical importance): reference data from specialised bodies (such as OCHA,[11] UNHCR, WHO, government agencies, and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre[12]); statements and reports from social organisations; and information identified through press releases.

An additional methodological difficulty should be noted: estimates of the number of affected people—regardless of the type of source—are frequently expressed in terms of families rather than individuals, which can generate inaccuracies in the form of both under and over reporting of the phenomenon.[13]

What does the data say?

The following variables were used to develop the graphics presented below: years and months of occurrence of the events (temporality), causes, department (spatiality), type of displacement (massive or multiple), and number of affected individuals.

Figure 1 shows that the highest numbers of events related to environmental displacement occur in the months of July, June and November for both 2019 and 2020. Observing that the months of June and July (winter season in Colombia) and October concentrate peaks or upward curves in terms of numbers of affected people, it could be deduced that there is a lack of preparation and prevention when it comes to mitigating and adapting to the impact of environmental phenomena. The peak in November 2020 is explained by severe flooding in the department of Chocó which, according to the IDMC, displaced 35,000 people.

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8   According to the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement, Art.1 of Law 387/07 defines a "person in a situation of displacement". This was reinforced in 2003 by judgment T-268, which recognises as minimum and necessary two conditions to recognise facts of forced internal displacement: (i) the coercion that makes the relocation necessary, (ii) the permanence within the border of the nation itself.

9   For example, law 1523 of 2012, "which reformed the National System for Disaster Risk Management and Environmental Migration (SNGRD) that constitutes and articulates local and national public policies and stipulates some emergency measures". Sarmiento-Erazo, J. (2018) Migración por cambio climático en Colombia: entre los refugiados medioambientales y los migrantes económicos. Jurídicas.

10   OCHA (n.d.) Monitor – Colombia.

11   OCHA's environmental impact records are particularly useful when combined with complementary searches, identifying factors relevant to displacement, such as: homes made unusable or destroyed, people placed in shelters, evacuations (whether planned or unplanned, voluntary or not), and relocations, among others.

12   IDMC (n.d.) Colombia – Country Information.

13   Generally, under-reporting prevails. For example, although there is a consensus for making estimates (one household equals four or five persons, depending on the source), there are socio-cultural factors (such as the occurrence and concentration of these phenomena in certain regions where families tend to be larger) that make this an unreliable criterion for making accurate estimates.

**Figure 1. Number of events and casualties per month (2019-2020)**
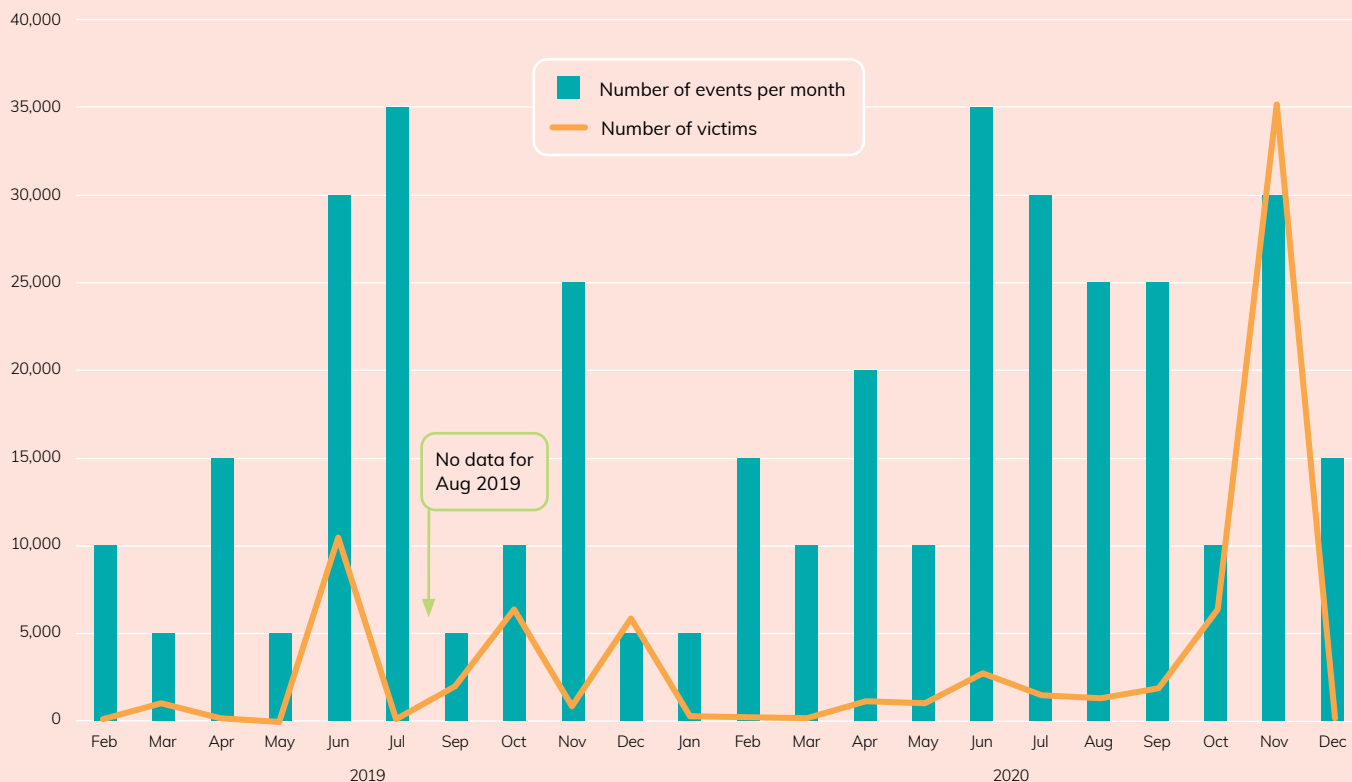
Source: Made by the author based on IDMC, OCHA (Monitor) and press release records.

Figure 2 shows the impact of different causes of environmental displacement. In 2020, floods were the main cause, generating 32,797 and 48,999 displaced persons, respectively. This can be interpreted as a consequence of the country's structural vulnerability to hydrological phenomena, accentuated by the occurrence of natural hazards. Hurricanes (Eta and Iota) were the second greatest cause of displacement (15,000 people) in 2020. If these phenomena had not occurred, it can be deduced that, for both 2019 and 2020, landslides would have been the second recurrent cause of displacement.

Figure 2. Total victims (annual) by type of events (2019-2020)
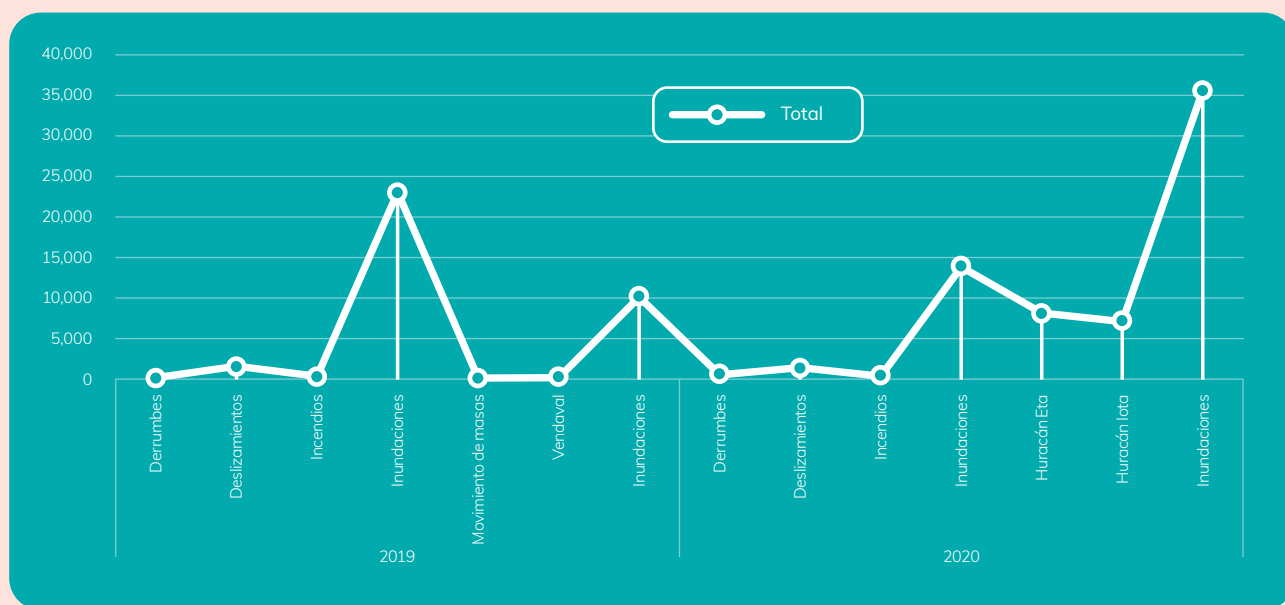
Source: Made by the author based on IDMC, OCHA (Monitor) and press release records.

Figure 3 outlines the worst-affected departments in terms of the total number of environmental displacements in 2019 and 2020. The concentration of colours also reflects the overall panorama. The five departments most affected are: Chocó, Antioquia, Meta-Guaviare, Puntumayo, and Nariño. Three of these—Nariño, Antioquia, Chocó—are among the most affected by armed conflict (main eviction), which shows the territorial bias of this humanitarian crisis in regions that have historically suffered from state neglect or absence.

Figure 3. Geographical concentration of displacements (number of casualties / departments)
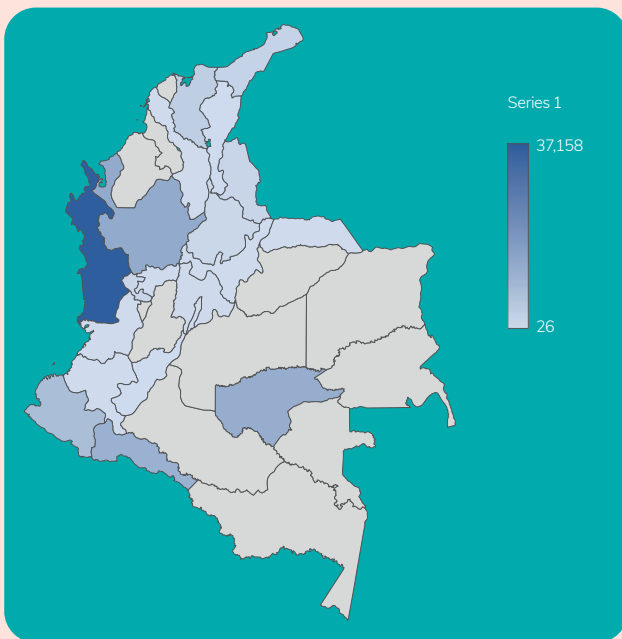
Source: Powered by Bing. © GeoNames, Microsoft, TomTom.

Finally, Figure 4 compares displacement in 2019 and 2020 caused by armed conflict and environmental factors. It clearly shows that in both years environmentally displaced persons outnumbered those who fled armed conflict. While the gravity of the latter is accentuated by the premeditated nature of the acts, the invisibility of environmental displacement is surprising. For its part, the cleaning of the data (the effort made here) is evident, as the OCHA Monitor presented a total of 1,528,360 and 1,307,348 people affected by environmental causes for 2019 and 2020, respectively. For 2021, the data on environmental displacement is absent (OCHA reports 267,180 people affected), so a comparative analysis is not developed for this year. However, even in the face of the acute worsening of the armed conflict (29,782 victims as of June 2021 according to OCHA), the trend of environmental displacement is expected to remain high.

Figure 4. Cumulative number of displacments by primary cause
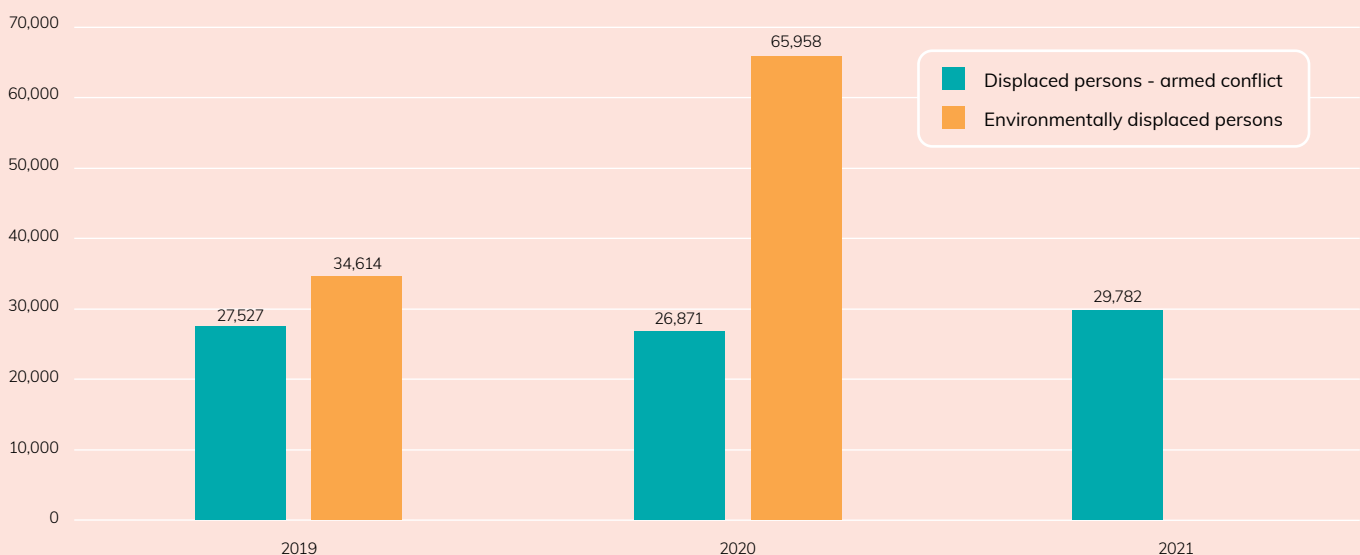
Source: Made by the author based on IDMC, OCHA (Monitor) and press release records.

Conclusions and final reflections

Environmental displacement, although still marginalised from the public agenda, has a significant importance in Colombia. Despite outnumbering those displaced by conflict, they remain invisible.

The international community must respond to these emerging contemporary international law developments in pursuit of human progress and dignified life, acting beyond extraordinary cases of disasters.

While inter-institutional and multi-level responses exist, there is still much to be strengthened in terms of operational plans, humanitarian responses, and monitoring and recording of data that includes differential approaches (ethnic, geographic-regional, etc.). State leadership, fundraising, and greater accountability are essential in this regard.

The Colombian context and experience can be particularly fruitful for learning at the international level, as the country has notable legal-institutional developments on forced internal displacement. The generation of local normative frameworks could provide greater precision and/or feed into the elaboration of international law, through a bottom-up logic.

Deepening these processes is crucial to bridging gaps and nurturing a picture of rights for those who are currently displaced not only from their land, but also from the law.
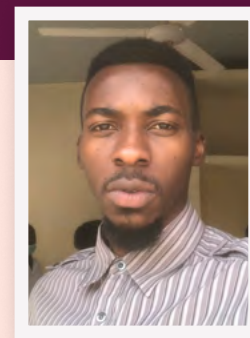
Survival flight: How underdevelopment drives Nigeria's mass exodus

By Ikeogu Chinemerem Chibuikem[1]

Introduction: false dawn

On Saturday the 1st of October 1960, Nigeria gained her independence from Britain in a ceremony marked with pomp and pageantry. As the green, white, and green flag was hoisted into the brilliant Lagos sunshine for the very first time, so did the hopes and aspirations of every Nigerian soar. Indeed, there was every justification for the conspicuous optimism: just three years earlier, in 1957, crude oil had been discovered in commercial quantities in the town of Oloibiri, in present day Bayelsa State. Added to this were huge deposits of coal in Enugu, in southeast Nigeria and an abundance of other mineral resources such as tin and columbite scattered all over the country. The agriculture sector was booming and there was a fervent patriotic spirit all over the country, buoyed by a sense of unity in purpose and direction. Across the length and breadth of Nigeria, the euphoria was palpable and the projections for the future were quite auspicious.

Sixty years down the line, Nigeria has quite unfortunately and contrary to all initial expectations degenerated to an epitome of a misruled state. A dreadful sequence of terrible leadership and a most tragic combination of mind-boggling corruption, religious and tribal bickering, and political instability have led to a pre-eminence of negative economic and social indices such as unemployment, insecurity, poverty, and infrastructural decadence.

In 2020, Nigeria was ranked as the third most terrorised country in the world by the Global Terrorism Index, only behind Iraq and Afghanistan.[2] In 2021, Nigeria's unemployment rate rose to a staggering 33 percent, second only to Namibia on a global list compiled and monitored by Bloomberg.[3] Also, the Nigerian Ministry of Education recently estimated the number of children out of school to be around 10.1 million.[4] In 2020, the National Bureau of Statistics put the country's poverty rate at an astounding 40.1 percent, which translates to the fact that about 80 million Nigerians live on less than two dollars a day.[5] Added to these depressing statistics are a high infant and maternal mortality rate, a rapid rise in banditry, kidnapping, and other violent crimes, a double-digit inflation rate, and an unabated fall in the value of the local currency.

These grossly unfavourable indices have prompted a mass exodus of Nigerians who have continued to flee the country in a desperate bid to escape its harsh economic and social climate and to secure better lives for themselves and the members of their families. The Nigerian Diaspora Commission estimates there are between five and 15 million Nigerian living abroad.[6] The higher figure represents about seven percent of the country's total population. It is estimated that this number of Diaspora Nigerians grew by six million in the last five years alone. In the developed countries of the world, such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Canada, as well as in the not so developed countries such as Ghana, Vietnam, and Cambodia, Nigerians can be found in their thousands doing all manner of jobs ranging from the dignifying to the downright derogatory.

Nigeria's migration situation can best be described as agathokakological. The well documented criminal activities of some Nigerians abroad continue to do damage to the country's already soiled reputation while the country's best brains in the fields of sports, medicine, and science, who should play critical roles in the development of their country, have continued to flee to other more developed countries, are lured by the prospects of a better quality of life and better pay. On the bright side, however, it is estimated that Nigeria earns an astonishing $20.5 billion in annual Diaspora remittances. These monies mostly take the form of gifts to relatives back home and investments in local businesses and the remittances have gone a long way in supporting the country's fragile economy.

1   Ikeogu Chinemerem Chibuikem is currently a postgraduate student of Public Administration at the University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.
2   Institute for Economics and Peace (2020) Global Terrorism Index 2020 – Measuring the Impact of Terrorism.
3   Olurounbi, R. (2021) Nigeria Unemployment Rate Rises to 33%, Second Highest on Global List. Bloomberg.
4   Obiezu, T. (2021) Officials Say 3 Million More Children Are Out of School in Nigeria. VOA News.
5   National Bureau of Statistics (2020) 2019 Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria.
6   NiDCOM (2019) Nigerians in Diaspora. See also: Nevin, A. & Omosomi, O. (2019) Strength from abroad: The economic power of Nigeria's Diaspora. PWC.

Deconstructing Nigeria's migration problem (the major causes)

Four main factors contribute the most to Nigeria's migration situation and these are:

- **Insecurity**
- **Poor healthcare**
- **Poor quality of education**
- **Inadequate economic opportunities**

I will proceed to expatiate on how each of these factors has contributed to the escapist tendencies that have bedevilled the Nigerian populace.

Insecurity

In 2002, an Islamic terrorist organisation, Boko Haram, was birthed in Borno State, northeast Nigeria. From inception to date, the disastrous activities of this extremist group have led to the deaths of about 40,000 Nigerians and the displacement of another 2.4 million. Of this displaced population, around 300,000 have fled Nigeria to the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, with the remaining occupying more than 100 camps for internally displaced persons spread across the northeast of the country.[7]

Added to this, the festering clashes between the mostly Muslim herders and the majorly Christian farmers in the north-central and southern parts of the country have led to the death of about 19,000 persons from 1999 to date and the internal displacement of a further 250,000 individuals.[8] As of March 2021, an estimated 62,000 persons were in camps set up for persons displaced by these clashes in the middle belt states of Benue, Plateau, Kaduna, and Nasarawa.

Poor healthcare

A failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to pay adequate attention to the nation's health sector has led to a near total collapse of that critical sector. Nigeria's public health sector has over the years become characterised by insufficient government funding, poor remuneration and motivation of health workers, infrastructural decay, frequent industrial action, and a workforce decimated by mass migration to foreign climes in search of better working conditions. These have severely compromised the medical sector's capacity to effectively handle procedures such as organ transplants, cosmetic surgery, as well as cardiac and orthopaedic surgeries.

This lack of confidence by most Nigerians in the ability of the nation's health sector to effectively meet their medical needs has precipitated a situation where an estimated 100,000 Nigerians travel abroad annually in search of quality medical care, with the nation losing an estimated $1 billion in capital flight as a result of these medical tourism expeditions.[9]

Poor quality of education

Just like its health sector, Nigeria's education sector has grossly underperformed over the years and has contributed substantially to the country's migration problem. The conspicuous failure of leadership in this critical sector has led to its becoming characterised by unqualified/poorly trained teachers, infrastructural deterioration, and incessant strike actions by the workforce. These have led to many Nigerian parents/guardians seeking better and mostly more expensive education options for their children/wards in foreign climes.

In 2020 alone, an estimated 100,000 Nigerian students were enrolled in schools abroad with about 90 percent of this figure admitted into institutions of higher learning. It is also estimated that the annual average amount spent by Nigerian students studying abroad on tuition and living expenses is $15,500.

Inadequate economic opportunities

With an unemployment rate of 33 percent, a double-digit inflation rate which currently stands at 18.12 percent, a flagging currency, and a harsh business climate, eking out a decent living in Nigeria has become extremely difficult and this singular factor has contributed the most to Nigeria's migration crisis, as a majority of Nigerians in the Diaspora fled the country in search of better economic opportunities.

These Nigerian migrants were lured by the social security, value of currency, easy access to basic amenities and infrastructure, better prospects of employment, better pay, and better working conditions that are obtainable in the countries they migrated to. The successes of these migrants have spurred other potential migrants to follow suit. Unfortunately, where these potential migrants cannot legitimately finance their quest to live and work in these developed climes, most of them resort to making very dangerous trips through the Sahara Desert and other irregular routes in order to gain entry into these countries. While many have become victims of human trafficking and slavery, others have lost their lives in such hazardous expeditions.

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7   UNHCR (n.d.) Nigeria Emergency.
8   Egbuta, U. (2018) Understanding the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Nigeria. Accord.
9   VOA (2019) Nigeria Losing $1B Annually to Medical Tourism, Authorities Say. VOA News.

Proposed remedies

To effectively address Nigeria's migration problem, the leadership of the country must get its policies right as well as make committed efforts towards addressing all the issues that are currently plaguing the country and which continue to serve as the motivation for the unabated flight of Nigerians to other countries.

The chronic issue of financial corruption, which has consistently led to funds earmarked for development projects ending up in private pockets, must be tackled speedily and decisively.

Also, the country's leadership must substantially increase funding to the education and health sectors to address the infrastructural deficit and poor motivation of the workforce in these critical sectors.

The government of Nigeria must also seek more military assistance from the developed nations of the world such as the US, UK, France, Germany, and Israel in battling with the menace of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups that have sprung up within the country as it has become quite obvious that the government lacks the capacity to prosecute the war on terror effectively on its own.

The government must also pay more attention to the training and equipping of the nation's police force to be better suited in dealing with the several internal security issues currently bedevilling the country.

When all these things are done, Nigeria would become a much better place to exist in and Nigerian citizens would have little or no need to escape to other climes because as the popular saying goes, "There is no place like home".

Decolonising African migration research and practice as engagement in and with time

By Kudakwashe Vanyoro[1]

Power imbalances, biases, and blind spots

Three years ago, I was in Europe attending an international conference on migration and health. Afterward, I wrote a brief piece, which I posted on my brother's blog.[2] I was using my words to open up about the ontological pain that I was feeling as a black African migration scholar occupying a predominantly white academic space. These words of mine described a pain that came from a place of seeing that certain things were not okay. I felt there was no visible room for black African scholars doing migration research in Africa to speak about it because their work was often relegated to the margins of the conference (i.e., posters; no keynotes). In the rare instances where work on African migration was articulated, African participants (like me) had to endure hearing white scholars speak about African migrants through Eurocentric lenses that reinforced migration myths, misconceptions, and biases. These included, amongst others, portraying Europe as the main host continent for the majority of African migrants—in spite of the greater numerical significance of internal and cross-border migration within and across the countries of the Global South[3]—and posing research questions implying that African migrants are vectors of diseases.

My attempts to settle these feelings internally lasted only for a while. In July the following year, I was again reminded of my abysmal positionality. On the very first day of occupying a white space that brought together academics and practitioners working in various policy and humanitarian institutions around the world in Europe, we were divided into groups. We were then tasked with discussing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) objectives and ranking them according to the top three that we thought should take priority in terms of implementation. I found the choices of one of the participants who worked for the European Commission rather troubling as they appeared oblivious to how, among many other things, the GCM risks becoming about addressing migration in and from the Global South, financed by the Global North.[4]

Unpointed fingers

I realised that a certain kind of language, gaze and praxis is now too infrequently seen in our public and academic discourse about migration as problematic. There is almost an expectation that we can talk about migration, displacement, and border atrocities without pointing a finger at the guilty. For example, it is now common knowledge that young refugees and asylum seekers attempting to travel to or through North Africa, particularly Libya, will end up in one of the country's notorious detention centres, where they are held in arbitrarily squalid, cramped conditions for months without any form of due process.[5] They are exposed to human rights abuses including physical and sexual abuse, torture and unlawful killings, as well as arbitrary detention from criminal gangs, traffickers, armed groups, smugglers and state officials.[6] On 29 February 2020, one 24-year-old migrant died in an overnight fire that destroyed parts of the Zintan detention centre (182 kilometres southwest of the Libyan capital of Tripoli).[7] By 18 March 2020, over 600 migrants had been declared missing in a Libyan detention centre run by the Ministry of Interior following their rescue from the Mediterranean Sea and subsequent return from the sea to a facility in Tripoli[8].

Why these migrants find themselves in these situations and why Libya is no longer necessarily an attractive host for them is rarely interrogated in practice. Instead, they become framed as the problem to be dealt with. Broader discussions about the dehumanising of migrants and

1   Kudakwashe Vanyoro is a postdoctoral research fellow at the African Centre for Migration & Society, University of the Witwatersrand. His current research is on governing immobilities at the Zimbabwe-South Africa border.
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3   Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., & Carella, F. (2020) The Position of 'the South' and 'South-South Migration' in Policy and Programmatic Responses to Different Forms of Migration: An Interview with Francesco Carella.
4   Frouws, B. (2021) Same old, same old? Are we seeing a resurfacing of the North–South divide in GCM implementation?. Mixed Migration Centre.
5   IOM (2016) The Middle East and North Africa: Annual report 2015.
6   Lichtenheld, A. (2019) What makes refugees and migrants vulnerable to detention in Libya? A microlevel study of the determinants of detention. Mixed Migration Centre.
7   Louarn, A-D. (2020) Libya: One dead and several injured in fire at detention center. Info Migrants.
8   Zayed, A. (2020) Hundreds missing after detention in Libya. CAJ News.

how they are influenced by our ways of framing migration research and practice, the need for ongoing reflection and in particular the need to address Northern-centric views in social science and public debate are met with evasion. Asking critical questions, such as about the interplay of displacement with neoliberalism and neo-colonialism, can even lead to ostracisation, especially among practitioners. Yet lives will continue to be lost if we do not do so.

Key questions

We should ask ourselves: Why do European delegates presume there can be quick (humanitarian) fixes to counter migration from Africa to Europe—by addressing the "root causes" of migration and displacement—without necessarily addressing the systemic causes of oppression? Why has no one taken responsibility for the deaths and disappearance of migrants in detention and at sea? What does this *status quo* tell us about the value we accord the lives of African migrants? How are researchers and practitioners complicit in reinforcing this power relation?

The academic space I encountered in 2018 attests to a lack of the transformation drive required to produce knowledge systems capable of dismantling the racial hierarchies being replicated in the deadly practices we are witnessing today in Africa's borders as it is informed by the rhetoric that African migration is largely a problem to be dealt with. We must give credit to the "reflexive turn" in migration research[9] for engaging with the politics and ethics of knowledge production processes that involve vulnerable groups and for offering a paradigm shift in thinking about these questions by way of epistemological and conceptual reflections. Migration research has also begun incorporating decolonial perspectives,[10] particularly with the so-called European refugee crisis. As a result, several important and insightful contributions have been published on decolonising migration research in recent years.[11]

The politics of time

But how is decolonisation any different from pre-existing notions of reflexivity in the field of migration? In this essay, I propose that decolonisation is a framework that critically engages with the politics of time in a way that reflexivity does not. This means that it could allow migration researchers and practitioners to interpret space and time as closely intertwined. The relationship between time and space is articulated in Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of "chronotopes"—a set of connections between time and space.[12] Like space, time is also implicated in migrants' histories, journeys, desires, perspectives, narratives, and experiences of "stuckedness"[13] and displacement, yet it is seldom the object of critical reflection. This belies how the world and the narratives and discourses that go into shaping it are spatial expressions of time. For example, we come to know that physical borders are like Bakhtin's chronotope as they reveal how colonial time materialises by becoming visible and real in the form of frontiers.

The power of decolonisation

By offering this temporal worldview, decolonisation has the potential to change biased discourses and public opinion about what African migration signifies as it reveals that challenging physical borders is thus challenging space as time. This brings us to the understanding that human mobility is akin to transformation in both marginalised political subjectivities and the places as well as borders these people move through.[14] This transformational reading of human mobility is based upon the notion of "decoloniality", which situates political subjectivities in the continuities of colonialism—better known as "coloniality".[15]

Decolonisation situates human mobility within a temporal framework such that we perceive movement in space as movement in time and vice versa. In this way, decolonisation reveals that to move is also to pose an epistemological critique to the historical debt that Europe owes to African inhabitants for plundering the continent's resources and supporting wars in the now desolate places that they must escape. There are indeed certain actors who treat the privileges enjoyed in northern cartographic spaces as if they were God-given, as shown by their treatment of African bodies and desires. These actors are often

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10   Emerging Scholars and Practitioners on Migration Issues (ESPMI) Network (2019) Discussion Series: Decolonising Forced Migration Research.
11   Mayblin, L. & Turner, L. (2020) Migration Studies and Colonialism. Cambridge: Polity Press.
12   Çağlar, A. (2018) Chronotopes of Migration Scholarship: Challenges of Contemporaneity and Historical Conjuncture in Gardiner Barber, P. & Lem, W. (eds) (2018) Migration, Temporality, and Capitalism Entangled Mobilities across Global Spaces. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
13   Hage, G. (2009) Waiting out the crisis: on stuckedness and governmentality in Hage, G. (ed) (2009) Waiting. Carlton, Victoria.: Melbourne University Press.
14   Collins, F. (2018) Desire as a theory for migration studies: temporality, assemblage and becoming in the narratives of migrants. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.
15   This term refers to long-standing patterns of power that define contemporary culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production, well beyond the formal ending of colonial rule. See: Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007) On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the development of a concept. Cultural Studies; Hendricks, C. (2018) Decolonising Universities in South Africa: Rigged Spaces?, International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity.

quick to normalise the astounding gap between their rich countries and poor ones while concealing the role Europe has played in disparaging the African continent in the first place, only to then create and enforce laws and juridical orders that prevent Africans from moving away. In reality, these disparities are not a natural feat of human creation. Fortified borders are a physical manifestation of a body of knowledge propagated through Western ideas and theories that invented Africa solely as a geographic space to be exploited.[16] It is expressly because of colonial bordering enterprises of European colonisers like Cecil John Rhodes[17] that there are those for whom place of birth determines whether travel will be a matter of life or death.[18] It is thus not a matter of sublime coincidence that today the mortal cost of international mobility is largely a non-white problem.[19]

Whose best interests?

Increasingly militarised borders have often come to be justified in the name of acting in the best interests of ostensibly unyielding migrants who are not sufficiently equipped with knowledge of the dangers of the journey ahead of them. Much like the infantilisation of the purportedly *dom* (Afrikaans for "dumb", in the sense of stupid) Bantu colonial subject in apartheid South Africa,[20] the state positions itself as having a moral duty to act on behalf of the passive migrant subject who, by definition, can only be a victim or transient labourer, at best. The reasons behind risky migration are expelled from the popular imagination. These interventions are also becoming gendered as they are couched in discourses that purport to be rescuing women from trafficking, [21] with little attempt to differentiate this from smuggling. In these scenarios, suffering and its sources are neutered and depoliticised, necessitating and validating humanitarian border interventions, which are in and of themselves problematic in so far as they can enable the "white saviour industrial complex" that reinforces social hierarchies.[22] We see this in the perfect example of the words of one Niger mission chief for the International Organisation for Migration: "Of course, we cannot match their [Niger youths] dream of being in Italy, but we can give them a local development project."[23]

Normalising immobility

Africans' mouths then exist only to be fed. Such saviourism normalises immobility such that African migrants are vilified as threats through colonial narratives and identities contained in European frameworks that are designed to identify those that defect from a sedentary life[24] and are dedicated to "containment development", or development at home.[25] Collaboration among political leaders across the Mediterranean basin has generated this politics of time in a bid to contain African ambitions to move and framing it as global progress.[26] This collaboration has taken place through policies such as the revised 2011 EU Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, the 2015 European Agenda on Migration and the 2015 Valletta Political Declaration and Action Plan, as well as the use of EU development funds to address irregular migration such as the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability.[27] Algeria also signed a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement with the EU, providing for, among others, cooperation to prevent and control illegal immigration.[28] The laws that produced the terms and conditions for the illegality of the migration in question are utterly naturalised and vanish from view.[29] In part, this saviourism enables the savage sorting of "deserving" refugees and the highly skilled from ordinary, superfluous migrants who can then be legitimately detained and excised.[30] It turns borders into key sites for keeping migrants immobile with a goal to turn "Africa" back in time into "a huge Bantustan"[31] that is a site for the everyday practice of racialisation through containment and detention strategies.

Summarising this topic in one essay is by no means an easy task. Decolonising migration research and practice remains a contentious enterprise that requires ongoing genuine reflections and uncomfortable conversations. I still view my experiences in European academic spaces as enriching to my acumen and academic career. However, I seek to share my experience so that others who look like me and come from similar spaces are equipped to be more comfortable in their skins and articulate than I was when certain things around me felt colonial. Let me end by saying African migration, in whatever shape or form,

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29 De Genova, N. (2015) The border spectacle of migrant 'victimisation'. Open Democracy.
30 Landau, L. (2018) op. cit.
31 Mbembe, A. (2019) 'If we don't rehabilitate reason, we will not be able to fix our broken world'. Mail & Guardian.

is a justifiable and redemptive act of transforming border regimes as well as colonial laws and juridical orders from below. We cannot genuinely claim to be opposed to coloniality while advocating for the fortification of borders and the criminalisation of African migrants.

Frontier fixers: how *thieup-thieup* men facilitate passage across a key Senegal-Mauritania border post

By Baye Masse Mbaye[1]

Introduction

Separated by the Senegal River, a southern Mauritanian city and a northern Senegalese town, both called Rosso, lie on the main road between Nouakchott and Dakar. As such, the twin conurbations constitute a major regional border post, a transit point for both people and goods. By one reckoning, it is topped as an entry point into Senegal only by the capital's international airport.[2]

However, this socio-economic activity at the border is hampered by several factors: high customs duties, ethno-racial quarrels, frequent deportation of foreigners by the Mauritanian state, and a form of competitive corruption between the two countries' border officials. By way of example, at the Rosso-Mauritania checkpoint, police officers ask Senegalese travellers for 1,000 CFA francs ($1.8) without giving a receipt, and Senegalese border officers ask Mauritanian travellers for an equivalent amount in the Mauritanian currency, 500 ouguiyas.

Travellers, including migrants, can be spared these payoffs and other costly hurdles by engaging the services of multi-tasking and well-connected fixers known locally as *thieup-thieup* men.

The various roles of the *thieup-thieup* men and the way they operate is the subject of this essay.[3]

Who are the *thieup-thieup* men?

The word *thieup* comes from the onomatopoeic Wolof verb *teup*, which means to jump, climb, or cross; it evokes the sound one's feet make when landing after a jump. Hence, *thieup-thieup* alludes to the easy movement between Rosso-Mauritania and Rosso-Senegal. The fixers who facilitate the movement across this border of people, goods, livestock, materials and equipment, vehicles and machinery, and mineral resources tend to be male. *Thieup-thieup* men serve as intermediaries between travellers—including migrants—and state officials such as police and customs authorities. They are good negotiators who live by their wits and to the rhythm of the many pirogues and the two ferries that shuttle between the two Rossos from morning to night[4].

Most *thieup-thieup* men are local residents, although some come from other countries in Africa. Many are veterans of the so-called "desert road" that runs from Senegal through Mauritania to Morocco, and which is used by a variety of travellers, including traders, students, migrants, and tourists from these three countries as well as European states and elsewhere in West Africa.[5] It is *thieup-thieup* men's mental maps of migration points and their good command of travel procedures than enable them to engage in the business of facilitating mixed migration. They can be found plying for trade on the riverside docks, in front of administrative offices, at the traveller stop-off and pick-up points either side of the river.

Thieup-thieup men specialise in one of three categories of business:

- **Commercial goods.** This entails taking charge of merchandise, clearing them through customs and delivering them to the right place. It also requires having good relationships with police and customs officers.
- **Tourists and migrants.** This entails facilitating the cross-border journeys of foreign tourists and migrants by efficiently dealing with their formalities, finding them temporary or permanent accommodation, and assisting them with foreign exchange at the currency traders.

1   Baye Masse Mbaye is studying for a PhD in socio-anthropology at the Gaston Berger University in Saint Louis, Senegal.
2   Bouhali, A., Dimé, M. & Mareï, N. (2018) Sur les routes et marchés ouest-africains. Les circulations internationales du made in China. Métropoli-tiques.
3   The data contained in this essay derive from qualitative research consisting of eight semi-structured interviews, six life stories, participant observation and the snowball technique conducted in Rosso and Nouakchott between 2 December 2019 and 1 January 2020.
4   The border post at Rosso Mauritania closes every day at 6 p.m.
5   Bouhali, A., Dimé, M. & Mareï, N. (2018) op. cit.

- **Returning Senegalese migrants (*modou modou*).** This involves arranging travel logistics for Senegalese migrants living abroad who temporarily return to Senegal along the Desert Road, for example to attend family ceremonies.

Roles and social resources

The role of the *thieup-thieup* man is to take on all the burdens of their clients, including by:

- Clearing their goods through customs;
- Managing foreign exchange transactions between CFA francs, euros, ouguiyas, and US dollars;
- Sourcing legal travel documents;
- Recovering goods lost by migrants or negotiating the return of those confiscated by border guards; and
- Delivering goods ordered by remote customers.

To better carry out these tasks, *thieup-thieup* men have adopted a social code of convenience: communicative flexibility, a welcoming smile, and likeability. These flexible skills are accompanied by their mastery of many languages: Wolof, Hassanya, Pulaar, Mandigo, Creole, workable French, and basic English.

To get goods through the frontier, *thieup-thieup* men sometimes scale the wall surrounding the border facilities at Rosso-Mauritania instead of clearing them through customs. In so doing, they risk terrible bone fractures as well as police violence and even detention if caught. Then they entrust their goods to the town's elected officials, who are not checked at the border post. These officials, thanks to the privileges of their political status, are enlisted as unsuspected carriers.

In addition, *thieup-thieup* men mobilise their social capital at the administrative level, establishing good relationships with Mauritanian police and customs officers so that the latter turn a blind eye to their activities. One way the *thieup-thieup* men create and consolidate social connections with these border control agents is by facilitating medical evacuation services. Because of the limited facilities in Rosso-Mauritania, when Mauritanian police and customs officers or members of their family need medical treatment, *thieup-thieup* men arrange transportation either to the dispensary in Rosso-Senegal or the regional hospital in Saint Louis, about 85 kilometres to the southwest. In return, the police and customs officers are very grateful to them and allow them to operate freely at the border post.

Cheaper crossing

In contrast to the official €50 fee to enter Mauritania, *thieup-thieup* men charge their clients just €15 for their border-crossing services, which can be divided into four steps:

1. The *thieup-thieup* man borrows €50 euros from a forex trader with whom he is in cahoots. This sum will be shown—but not given—to Mauritanian officials as proof that the travelling client has sufficient funds to meet their own needs in the country.

2. The *thieup-thieup* man assembles various documents relevant to his client's journey:
   a. Statement of any ownership of gold or currency
   b. Certificate of enrolment at the Rosso crossing point
   c. Vaccination records (yellow fever)
   d. Currency transaction sheet
   e. Territorial access form

   About €13 of the borrowed €50 are paid as fees to process this paperwork. The balance is paid in Mauritanian ouguiyas.

3. Having navigated the border formalities, the *thieup-thieup* man drives his client to the bus stop in the Escale district of Rosso-Mauritania and watches over his luggage while the client buys a bus ticket. At this point, clients typically tip the *thieup-thieup* man a few euros.

4. The *thieup-thieup* man reimburses the forex trader.

On average, *thieup-thieup* men carry out about four such operations every day. Their intervention reduces travellers' costs and time spent under a hot sun at the crossing and saves their clients from having to directly deal with bureaucracy and forex traders there.

Conclusion

In current political discourse, especially in Europe, people smugglers are widely demonised and often portrayed as unscrupulous, exploitative players operating within international criminal networks. Such a simplistic view obscures the wide variety of activities covered by the umbrella term "smuggling", relationships between smugglers and their clients, and local contexts in different regions.

Like fixers all over the world, the *thieup-thieup* men of Rosso are best understood as a very local phenomenon, one that is embedded in the economic and social fabric of the Senegal-Mauritania border. Despite its illicit aspects, their work is not very different to any other informal business activity featuring willing buyers and willing sellers. As such, it illustrates the dangers of "managing" migration primarily through an anti-smuggling lens, an approach that is at best ineffective and which is often damaging for local economies.

Photo credit: bepsy / Shutterstock

This art installation by Christoph Büchel, titled *Barca Nostra* (also known as the Migrant Death Ship) was exhibited at the 58th Venice Biennale in early 2019. Since then, almost 3,000 refugees and migrants have drowned trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe, a journey made more dangerous by the dramatic and deliberate reduction in rescue capacity. Since 2014, an estimated 22,000 refugees and migrants have lost their lives in the Mediterranean.

The sentiment of this graffiti on a Venice wall is not shared by all. The politics of migration continues to take centre stage in many European countries, especially those on Europe's external borders, such as Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain on the Mediterranean, and numerous states in Eastern Europe. There is growing evidence that while more extreme anti-migrant and anti-refugee parties lost political ground in 2021, their policies have become more mainstream, adopted by more centrist parties, threatening asylum space and jeopardising the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.

Section 3

Reframing mixed migration

This section aims to reframe or revisit various aspects of human mobility in relation to important global trends and changes, not least the close relationship between climate change and human movement. Through essays, thematic snapshots and expert interviews, it introduces new considerations of less appreciated aspects of mixed migration, such as immobility and mass non-migration, the concept of "circumstantial migration", the economies of mixed migration, the prevalence of South-South migration, and migration routes that receive relatively little coverage in mainstream research and news media. This section also includes a discussion on migration within states. Given its global pervasiveness, we ask whether internal movement ought to be included in the broad conceptualisation of mixed migration.

Rethinking mixed migration: What about internal migration and displacement?

By Bram Frouws[1]

Picture a truck travelling on a long desert route carrying refugees and migrants of various nationalities, legal statuses, and reasons for leaving or fleeing their homes. Some are looking for better economic opportunities elsewhere, others are fleeing insecurity, conflict, or increasingly harsh environmental circumstances at home. For many, it's a combination of all the above that made them decide to move. There are checkpoints along the way, but the smugglers who organised the trip made sure police and military manning them turn a blind eye.

This is a typical—if imaginary—snapshot of mixed migration. It is likely to include people who began their journey in another country as well as those who did not. The latter may or may not be planning to cross a national border, perhaps to reach the same destinations as their fellow passengers. They might share the same experiences and have started their journeys for the same reasons as the foreign refugees and migrants on the truck. But until they cross an international border, they are not considered to be part of the mixed migration phenomenon as it is understood by humanitarian agencies, international organisations, researchers, and policymakers.

Critically reappraising the notion of mixed migration raises a question: have we created another artificial or arbitrary exclusion? One of the defining characteristics of mixed migration as a concept is that it bridges rigid, technical categories, organisational mandates, and siloed approaches to human mobility.[2] Why then continue to restrict its application to cross-border movement, given that many borders are just artificial lines on a map that do not figure in the perceptions or desires of people living either side of those lines? Is it time to broaden the concept to encompass internal migration and displacement?[3]

Conceptual roots

The notion of mixed migration emerged in the early 2000s from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Global Consultations on International Protection, where UNHCR highlighted the existence of a crisis of international protection, due in part to a perception among Western governments and citizens that asylum systems were being abused by individuals seeking economic opportunities.[4]

There is no single commonly agreed definition or conceptual understanding of mixed migration. Some definitions focus more on mixed motivations for moving, either between people in mixed migration flows or within individuals with multiple reasons for migrating. Others focus more on the mixed composition of migration flows in terms of legal/migration status.[5] Most definitions or descriptions somehow refer to the complexity of population movements.[6]

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1   Bram Fouws is director of the Mixed Migration Centre.
2   Van Hear, N., Brubaker, R. & Bessa, T. (2009) Managing Mobility for Human Development: The Growing Salience of Mixed Migration. UNDP.
3   *Internal migration* refers to the movement of people within a state involving the establishment of a new temporary or permanent residence (IOM (2019) Glossary on Migration). *Internal displacement* refers to the forced movement of people within their country of residence (IDMC (n.d.) Internal displacement). *Internally displaced persons* (IDPs) are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of general- ized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border", and *internal migrant* refers to "any person who is moving or has moved within a state for the purpose of establishing a new temporary or permanent residence or because of displacement" (IOM (2019) Glossary on Migration).
4   For an excellent overview of the origins and use of the mixed migration concept, refer to Sharpe, M. (2018) Mixed Up: International Law and the Meaning(s) of "Mixed Migration". Refugee Survey Quarterly.
5   Ibid.
6   IOM defines mixed movements as those "in which a number of people are travelling together, generally in an irregular manner, using the same routes and means of transport, but for different reasons. People travelling as part of mixed movements have varying needs and profiles and may include asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked persons, unaccompanied/separated children, and migrants in an irregular situation" (IOM (2019) Glossary on Migration). UNHCR refers to mixed movements as "flows of people travelling together, generally in an irregular manner, over the same routes and using the same means of transport, but for different reasons. The men, women, and children travelling in this manner often have either been forced from their homes by armed conflict or persecution, or are on the move in search of a better life" (UNHCR (n.d.) Asylum and Migration).

In 2018, the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) adopted the following 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 different 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.[7]*

Despite these variations and regardless of whether the notion of crossing borders appears in a definition, a key point is that the concept of mixed migration is universally applied only to international movements.

Spurious distinctions?

At the MMC, we are convinced that, in order to contribute to a better understanding of mixed migration and evidence-based policies and programmatic responses, we need to focus on the drivers, vulnerabilities, experiences, protection needs, challenges, aspirations, and intentions of all people on the move, whatever their migratory status. We need to recognise that all people on the move ultimately have various, often intertwined reasons for migrating, with the distinctions between forced and voluntary migration better understood as points on a spectrum rather than as a dichotomy.[8] We believe that such a broader mixed migration lens is needed to provide an accurate reflection of the reality of human mobility on the ground, where it is important to go beyond mandates and siloed approaches in our responses to complex population movements as a whole instead of spuriously isolating different groups and categories within migratory movements. Mixed migration is not a legal term; rather we use it as an analytical lens to understand contemporary human mobility, a conceptual framework to respond to the complex characteristics and protection imperatives of modern-day human mobility.[9]

All of the above, making up our rationale for applying the mixed migration lens, could equally be applied to internal migration and displacement. So why do we still exclude the majority of both migrants and displaced people worldwide from our understanding of mixed migration? Why do people first need to cross a border, if the drivers, experiences, needs, and aspirations are often so similar, and mixed? Should we perhaps let go of this somewhat artificial limitation that the concept would only apply to cross-border international migration?

Needs before status

Moreover, in their search for protection, livelihood opportunities, and access to housing, education, healthcare, and other services, IDPs and internal migrants, as well as refugees and migrants returning to their country of origin, often end up in the same destinations—and frequently in the same urban districts—as refugees and international migrants. Both categories often face similar challenges, such as poor housing conditions, unemployment, lack of access to services, and discrimination. Again, if the experiences, needs, and challenges are so much alike, whether in transit or while more settled in a destination, does it make sense, from a policy and programming perspective, to exclude a particular group because it falls outside standard definitions of mixed migration? Or would it be more appropriate—not least to avoid tensions over who has better access to aid—to adopt approaches based on needs, rights, and geography rather than legal status and category?[10] Development actors also often find it impossible to differentiate between the vulnerabilities that internal migrants, refugees and local residents face in urban areas.[11]

Maintaining a strict distinction between internal and cross-border mobility and displacement defeats the purpose of the mixed migration concept, which is to look at drivers, aspirations, needs, risks, and vulnerabilities of people across the mobility spectrum, regardless of their migration status. Including internal mobility under the mixed migration umbrella might help to better understand and address different mobility dynamics along the displacement continuum. As framed by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), today's IDPs may become tomorrow's refugees, just as today's returning refugees risk becoming tomorrow's IDPs.[12] More than half of the refugees surveyed by the IDMC in a 2020 study conducted in seven countries were internally displaced—often repeatedly—before

7   Mixed Migration Centre (n.d.) MMC's Understanding and Use of the Term Mixed Migration and Human Smuggling.
8   Bivand Erdal, M. & Oeppen, C. (2018) 'Forced to leave? The discursive and analytical significance of describing migration as forced and voluntary'. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.
9   Horwood, C., Forin, R. & Frouws, B. (eds.) (2018) Mixed Migration Review 2018. Highlights. Interviews. Essays. Data. Mixed Migration Centre.
10   Cantor, D. & Apollo, J. (2020) Internal Displacement, Internal Migration and Refugee Flows: Connecting the Dots. Internal Displacement Research Programme, Refugee Law Initiative, University of London.
11   Ogude, H. & Sarkar, A. (2018) The urban dimensions of mixed migration and forced displacement in South Africa. World Bank Blogs.
12   Sydney, C. & Rushing, E. (2018) Internal Displacement is not just a footnote. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

leaving their country of origin because they could not find safety there.[13] Those not granted refugee status might be considered to be irregular migrants, and many former IDPs, now refugees, might at some point decide to move onward as international migrants to other destinations which offer better educational, livelihood and employment opportunities.

Irregularity and smugglers

Of course, one important characteristic of the mixed migration phenomenon is the irregularity of movement and the use of smugglers of some people in mixed flows. Usually, internal migration cannot be irregular, as it involves the movement of citizens within their own country, and the concept of irregularity generally applies to the way borders are crossed. According to IOM, internal migration refers to movement of people within a state, including internal displacement and rural-urban migration. However, such journeys can be made by both nationals and non-nationals of the country in question, provided they move away from their place of habitual residence,[14] though it would be unlikely these non-nationals are moving irregularly. Nevertheless, in a year in which almost all citizens across the world have experienced some kind of restrictions on movement within their own countries as part of measures to control the spread of Covid-19, the idea of domestic movement being irregular has gained unprecedented plausibility. Moreover, for some groups, such as Myanmar's Rohingya and internal migrants in China, limits on domestic freedom of movement was a daily reality even before the pandemic.

The use of smugglers by citizens moving within their own country is uncommon too and usually not needed. In fact, smuggling generally refers to the facilitation of irregular entry into a country by someone who is not a national or resident of that country. However, MMC deliberately applies a broader interpretation of "smuggler" and "smuggling", one which encompasses a range of activities paid for or otherwise compensated by refugees and migrants that facilitate irregular migration. These include irregularly crossing not only international borders but also internal checkpoints, as well as providing documents, transportation, and accommodation. This approach reflects refugees' and migrants' perceptions of smuggling as the facilitation of irregular movement.[15]

Many of these smuggling services might be used by those moving internally, especially when they start preparing for subsequent international migration and get in touch with smugglers to organise onward transportation or documentation. Furthermore, when internal mobility is restricted, even citizens with no plans for international travel might have to resort to smugglers (as per this broader definition).

While there are exceptions, it is clear though that these two common characteristics of mixed migration—irregularity and the use of smugglers—are found far less frequently in cases of internal migration and displacement.

Laws and norms

Legally speaking, there is of course an important difference between those who cross a national border and leave their country and those who do not. Most importantly, in the context of mixed migration, the 1951 Refugee Convention (which only applies to cross-border refugees), and principles and norms such as the right to seek asylum, the right to leave one's own country, and the right not to be returned to a country where one's life of liberty would be at risk (the prohibition of refoulement, which applies not only to refugees but to all international migrants) have no direct bearing on internal migrants or IDPs. International human rights law, by contrast, applies to all individuals on the move, regardless of their nationality and whether they are transiting through or remaining in states. It applies to all people on the basis of their inherent human dignity.[16] Broadening the concept of mixed migration to incorporate internal mobility might bring it more in line with international human rights law, which is perhaps more applicable to all people within mixed migratory movements than the more narrowly focussed Refugee Convention. Moreover, the Convention does not afford protection to those who cross borders because of the impacts of climate change and related environmental shocks, which are expected to prompt growing numbers of people to leave their homes in the coming years.[17] Most of these movements will be internal or proximate cross-border movements, again pointing to a continuum of mobility.

Finally, both the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration focus exclusively on international movements—even in the latter 34-page document the word "internal" does not appear at all. A broader application of mixed migration that includes internal mobility might help not only to bridge the gap and ensure more complementarity between the two compacts, but also to focus on the needs- and rights-

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13 Sydney, C. (2020) The Displacement Continuum. The relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movement in seven countries. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.
14 IOM (n.d.) Key Migration Terms.
15 Mixed Migration Centre (n.d.) op. cit.
16 Sharpe (2018) op. cit.
17 Although we should be wary of presenting climate change as the sole driver of migration decisions, as discussed in the "Stifling silos" essay on page 178 of this review and in: Linekar, J. & Litzkow, J. (2021) Forced displacement and (im)mobility: what's climate change got to do with it? Mixed Migration Centre.

based aspects of human mobility in all its forms, ensuring more policy and programmatic coherence across the full spectrum of mobility.

None of the above is to suggest we should stop focussing on or differentiating between the distinct profiles, challenges, and needs of those in mixed migration movements, be they IDPs, internal migrants, returnees, refugees, or international migrants. Importantly, neither does it mean that the distinct rights of particular groups, most notably refugees, should go unrecognized. An even more comprehensive and inclusive conception of mixed migration does not mean we should or will close our eyes to diversity; on the contrary.

Potential pros and cons

But many questions remain. Would including internal mobility undermine the strong and useful policy and programmatic concept of mixed migration, or would it contribute to a more comprehensive focus on and understanding of human mobility in all its forms? Would it foster better protection outcomes and less invisibility for people moving within their own country? Or, by incorporating too many different categories under a single concept, would it lead IDPs to become even more invisible and get lost in the mire of mixed migration, with a less dedicated focus and worse outcomes for all? Would it constitute an example of rash mission creep or of a progressive insight that excluding internal migration from the idea of mixed migration for all these years has been a damaging omission? These are by no means easy questions and this propositional think-piece essay is only designed to provide a starting point for raising and discussing these questions.

At the Mixed Migration Centre, we believe knowledge and insights should always evolve, that we should always challenge received wisdoms and continue to advance our understanding of mixed migration in all its facets. Our recent focus, through new collaborative projects, data collection, research, and policy work on both the nexus between climate change and mobility as well as urban migration, is bringing us much closer to internal migration and displacement than before, not least because urbanisation is primarily driven by internal migration and since most climate-change-influenced mobility manifests itself as internal migration and displacement. While it is too soon to decide whether to amend our definition and understanding of mixed migration here and now, we will in the coming months further explore, consult, and discuss these important questions.

Interview

Finding the right mix

Veteran UN staffer **Vincent Cochetel** discusses the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on migration dynamics and European policies and posits ways out of the shortcomings of current asylum management.

Vincent Cochetel has worked for UNHCR for more than three decades and currently serves as its special envoy for the Western & Central Mediterranean situation. For most of 1998, he was held hostage in North Ossetia, where he was in charge of the UNHCR's office. Before joining the UN's refugee agency he worked for the European Commission and the European Court of Human Rights.

The number of people coming to Europe irregularly in 2020 amid the growing Covid-19 pandemic was only about 25% fewer than the year before. Does this speak to the determination of those on the move, or that of their smugglers, or to Europe's political and physical inability to stop irregular migration?

I think it's a combination of everything, and as we see now, the pandemic is really hitting more North African countries harder. You see, again, an increase in terms of departure, mainly from Tunisia, Libya, and the West African maritime route. It just shows that traffickers and smugglers are not at all affected by Covid-19. On the contrary, this has offered them new business opportunities to circumvent land border closures and lure people into those dangerous routes, and states are slow to react.

You recently used the term "human trafficking" in relation to smugglers and/or facilitators. As you are aware of the international definitions of smuggling and trafficking, I assume you do this deliberately?

I call them human traffickers because what started often as a consensual business relationship to move from one place to another, at some stage is involving

coercion and violence. The closer you move to the border with Libya, with Egypt, Morocco, or with Algeria, you are more likely to be exposed to some form of abuse. So while there is a difference in international law, and it requires a different response, in reality, the smugglers turn into traffickers when they move in some directions.

Despite widespread concerns early last year about how Covid-19 would affect refugee camps and refugee communities, the impact has actually been very limited. Why is that?

I think the response has been pretty good, even with the shortcomings in term of assistance, and it's easier to monitor a camp environment then when people move to urban areas. I don't think we have data to support any assumption or any affirmation when it relates to urban refugees, but indeed in camp situations, the impact has been low.

At the policy level, to what extent has Covid-19 been used as a pretext by governments to restrict cross-border movement and refugee resettlement in the last year?

It has affected safe mobility pathways for refugees,

resettlement has gone down. Of course, we have to acknowledge the concern of resettlement states, so it's not a surprise, but some countries have shown that it was possible to manage health protocols and continue refugee resettlement. Now, many states have used Covid-19 indeed to close their borders, not to allow rescue, to refuse disembarkation of people in distress at sea, and that's a shame. And when I say it's a shame, I mean, we understand we have to protect the communities, host communities, but some countries have shown that it can be managed. And other countries have not even tried to manage it.

As a refugee coordinator with the UNHCR you expressed concern that the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement violated the ban against mass expulsion in the European Convention on Human Rights. Do you still hold that view?

I think at that time it carried the risk of mass expulsion because the agreement was based on the assumption that a return [of refugees and migrants from Greece to Turkey] would lead automatically to a restoration of effective access to protection in Turkey, and I don't think that this assumption could have been made at that time, nor could be made today.

> **" Covid-19 has offered smugglers and traffickers new business opportunities to circumvent land border closures and lure people into dangerous routes, and states are slow to react. "**

Migrants and refugees continue to lose their lives in the Mediterranean, while the search and rescue capacity remains very low, with the EU ending official assistance to refugees and migrants, and some states hindering the work of the NGOs. What are the conflicting policy positions around this, in your understanding?

Everybody recognizes that saving lives is important, but no one wants to be assuming the responsibility for disembarkation because the solidarity component of the future pact on asylum and migration is just not there. But I would not say that there is a shortage of rescue at sea. If you look at Spain, for instance, what they do in the Western Mediterranean, they are assuming a lot of responsibility in terms of rescue at sea, so they have demonstrated that if a state wants to do it, it can do it—it can be managed. The problem is more the Central Mediterranean Sea at this stage or the Eastern Mediterranean Sea to some extent. Operation Sophia is finished, there is no more naval operation to rescue people, states have disengaged from that, to a large extent, but you still see Italy undertaking rescue, onboarding of people rescued by

other ships, putting people on quarantine boats etc. So it's not that Italy has stopped altogether rescue at sea efforts; they do that, but they don't go so far in the international waters anymore.

From a rights perspective, do you see contradictory or contested policies in the EU's upholding of certain values and ethics while reportedly turning a blind eye to multiple member states implementing pushbacks and violations of asylum seekers' rights?

They don't necessarily turn a blind eye, but yes, they are a bit selective in their condemnation of some of the pushbacks, and we all agree we need a lot better border management for everyone, for host communities, for migrants, for asylum seekers, but it has to be done in a way that is protecting refugees. Some states demonstrate even during Covid-19 that it is possible, and others have relinquished their obligation. But a regime of sanction for lack of solidarity will never work and could undermine the public support for asylum procedures in Europe. So you have to use a mix of incentives, encouragements, that makes the system work.

What about the huge increase in allocation for Frontex spending and member states fortifying their own borders? Are they preparing for what they expect to be a difficult, long-lasting future vis-a-vis mobility, and the necessary exclusion that they're trying to implement?

Well, there are definitely some strikes at the external border of the European Union that are a concern to states and the European citizens, and they need to be addressed. Yes, Europe has stated in many ways and forms that nothing like we had seen in 2015 would be seen again, that we are better prepared today. The easy quick fix was to develop the capacity of Frontex, and have the standing border guard corps, but at the end of the day, some responsibilities still belong to states, and you need solidarity, you need fast screening at borders, and this is not yet happening.

How do you account for the very low appetite of OECD countries to accept refugees? 2020 was the lowest on record, I think. Are we facing a widespread refugee or displacement fatigue, or are other factors at play? Will it get better or worse?

We see some fatigue, we see some questioning of the fundamentals, regarding the right to seek asylum. And you have some variation there, where a lot of states are saying, "Yes, asylum is important," but in the region of origin, not on our doorstep. There is a lot of concern about secondary movements by land, and primary movements by sea, but that's a bit unfair, because that leaves the European responsibility at the external border of the European Union. Within public opinion, I think what is important is to demystify the numbers, debunk some of the myths, and talk about numbers:

when you look at the numbers of crossings last year, for the Mediterranean, for Central Western Mediterranean, 70,000 people tried to cross the sea; only half of them succeeded. This is the same number of people that cross from Ethiopia to Sudan in [just] two months. Because people on boats are very visual it's a political drama every time. There's a lot of instrumentalisation around it. But if managed, it's possible. If managed with quick processing, a bit of return, a bit of entry and integration, then that works. But I see many European opinions are confused, and many people have lost trust in their state's ability to really manage it.

You have spoken about countries of origin taking responsibility as well, especially for economic migrants, and allowing unconditional deportations of failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants.

In the European Union, only 30 percent of the people who get a final negative decision on asylum will actually return to their country of origin. And within those 30 percent only a third accept to do so voluntarily. Many countries of origin are just dragging their feet. They refuse to identify their nationals and sometimes they think it's a good thing to keep people illegally in Europe, that they will be given some residency over time. And there is no benefit for them to take those citizens back. At the same time those countries are calling for more legal migration pathways. You can't have it all, it has to work both ways, for countries of origin, for host countries, for countries of destination. And if we want it to work, we need to improve the trust level in that dialogue on migration management. Right now it's just not there.

> **" Last year 70,000 people tried to cross the Central Western Mediterranean Sea; only half of them succeeded. This is the same number of people that cross from Ethiopia to Sudan in two months. "**

In 2019, you referred to the "radicalisation" of the migratory dreams and demands of some migrants and refugees. What did you mean?

What I said about a specific situation led to a controversy because "radicalisation" is a term often used about religion and faith, so maybe the word was not well chosen. But what I see is that some people have embraced the dreams that have been sold to them by smugglers, traffickers, diaspora, or relatives, and they will not even consider [other] options available to them. In Tunisia, which does not offer, for instance, a perfect protection space, we try to get work permits for people, we obtain work permits, and people just don't want to work. This is not the sort of work they want. That work is not good enough for them. The objective is to go to

Germany, to Sweden, to France, etc. The system can't work like that, because first of all, it's not fair. When you look at the gender distribution of irregular movements to Europe, you can't say you have a fair system here. So we need to have this management of expectations with asylum seekers on the move, or migrants on the move.

> **" We need to improve the trust level in the dialogue on migration management. Right now it's just not there. "**

Do you think the presence of the economic migrants is doing a lot of damage to the asylum system, making it unable to function?

There are many drivers that lead people to choose to leave their country; nobody does it for the fun of it, that's for sure, and everybody has a right, equal rights, and response must be different. Obviously, because of a lack of other channels, migrants are "forced", when they arrive in Europe, to apply for asylum because there is no other channel for regularisation, or [they] try to get a work permit.

And of course, that blocks the asylum system, that leads to a dysfunctioning of the asylum system. I remember being in Pozzallo, in a hotspot in Italy, just 48 hours after the arrival of a large group of people. I spent six hours there. Talking 10, 15 minutes with individuals, one after the other, it was very clear why the people were moving. For 85 percent of the people, you could decide why they are moving (clear migrants or refugees); for the others, it was more complicated. But why put someone in an asylum system that is going to last three years with lots of misery associated with that, and social/labour exploitation? Why put people in an asylum system when at the end of the day, we know the result will be negative? There has to be a better way to manage that, so I think insisting on return, but return with reintegration, individual and community-based reintegration that addresses the development needs of the communities where those people come from, makes a lot of sense. It should lead, in the longer term, to a win-win, maybe not for the specific individual, but it will lead to a win-win in terms of asylum/migration management.

Perhaps it's a kind of loophole migrants fully understand and utilise irrespective of the eventual negative outcome of their asylum claim?

Yes, but it's a social cohesion time-bomb. Because the tolerance for that is reducing in Europe, to start with. The level of exploitation of these people is something that we also need to consider, and if at the end of the day your neighbour in Europe is not able to make the distinction between who is who, who has the right to stay, and who should not stay, and maybe assisted

to return to his country, well, the door is going to shut. Some people say, "Legal migration pathways will lead to more irregular migration." I don't know, I'm not an expert. But for the time being, we talk about legal migration channels and not many exist in reality.

A UNHCR colleague of yours wrote in 2019 that a person should apply for asylum in the territory they are in, that they cannot withhold their asylum claim in the hope of getting a better offer somewhere else. Do you stand with that position or do you take a different one?

I stand by that position, but of course there could be special circumstances, in particular, lack of effective protection in the first country of arrival, language or family relationships or previous education in another country that could lead to another solution than seeking asylum in the country where they have arrived. There could be exceptions to that. But as a principle, yes, people should try to seek asylum and enjoy asylum where they are. First of all, because it will be easier to go back home when/if the situation changes in the country of origin. Two, there is lot of exploitation and abuse related to secondary movements. We see broken people.

How much do they have to suffer? We have documented those routes in Sudan, Mali, and in Algeria; people suffer a lot, and we can't ignore that human rights dimension whether they are refugees or migrants. Many of them are already broken individuals when they arrive in North Africa.

In the Balkans, North Africa, Central America, Bangladesh and elsewhere, some refugees take the matter into their own hands: they get themselves into countries, apply for asylum and effectively jump the refugee queue, often successfully. Is that OK?

In general, I don't like queue jumping, but I understand the motivations of these people. Some are more resilient, some are less risk adverse, some will try everything because also despair is a strong driver. What I'm concerned about is that the demographics of irregular movements—in particular to Europe, but that's the same for North Africa—is not gender neutral, whereas persecution, human rights abuses, are gender neutral or sometimes even women and children are more exposed, but then the opportunity to move is not the same for men and women. At some stage, you need to have those safe pathways that bring the gender corrector that is necessary. Why? Because firstly host communities prefer to see families rather than single men, they are more comfortable in terms of integration. Second, single men don't integrate very well when their family is not around. And again perceptions by host communities matter. So I think we need to keep that in mind, that if there has to be strengthened legal pathways for refugees and some categories of migrants, they have to bring in that gender dimension, in my view.

It will generate more public support.

You've often said that if the refugees and migrants reach Libya, it's already too late. Please explain.

In Libya, what we can do is extremely limited in terms of activities and the nationalities of the people we are authorised to work with. When you're looking at the routes leading to Libya, most of the people leaving, again, are not leaving for the fun or for just better economic prospects. The Sahel is exploding, so people will continue to move, but we need to create the conditions where the people are not forced to move, that they have the choice to stay, and, on that we need the sort of activities that bring some stabilisation value in those host countries. Today, if you are an 18-year-old refugee from Darfur [living] in Chad, you don't get food assistance because the perception is that you should be self-sufficient, you need to fend for yourself. So the youth are not targeted by programmes at all and also often don't have access to secondary education or vocational training, or no legal access to the labour market in many cases. In the case of Sudan, some can't leave the camps. People who are in those conditions will continue to leave. Now, if you are talking about social economic inclusions of those people, with smart programming, many will consider staying rather than embarking on those dangerous journeys. So I think that's where we need to focus, on programmes that have a stabilisation value in the country of first asylum.

> **If there have to be strengthened legal pathways for refugees and some categories of migrants, they have to bring in a gender dimension. It will generate more public support.**

That applies to refugees. What about migrants?

When I'm talking about migrants, of course, it's better if they can stay at home, but there it's something else: it's governance, it's development, it's mitigating the impact of climate change, it's all the drivers combined, and that's maybe more complicated to address than the root causes of forced displacement because of war or persecution, because if you fix that by peace, many will return home, even if the conditions are not ideal.

What's the next decade going to look like in respect to refugees, resettlement, and mixed migration? Are you optimistic?

No, pessimistic. In the sense that some of the mega crises, for example in the Sahel and around the Lake Chad Basin, are not solved and we know by now that the military response cannot be sufficient. So these

crises are building on other root causes, which are already causing intercommunal problems. The impact of climate change, the issue of access to land and water will be further instrumentalised by extremist groups. From West Africa, right across to the East and Horn of Africa, we've seen it's very fragile, in Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Chad, Libya. It's complex. But I also think Europe will get better at coordinating its response. For example, the start of the EU's Team Europe approach linking the four key issues of security, migration control, humanitarian aid, and development. I think it's a bit more focused, a bit less disconnected. Will that be sufficient? Well, it will help to better manage some of the flows coming to Europe, but it won't prevent the displacement in Africa.

" We need to focus on programmes that have a stabilisation value in the country of first asylum. "

Losing out: The broken economics of irregular migration (and how to fix them)

The economies surrounding irregular migration are usually hidden from or largely ignored by organisations and policymakers that focus on mixed migration. Yet many businesses and local economies in sending, receiving, and transit countries depend to a large extent on irregular migrants. Averting or even reversing widespread irregularity would deliver myriad benefits to many stakeholders.

By Doug Saunders[1]

Introduction

Shifts in states' migration policies and related enforcement actions often have economic knock-on effects in a range of locations affected by irregular migration, from places of departure to final destinations and points in between. Over the past decade, for example, European, North American, and Australasian policies aimed at curbing irregular migration have disrupted economies and livelihoods in transit-hub cities and regions of lower-income countries on key migration routes. In some cases, this has led to people on the move becoming "involuntary immobile"—or stranded, in plain English—and has reduced economic opportunities for local residents who once benefitted from a more constant coming and going of migrants and refugees with money to spend on accommodation, food, transport, and other essentials.

More recently, the border closures and mobility controls imposed by governments since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic have brought much-needed attention to the dependency of many economic sectors on migrant workers, including irregular migrants. This has prompted some countries to take steps to fill gaps in labour supplies previously served by irregular migrants.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, several higher-income countries, including Italy, Portugal, and Ireland, have found that the unintended consequences of their border closures have made it necessary to recognise the economic and logistical reliance of certain industries on irregular migrants' labour and to introduce regularisation and recognition policies. In other countries, such as Australia and Spain, business and political leaders have called for similar steps to be taken to resolve severe labour shortages.[2]

These moves point to the longer-term feasibility of policy options aimed at preventing migrant labourers from falling into irregularity, at regularising those who have, and at creating more economically rational migration pathways and visa regimes.

Understanding the irregular economy

Governments have long been hampered by misunderstandings of the nature of irregular migration. There is often an underlying assumption that regular "recognised" or visa-holding immigrants are a distinct group unrelated to irregular migrants, who are seen as clandestine or trafficked. In reality, irregular status is more often a product of gaps and flaws in immigration and visa regimes that cause the same migrant populations—and often the same individual migrants—to shift back and forth between regular and irregular status. "There are many paths to irregularity," the International Organization for Migration (IOM) observes, "such as crossing borders without authorisation, unlawfully overstaying a visa period, working in contravention of visa conditions, being born into irregularity, or remaining after a negative decision on an asylum application has been made."[3] Irregular labour migration was found by one United Nations analysis to be predominantly "driven by asymmetries between the demand for labour and the supply in countries of destination and origin," producing "limited legal channels through which to migrate."[4] A great many "irregular-stay" migrants in higher-income countries are simply formerly regular migrants who have overstayed their visas or who are working while holding non-work visas.[5] In other cases, they are among groups of previously recognised, regular seasonal migrant workers

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1   Doug Saunders is a Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin. He is the author of books on migration and cities including Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping Our World (2010) and The Myth of the Muslim Tide (2012).
2   Fanjul, G. & Dempster, H. (2020) Regularizing Migrant Workers in response to COVID-19. Center for Global Development.
3   IOM (2020) World Migration Report 2020.
4   UN Special Representative for International Migration (2017) Issue Brief #6: Irregular migration and regular pathways.
5   Finch, T. & Cherti, M. (2011) No Easy Options: Irregular immigration in the UK. Institute for Public Policy Research.

forced into irregular and clandestine status by the elimination of work-visa regimes. (This has been shown to have been the origin, in the early 2000s, of irregular trans-Mediterranean migration from North Africa to Europe).[6] In the Global South, irregular status is more likely to derive from irregular entry (crossing borders without required documentation) than irregular stay (working in a country with expired or improper documentation) and is often tied to informal economies. In fact, research has found a direct link between the size of an informal economy and the proportion of irregular workers in the labour force.[7]

The economies of mixed-migration transit hubs (explored in further detail below) are equally misunderstood or even ignored entirely.[8] Migrants in such locations spend their savings on transportation and documentation services and other transit needs, and often decide to stay there for longer than they had anticipated either to engage in casual labour or entrepreneurial activities to fund onward travel, or because downstream legs of planned journeys have been severely restricted or closed off entirely under political pressure from major destination countries.[9]

In part because the status of many migrants is constantly in flux, it has been difficult to gauge with any precision the scope of irregular migration, or its contribution to labour markets and economies. Significant numbers of undocumented people are found in low- or middle-income countries susceptible to large mixed-migration flows. These populations usually enter irregularly without documents. For example, rough estimates suggest that Pakistan is home to about 4 million undocumented people, with the largest national group coming from Afghanistan; Thailand to between 2.5 and 3 million, from Southeast Asia; and Malaysia to 500,000.[10] Brazil is thought to have hundreds of thousands of irregular Andean migrants within its borders. In higher-income countries, irregular populations are more typically, but not exclusively, irregular-stay migrants who enter legitimately and later slip into irregularity. Recent estimates of irregular-migrant stocks have found that in "normal" years (that is, years without a pandemic or a large-scale migration "crisis" such as the one that gripped European countries

in 2015-16) there are typically between 1.9 and 3.8 million irregular migrants residing in the European Union,[11] approximately 11 million in the United States,[12] and between 60,000 and 100,000 in Australia.[13]

Transit hubs

Because migration pathways are so lengthy, complicated, and unpredictable for refugees and migrants who do not comply with receiving-country entry regimes, transit regions—which often adjoin international borders—become centres of economic activity driven by hospitality, transportation, accommodation, food service, smuggling, communications, and other migrant needs.[14] These local economies are highly vulnerable to shifts in the migration policies and enforcement regimes of receiving countries and regions.

Two well-known transit hubs are Agadez in Niger and Gao in Mali. Both lie on routes heading north across the Sahara to Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya.[15] IOM has estimated that between 320,000 and 350,000 migrants stayed in Agadez during 2016 on their journey northward, with an additional 91,500 staying there during southbound circular-migration or following deportation from Algeria or Libya.[16] Residents of both Gao and Agadez were found to have little long-term interaction with the migrants, but nevertheless see them as essential to their livelihoods.[17] In Agadez, before the EU-funded enforcement of the 2015 Law Against Illicit Smuggling of Migrants reduced the number of refugees and migrants transiting the city, services to people on the move "offered direct jobs for more than 6,000 people (in jobs such as passeurs, coxeurs, ghetto owners and drivers) and the combination of migrant consumption and increased trade with Libya indirectly supported incomes of reportedly more than half of all the households in Agadez."[18]

Another well-documented example is the Frontera Corozal region, which straddles western Guatemala and the Mexican state of Chiapas. In places such as the Guatemalan border town of La Técnica, large numbers of Central and South American and Chinese migrants have

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6   De Haas, H. et al (2018) International Migration: Trends, Determinants and Policy Effects. Population and Development Review.

7   OECD/ILO (2018) How Immigrants Contribute to Developing Countries' Economies.

8   Sampson, R., Gifford, S. & Taylor, S. (2016) The myth of transit: The making of a life by asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies; and Cherti, M. and Grant, P. (2013) The myth of transit: Sub-Saharan migration in Morocco. IPPR.

9   Castagnone, E. (2011) Transit migration: A piece of the complex mobility puzzle. The case of Senegalese migration. Cahiers de l'Urmis. Both these scenarios illustrate the phenomenon of "circumstantial migration", whereby "migration trajectories and experiences unfold in unpredictable ways under the influence of micro-level context and coincidence". Carling, J. & Haugen, H. (2020) Circumstantial migration: How Gambian journeys to China enrich migration theory. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.

10 McAuliffe, M. & Laczko, F. (eds) (2016) Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A global review of the emerging evidence base. IOM.

11 Vogel, D., Kovacheva, V., & Prescot, H. (2011) The size of the irregular migrant population in the European Union – counting the uncountable? International Migration.

12 Migration Policy Institute (2018) Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States.

13 Australian National Audit Office (2013) Individual Management Services Provided to People in Immigration Detention.

14 McAuliffe, M. & Laczko, F. (eds) (2016) op. cit.

15 IMREF (2021) Understanding Relations between Local Communities and Transit Migrants in Gao and Agadez.

16 Hall, S. (2016) Selling Sand in the Desert: The economic impact of migration in Agadez. IOM.

17 IMREF (2021) op. cit.

18 Hoffmann, A., Meester, J. & Nabara, H. (2017) Migration and Markets in Agadez: Economic alternatives to the migration industry. Netherlands Institute of International Relations.

fuelled a thriving local economy around smuggling and related services.[19] There, migrants will typically pay $2 to $3 each for a short trip across the Usumacinta River that marks the frontier—and considerably more for taxi or bus rides to and from the crossing points—$10 a night to stay in flophouse "hotels," and more on restaurants and other services. As one restaurant owner there told a reporter: "The economy of La Técnica is the migrants. If there are migrants, there is business. If there are no migrants, there is none."[20]

When migration routes become impassable due to policy or enforcement changes at the receiving end, transit hubs and countries not only experience a sudden loss of income for thousands of people, but often become longer-term homes to large populations of involuntary immobile migrants. As irregular-stay populations, they become competitors for scarce irregular-market and legitimate jobs, and risk running out of money to spend in the local economies. This was the case in the transit districts of Indonesia, where changing Australian migration policies in the 2010s left thousands of Afghans and then Rohingya from Myanmar stranded indefinitely. They developed their own informal economies and have joined the labour market, inspiring calls for regularisation or limited services and labour rights.[21]

Settled irregular populations

It has been known for some time that irregular and undocumented migrants play a significant part in the labour forces of major industries and service sectors in advanced economies. In sectors such as agriculture, elder care, childcare, hospitality, construction, and food service, one analysis found that irregular migrants "make an economic contribution by allowing firms to overcome bottlenecks caused by recruitment problems."[22] But it is not only in low-skilled and low-wage sectors that irregular migrants play a role: many highly skilled workers in fields such as education, health, public administration, and financial services are students who have overstayed their education visas and are thus irregular; one study estimates that more than 50 percent of non-European Union students employed "illegally" in full-time positions in Europe are working in such fields.[23]

Dependence on irregular-stay migrants may be a necessity caused by gaps in regular immigration and visa systems, but it can be exploitative of the migrants themselves and sometimes harmful to the earning prospects of the wider labour force. As one study found, undocumented labourers "tend to arrive in larger numbers when the economy is booming and move to regions where job growth is strong."[24] Literature shows that, although regular immigrants have little or no negative effect on the earnings of domestic workers, irregular immigrants can have a more noticeable negative wage impact—albeit one that can be mitigated by minimum-wage laws.[25] One study in the UK found that average irregular immigrant wages are around 25 percent lower than those of regular migrants and that reliance on undocumented labour can bring down sectoral salaries in a way that regularised labour would not.[26] However, a number of analyses suggest that irregular-immigrant labour delivers a net economic benefit, at least at the limited scale typically found in developed countries: "Due to the overall small number of irregular immigrants their impact on the economy is modest though significant in the few sectors where they concentrate… they are highly responsive to labour market needs and more geographically mobile than the indigenous population."[27] Studies in Greece and the United States have found that irregular immigration has a net positive effect on these countries' economies.[28]

Relying on irregular labour, however, risks incurring fiscal losses, in the form of forfeited tax revenues and increased enforcement costs. In general, immigrant labour is a considerable benefit to the public revenues and overall economies of host countries. It is estimated that at least 85 percent of immigrant-worker earnings remain in the host country, even when employment is in the informal economy.[29] Irregular-immigrant labour does play some fiscal role because even undocumented workers employed in the grey-market pay some taxes, such as sales or value-added tax. Moreover, they "do not claim as many benefits, including access to public services to the same degree" as regular migrants.[30] But analyses have shown that irregular workers pay considerably less overall in taxes, and that regularisation results in higher fiscal contributions.[31] One UK estimate found that an earned regularisation scheme (affecting around 400,000 migrants) would raise national tax

19 Ellis, E. (2012) Organized Crime Exploits China's Growing Links to Latin America. China Brief.
20 Root, J. and Gutierrez, M. (2019) 1,000 Migrants a Day Made this Tiny Guatemala Town as Smuggler's Paradise. The Business Has Dried Up. The Texas Tribune.
21 Lau, B. (2021) A Transit Country No More: Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Indonesia. Mixed Migration Centre.
22 Finch, T. & Cherti, M. (2011) No Easy Options: Irregular immigration in the UK. Institute for Public Policy Research.
23 Chappel, L., et al (2011) Background paper for the ETUC: The impacts of irregular migration. Institute for Public Policy Research.
24 Hanson, G. (2007) The Economic Logic of Illegal Immigration. Council on Foreign Relations.
25 Chappel, L. et al (2011) op. cit.
26 Gordon, I. et al (2009) Economic impact on the London and UK economy of an earned regularisation of irregular migrants to the UK. GLA Economics.
27 Duvell, F. (2011) Irregular Immigration, Economics and Politics. IFO-Institut DICE-Report.
28 Sarris, A. & Zografakis, S. (1999) A Computable General Equilibrium Assessment of the Impact of Illegal Immigration on the Greek Economy. Journal of Population Economics; Hanson, G.H. (2007)
29 Ponsot, F. et al (2017) Sending Money Home: Contributing to the SDGs, one family at a time. IFAD.
30 Finch, T. & Cherti, M. (2011) op. cit.
31 OECD/ILO (2018) op. cit.

revenues by the equivalent of £1.1 billion per year, while it would cause these migrants to use only £410 million more in public services.[32] Additionally, regularisation was estimated to save the country between £10.5 billion and £15.5 billion annually in deportation and removal-related costs.[33] Indeed, wider-scale analyses have suggested that the worldwide economic benefits of appropriately matching labour-market needs to regular migration demands would be in the hundreds of billions of dollars.[34]

The Covid effect

As the Covid-19 pandemic began to spread across the world in March 2020, most countries imposed some form of border closure or restriction, introduced quarantine requirements, banned seasonal, student or work immigration, or prohibited all entry by non-citizens.[35] Anticipating or responding to such actions, millions of migrant labourers returned to their home countries or were left stranded in transit countries. These phenomena had two effects on irregular migrants in the labour market: the loss of irregular-entry seasonal or temporary workers who were usually available for work, and an increased reliance on undocumented irregular-stay workers already present when the restrictions came into effect.[36]

As a consequence, many countries found themselves desperately seeking qualified workers in sectors such as healthcare (as the pandemic intensified) and in agriculture (as planting and harvest seasons approached). Likely the first country to recognise the problem and to seek a policy solution was Italy, which had been struck hard by the coronavirus and closed its borders in the spring of 2020. While Italy faced severe labour shortages, the presence of tens of thousands of undocumented migrants living in dangerous conditions became a public issue, and a potential solution to the labour shortages.[37] Research had already identified Italian agriculture as a migration pull factor that regularly draws in as many as 200,000 undocumented field workers per year, on top of around twice that number of undocumented workers within Italy, employed mainly in elder care and healthcare.[38]

In the summer of 2020, the Italian government issued a decree allowing certain undocumented residents to apply for regularisation with employer sponsorship, or to apply for a residence permit for the purpose of seeking employment. By October, 207,000 people had applied for a six-month visa and another 13,000 had applied for job-seeking residence permit.[39] Most of the applicants worked in the health and care sectors; workers in fields such as construction, logistics and hospitality were excluded from the scheme. This restrictive scope, the limited timeframe of the program, and its reliance on employer goodwill were criticised by humanitarian organisations.[40] Regularisation programs on smaller scales (affecting a few tens of thousands of migrants) but providing more robust visas and pathways to citizenship, were launched in 2020 by Portugal[41] and in 2021 by Ireland.[42]

In other countries, the plight of irregular-stay migrants and many industries' urgent need for legal access to this labour force amid pandemic restrictions has led to public debates about the processes and policies that lead to irregularity and the need to reform them. In Brazil, as hundreds of thousands of irregular-stay migrants were in danger of becoming a serious infection risk due to their lack of access to the public health system, there was a sustained push to offer two-year renewable residency permits to an estimated 200,000 people "who are undocumented or have a pending immigration case." [43]

A similar push has taken place in Australia, where a government-sponsored study in the spring of 2021 recommended amnesty—or "status resolution"—in the form of a one- or two-year visa be given to an estimated 100,000 undocumented workers, three-quarters of them employed in agriculture, the rest in fields such as cleaning and hospitality.[44] The report cited public health concerns; most of these workers had not been vaccinated, because this would involve collection of their names and addresses. Farm-industry groups supported the recommendation because it would make widespread clandestine employment legal and allow the workers to pay taxes. One New South Wales business organisation found that 42 percent of firms surveyed believed labour shortages were imposing a "significant" toll.[45] In August, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute recommended the country "seize the opportunity Covid-19 brings to harness Australia's large number of unlawful non-citizens."[46] This would be similar to the mass amnesties Australia conducted on several occasions

32   Gordon, I. et al (2009) op. cit.
33   Ibid.
34   Clemens, M. (2011) Economics and Emigration: Trillion-Dollar Bills on the Sidewalk? Center for Global Development.
35   Guadagno, L. (2020) Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis. IOM.
36   Bodeux, L. & Gnes, D. (2020) Undocumented workers are Covid-19 'elephant in room.' EU Observer.
37   Oddone, E. (2020) Malpractice, fraud and blackmail: Italy's treatment of undocumented workers. Deutsche Welle.
38   Corrado, A. (2018) Is Italian agriculture a 'pull factor' for irregular migration – And, if so, why? Open Society Foundation.
39   ANSA (2020) Migrants in Italy: 220,000 workers applied for regularization.
40   Human Rights Watch (2020) Italy: Flawed Migrant Regularization Program.
41   Euronews (2020) Coronavirus: Portugal grants temporary citizenship rights to migrants.
42   Molony, S. (2021) Legal recognition to be granted for nearly 20,000 'undocumented' in Ireland. Irish Independent.
43   Dias, I. (2020) COVID-19 sparks push for immigration reform in Brazil. The New Humanitarian.
44   Davis, J. (2021) Calls for amnesty for undocumented workers, as new report recommends 'one-off' visas in agriculture. ABC.
45   Pearlman, J. (2021) Lengthy border closures in Australia prompt calls for 'amnesty' for migrant workers. The Straits Times.
46   Coyne, J. (2021) Amnesties could help solve Australia's Covid-related migration shortfall. Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

from the 1970s to the 1990s.[47] A similar debate has taken place in Spain, where one recent study estimated that about 430,000 immigrants—12 percent of the total immigrant population, most of whom come from Central or South America—were living irregularly.[48] The Spanish government is considering a mass regularisation program, similar to those it conducted in the 2000s, that would grant longer-term visas, both for health reasons and to bring irregular migrants into the formal economy.[49]

Border closures and movement restrictions have also had devastating effects on transit hubs, creating economic hardship and often dangerous situations both for migrants stranded along transit routes and for host populations economically dependent on servicing those on the move.[50] In Panama, towns along the Colombian border became populated with thousands of Haitian, African, and Asian transit migrants who were unable to travel further and had exhausted their savings, creating economic and humanitarian challenges.[51] In the Libyan capital Tripoli, a traditional centre for services and informal employment of transit migrants, the blockage of transit routes due to the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with tougher EU enforcement regimes, led to a violent and dangerous situation for tens of thousands of sub-Saharan migrants who lacked resources.[52] Citing pandemic concerns, in late 2020 the Algerian government expelled thousands of sub-Saharan transit and resident migrants to towns in Mali and Niger, further exacerbating existing economic tensions in those towns, which had already suffered from the decline of their core transit-migration economy.[53]

Beyond amnesties

Even if they garner the political will to be implemented, amnesties and regularisations are never more than stopgaps—emergency measures to recognise the economic and humanitarian importance of a migrant population whose plight and potential have been exposed by the commercial desperation of the pandemic period. Regularisations do not address the gaps between immigration policies and labour-market demands that force immigrants to take irregular paths or that leave large numbers of previously visa-holding workers and professionals without proper credentials after a short period. The pandemic-era crises of closed borders, labour

shortages and reliance on irregular-migrant populations could prompt policy reforms that address irregular-stay populations through more economically informed visa regimes. These could facilitate easier renewals for work and seasonal visa holders and smoother transitions between statuses for students or tourists seeking periods of work.

Amnesty is not the only effective measure to provide a better and more official livelihood for residents who have fallen out of regular status. Even without regularisation, it is possible to implement policies that provide irregular immigrants with healthcare (including vaccinations), access to housing and school systems, and rudimentary social benefits, so they do not have to live underground or at risk. One significant example is Thailand's Migrant Health Insurance scheme, under which all regular and irregular migrants from Southeast Asian countries must pay an annual fee to cover themselves and their families.[54] Argentina and Costa Rica both provide schooling, social protection, and health services to all residents, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.[55] And Spain is one of the few Western countries to provide access to healthcare and education to undocumented residents, although take-up is very limited because migrants fear deportation if they register.[56] Below the national level, access to social and health services without regard for immigration status is offered by a number of cities in Europe and North America.[57]

Some countries and regions have attempted with some success to reduce the volume of irregular-entry migration by creating limited pathways for regular migration, seasonal or otherwise, sometimes in partnership with sending countries.[58] This has been done, with measured success in reducing irregular flows, by Spain (in relation to Moroccan emigration) during the 2000s; by ASEAN countries since the 1990s to allow temporary regular skilled-labour migration and deter irregular movements; and by some South American MERCOSUR countries through a 2002 Residence Agreement which aims to reduce irregular entries by granting legal residence for labour purposes to nationals of participating states.[59] Similar steps have been proposed by the African Union since 2018 in its policies to implement the Free Movement of Persons Protocol to harmonise labour policies and regularise the cross-border

47   Love, S. (2021) Migrant amnesties: What has Australia done in the past? Parliament of Australia.
48   Fanjul, G. and Gálvez-Iniesta, I. (2020) Foreign, essential and undocumented: A snapshot of irregular immigration in Spain. Por Causa.
49   Fanjul, G. & Dempster, H. (2020) op. cit.
50   IMREF (2020) op. cit.
51   Zamorano, J. (2020) Stalled by pandemic, migrants press in quest for better life. Associated Press.
52   Amnesty International (2020) Libya: New evidence shows refugees and migrants trapped in horrific cycle of abuses.
53   Human Rights Watch (2020) Algeria: Migrants, Asylum Seekers Forced Out.
54   OECD/ILO (2018)
55   Ibid.
56   Laresgoiti, M., et. Al. (2019) Solidarity against healthcare access restrictions on undocumented immigrants in Spain: the REDER case study. International Journal of Equity Health.
57   Spencer, S. (2020) Cities Breaking the Mould? Municipal Inclusion of Irregular Migrants in Europe. Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe.
58   UN Special Representative for International Migration (2017)
59   MERCOSUR's Residency Agreement applies to Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador but residency rules vary considerably between these states. Berry Appleman & Leiden LLP (2016) The MERCOSUR Agreement.

movement of labourers across the continent.[60] However, in many cases, actual implementation is lacking and programmes for regular, temporary labour migration are often limited to small-scale pilots. Although expanding pathways for regular migration would not end irregular migration entirely (as it is unlikely the number of available pathways would satisfy demand), it would go a long way in reducing it.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) advises its signatory states to ensure a better fit between irregular migration and the domestic economy through several measures. Signatory states are urged: to "facilitate transitions from one status to another" so visa regimes allow migrants who have fallen into irregular status to become regular again; to "prevent migrants from falling into an irregular status in the country of destination"; and to "reduce precariousness of status and related vulnerabilities."[61] The global Covid-19 pandemic has made a number of countries—including those not party to the GCM—aware of the need to make these reforms in order to take advantage of populations who have proven vital to sustaining the economy amid closed borders, but who do not have proper documentation.

Conclusion

Irregular migrants, rather than being strictly a legal and economic liability, are often an integral part of host countries' economies and would be better served by closing the policy and visa gaps that create their irregular status. Irregular migration already contributes massively to the economies of transit and destination countries, as well as to origin countries through remittances. Regularising a larger part of irregular migration would lead to even greater economic benefits both for destination countries via, for example, increased tax revenues and lower spending on enforcement, and for migrants through, for instance, higher wages and lower risks of exploitation. Moreover, the economic impact of transit migration along major mixed migration routes needs to be taken into account in broader migration management policies, as reducing migration along these routes has severe economic impacts on transit hubs which could lead to further destabilisation in often fragile contexts.

60   Triandafyllidou, A., Bartolini, L. and C.F. Guidi (2019) Exploring the Links Between Enhancing Regular Pathways and Discouraging Irregular Migration. IOM.
61   United Nations (2018) Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Centre stage: Repositioning the importance of 'migrant states' in the Global South

South-South migration is a key facet of mixed migration. Many of the movements in the Global South feature people of different categories and statuses moving together as part of the mixed migration phenomenon. The policy implications are many and far-reaching.

By Chris Horwood[1]

Even though more people migrate—be it regularly or irregularly, voluntarily or not—within the Global South (around 37 percent of all migrants) than from the Global South to the Global North (around 35 percent), most international discussion, socio-political angst, and media focus is on South-North migration.[2] Part of the reason could be the predominance of academics, analysts and migration institutions based in the Global North, coupled with the somewhat fevered presentation of migration as a problem in the North, which is far less evident in the South, despite, as this essay will show, the huge differences in refugees' and migrants' experience of mobility there.[3]

Any re-thinking of mixed migration, therefore, needs to focus on the key characteristics and dynamics of mixed migration in the South. By disaggregating the groups that make up mixed migration in the South, the prevalence and salience of all forms of mobility in the Global South become clearer.

A focus on South-South migration (SSM) is even more pertinent and timely, since proportionally, migration looks set to increase across all categories in the South, presenting both challenges (e.g. migration management, refugee hosting) and opportunities (e.g. the potential contribution of migration to regional economic development). This demands a re-think of our focus and emphasis: shouldn't SSM and displacement take centre stage of global mixed migration analysis and policy debate, replacing the disproportionate—and often negative—focus on the lesser phenomenon of South-North migration? This essay explores the dynamics and dimensions of mobility in the Global South: its characteristics, prospects, and policy implications.

The mobility story of the South is neither even nor heterogenous. Embedded in the global figures of migration trends (currently 281 million people, 3.6 percent of the world's population, are on the move) are huge differences between mobility profiles in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania. This is particularly true of Asia, which has more international migrant stock in absolute terms (almost 86 million) than Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania combined (see Graphic 1). High levels of labour migration to the oil-rich states of the Gulf are also part of the South-South mobility profile.

While SSM is more prevalent than South-North migration in the Global South, North-North migration is very dominant in North America and Europe. Furthermore, migration transition theory suggests that whether the movement is South-South or South-North, populations will continue to migrate to higher wage-earning countries up to a threshold level of per capita earnings in the country of origin (roughly PPP$5,000–6,000 in 2014).[4]

On current economic projections and expectations, for many countries in the South this would mean increasing numbers of people will continue to leave as economic migrants for decades to come, not only traveling from South to North but also within the South.

1   Chris Horwood is a migration specialist and co-director of Ravenstone Consult.
2   Reidy, E. (2021) South-South migration has long been overlooked. Why? New Humanitarian; World Population Review (2021) Global South Countries. It is acknowledged that the terms "Global North" and "Global South" are imprecise and group together highly diverse states. However, for lack of a better term and for ease of reading, they are used in the remainder of this article without quotation marks.
3   A rare exception is Migration for Development and Equality, or MIDEQ, a hub of around 90 researchers studying movement along six migration corridors between 12 countries in the Global South.
4   Clemens, M. (2014) Does development reduce migration? In: Lucas, R. (ed.) International Handbook on Migration and Economic Development. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Graphic 1. The number of international migrants has increased in all UN regions, but has increased to a greater degree in Europe and Asia than in other regions
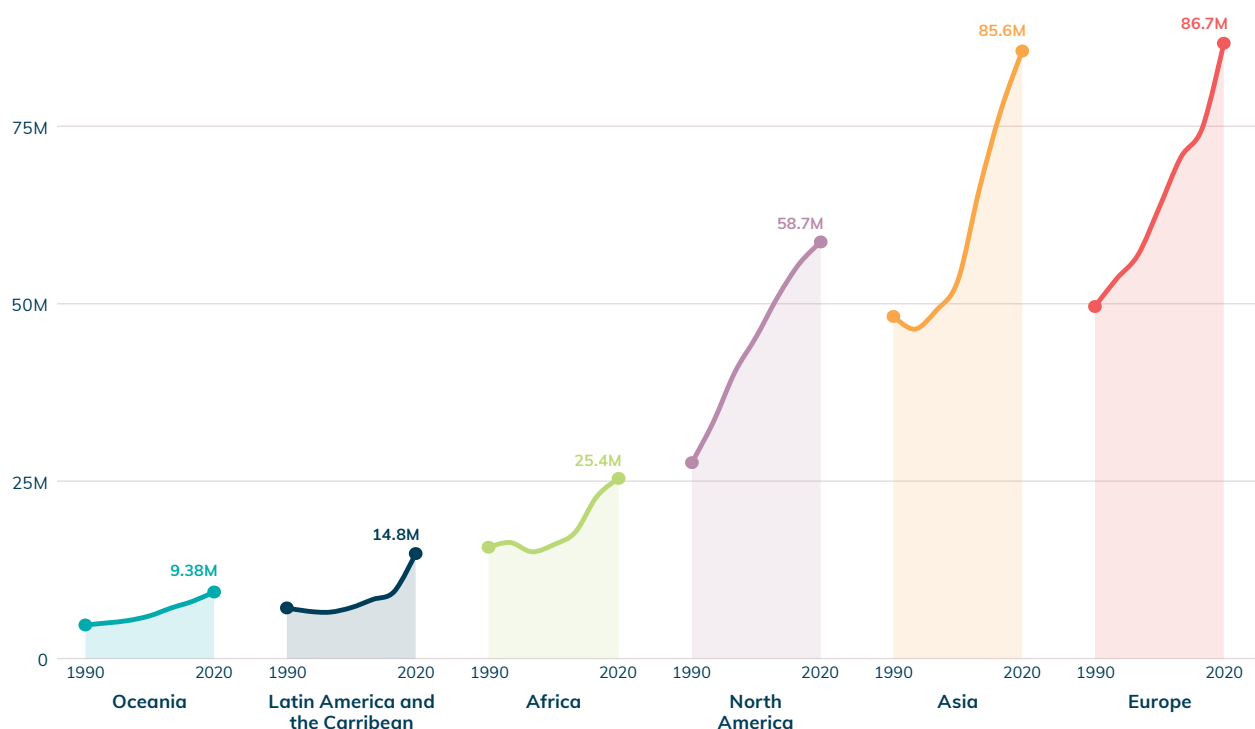
Source (adapted) and credit: IOM[5]

A clear commonality between the geographical regions of the South is that regional mobility overwhelmingly originates from states within the region, as SSM.

Not surprisingly, in terms of economic migration, the normal general trend is of movement of people from lower-income to higher-income countries, whether the movement is from South to North, within the South, or within the North, conforming to migration transition theories based on the original thesis of human geographer Wilbur Zelinsky.[6]

Beyond migrant stocks

To get a fuller picture of complex flows, mixed migration, and displacement, we need to look beyond migrant stock figures. In particular, if our interest is related to vulnerability and rights' protection, it is relevant to establish where **refugees** reside; where the largest **displacements** (prompted by conflict, disasters, and climate change) are occurring; where internal migration is most prevalent, often as rural-urban movements leading to increasing **urbanisation**; where Covid-induced **reverse migration** recently took place; and where

human trafficking is reckoned to be most prevalent. Additionally, we need to understand the scale and scope of the uncounted **irregular migration** and its trends in the South, and consider the level and implications of **involuntary immobility**. When focusing on migration in the South we need to recognise that both quantitative and qualitative data is less widely available than in the North and that there is a higher degree of invisibility of some aspects of SSM. This means that we might even underestimate the scale of SSM, where movement may be nested within other socioeconomic phenomena such as urbanisation.

Refugees and asylum seekers

As of mid-2020, UNHCR stated that the total number of people forcibly displaced across borders had reached a total of 34.4 million. This number includes: 20.7 million official convention refugees, 4.1 million asylum seekers, 5.7 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate, and 3.9 million Venezuelans displaced abroad.[7] Many of these have been displaced for years or even decades, but 11.2 million were newly displaced in 2020.[8] The top ten ranking nationalities displaced (excluding Palestinians) are shown in the chart below (Graphic 2). The companion

5   IOM (2020) World Migration Report 2020.
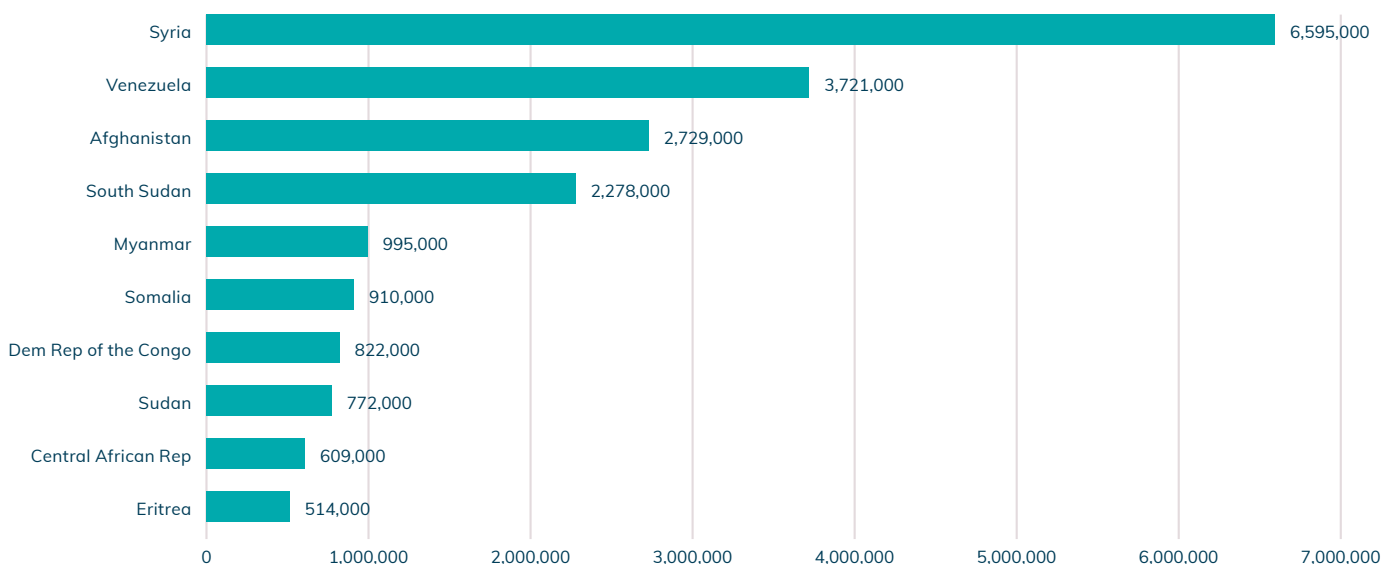6   Zelinsky, W. (1971) The Hypothesis of the Mobility Transition. Geographical Review.
7   UNHCR (2021) Global Trends Forced Displacement In 2020.
8   2020 saw 11.2 million people fleeing crises, compared to 11.0 million in 2019. This figure includes people displaced for the first time as well as people displaced repeatedly, both within and beyond countries' borders. See: UNHCR (2021) Crises in 2020 – Global Trends.

chart (Graphic 3) clearly shows that almost all those displaced internationally are hosted in the Global South. The only exception is Germany, whose ranking rose significantly after it took in over a million (mainly Syrians) during 2015/2016 when large numbers of refugees and migrants arrived in Europe and moved further north, often to Germany. According to UNHCR figures, "developing countries host 86 percent of the world's refugees and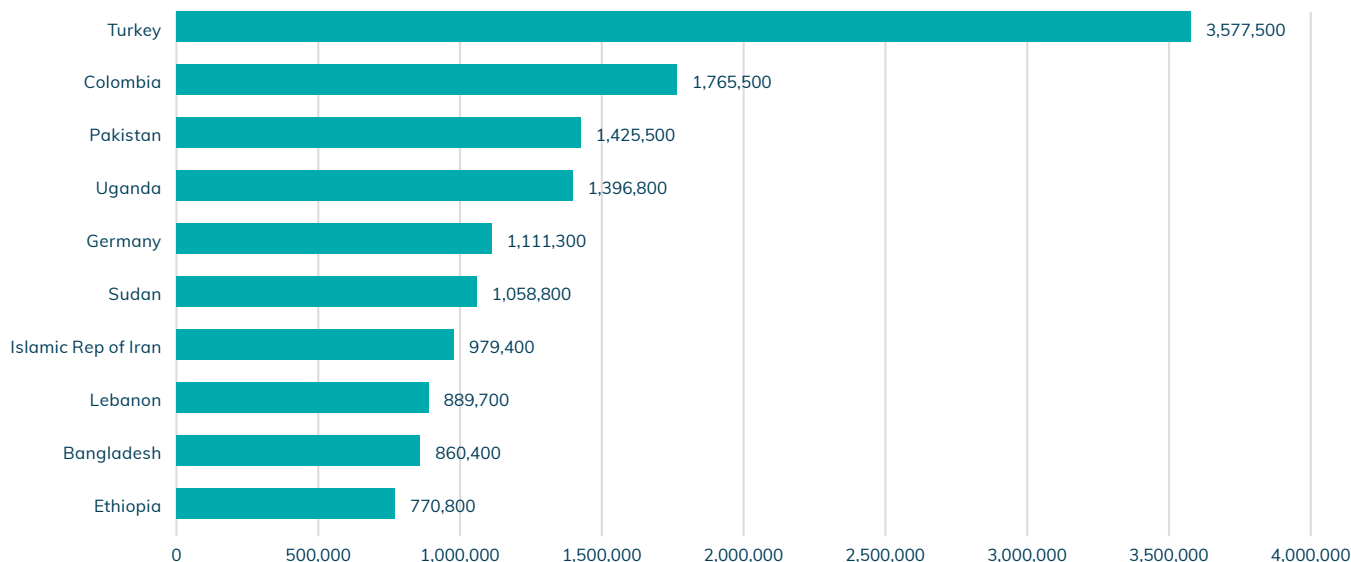 Venezuelans displaced abroad. The Least Developed Countries provide asylum to 28 percent of the total."[9] In the current climate of strengthening borders, externalisation deals, conditionalities in aid agreements, and pushbacks (often illegal under international law), "fewer potential refugees reach countries ready and capable to recognize their status".[10] New conflicts and political turmoil continually add to the de facto hosting of those fleeing events in the South, such as the Tigray crisis in Ethiopia and violence in the Central African Republic.

Graphic 2. People displaced across borders by country of origin, mid 2020

Country	Value
Syria	6,595,000
Venezuela	3,721,000
Afghanistan	2,729,000
South Sudan	2,278,000
Myanmar	995,000
Somalia	910,000
Dem Rep of the Congo	822,000
Sudan	772,000
Central African Rep	609,000
Eritrea	514,000

Source: 2020 UNHCR

Graphic 3. People displaced across borders by host country, mid 2020

Country	Value
Turkey	3,577,500
Colombia	1,765,500
Pakistan	1,425,500
Uganda	1,396,800
Germany	1,111,300
Sudan	1,058,800
Islamic Rep of Iran	979,400
Lebanon	889,700
Bangladesh	860,400
Ethiopia	770,800

Source: 2020 UNHCR

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9   UNHCR (2021) Refugee Data Finder.
10 ESI (2021) The European Refugee Convention? Basic facts about international protection in today's world.

Forced internal displacement

The director of the world's leading displacement tracking organisation, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) said in early 2021: "Conflict, violence and disasters continue to uproot millions of people from their homes every year. Never in IDMC's history have we recorded more people living in internal displacement worldwide than we do today."[11] There were 55 million internally displaced people (IDPs) across the world at the end of 2020; 48 million as a result of conflict and violence, and 7 million as a result of disasters.[12] Those displaced by conflict and violence were situated in 59 countries and territories as of early 2021, all in the Global South. Equally, with the exception of those displaced by bushfires in 2020 in the United States, all disaster-related displacement globally occurred in the Global South. Graphic 4 shows the increasing predominance of weather events over geophysical events as the cause of displacement. Together, this level of forced movement and disruption represents a significant proportion of global mobility.

Graphic 4. New displacements by disaster, breakdown by hazards (2008-2020)
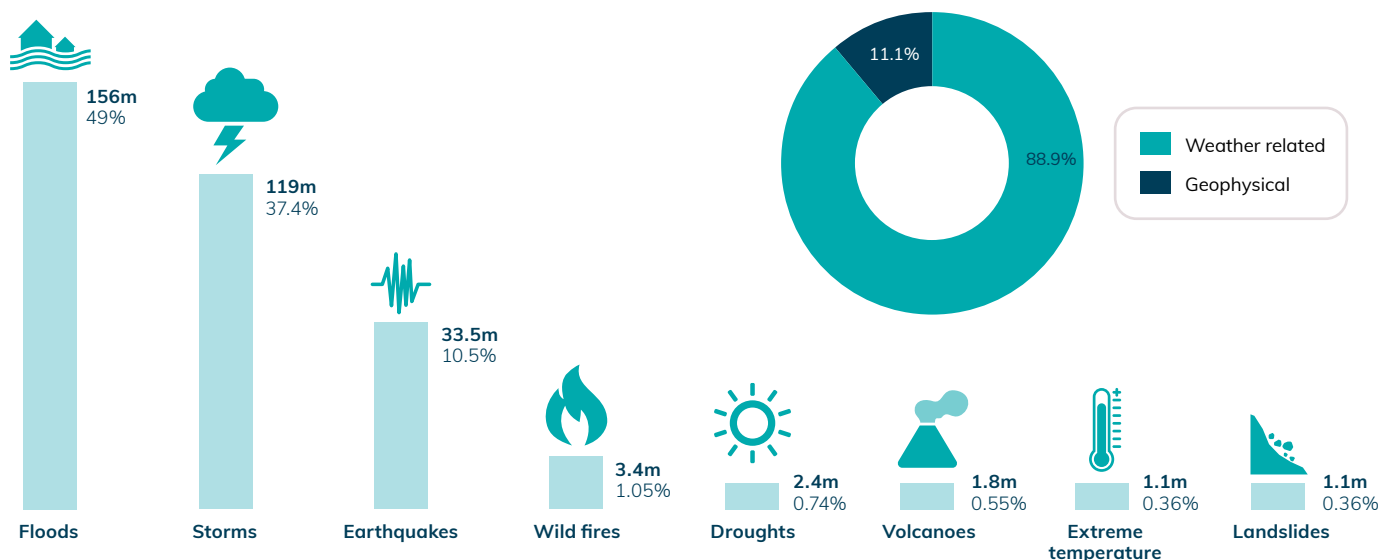
Source (adapted) and credit: GRID 2021. IDMC (Part 2).

Urbanisation—internal movement

Urbanisation typically represents rural-to-urban movement, although it may also occur between urban centres, normally towards larger metropolises. Globally, the level of international migration is dwarfed by levels of internal migration which, when not related to disaster or conflict, is predominantly rural-to-urban movement. In 2021 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated the global total of internal migrants at 763 million, almost three times the number of international migrants.[13] Even a proportion of internal displacement related to conflict and disasters becomes de facto urbanisation in some cases. China is still in the midst of its urban transition, dominated by rural-to-urban migration; an estimated 14 percent of the population of 1.4 billion is engaged in such internal movement.[14] China's internal migration, like India's, represents a significant proportion of the global total. In the Global South, migration drivers are various, but are generally linked to limited livelihood opportunities and the diminishing ability in rural areas to achieve desired economic, social, health, and educational outcomes. Economic and livelihood needs are increasingly linked to overpopulation, resource competition, and productivity, and are exacerbated by changing environmental conditions. Here we distinguish economic drivers of mobility from the political or security related drivers that force people to flee their homes as IDPs or, when they move across borders, as refugees. Relatively speaking, migration in the Global South is dominated by internal migration, while migration in the Global North is more international, which could be explained by the fact that international migration usually requires more substantial resources.

Many middle-to-upper income countries in Latin America, North Africa, and the Middle East have already

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11 IDMC (2021) Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021.
12 It should be noted that with respect to IDPs, annual flows are substantial and dynamic, with new people becoming displaced while at the same time others previously displaced return home, particularly when disasters are the (main) cause of displacement. IDPs fleeing conflict are more likely to experience protracted displacement and form part of the year-on-year 'stock' of IDPs.
13 IOM (2021) Migration in the World.
14 Shen, J. (2020) Internal Migration in China. In: Bell M., Bernard A., Charles-Edwards E., Zhu Y. (eds) Internal Migration in the Countries of Asia.

experienced high levels of urbanisation that continue, but at a slower pace. In many low-to-lower-middle income countries of the Global South, the majority still live in rural areas, but the situation is changing rapidly with urbanisation today primarily taking place in parts of Asia and the Pacific and Africa (see Graphic 5). Ninety percent of projected urban population growth will take place in African and Asian countries. Africa, whose population is projected to double between 2020 and 2050, has the highest rate of urbanisation of all continents and two thirds of that population growth will be absorbed by

cities.[15] It is expected that over a third of the projected global urban growth between now and 2050 will occur in just three countries: India, China, and Nigeria, with India adding 416 million urban dwellers, China 255 million, and Nigeria 189 million.[16] To the extent that current and future urban growth results from the internal mobility of hundreds of millions of people from rural to urban areas—rather than from "natural" population growth—this too is occurring and will continue to occur overwhelmingly in the Global South.

Graphic 5. Share of people living in urban areas, 2017
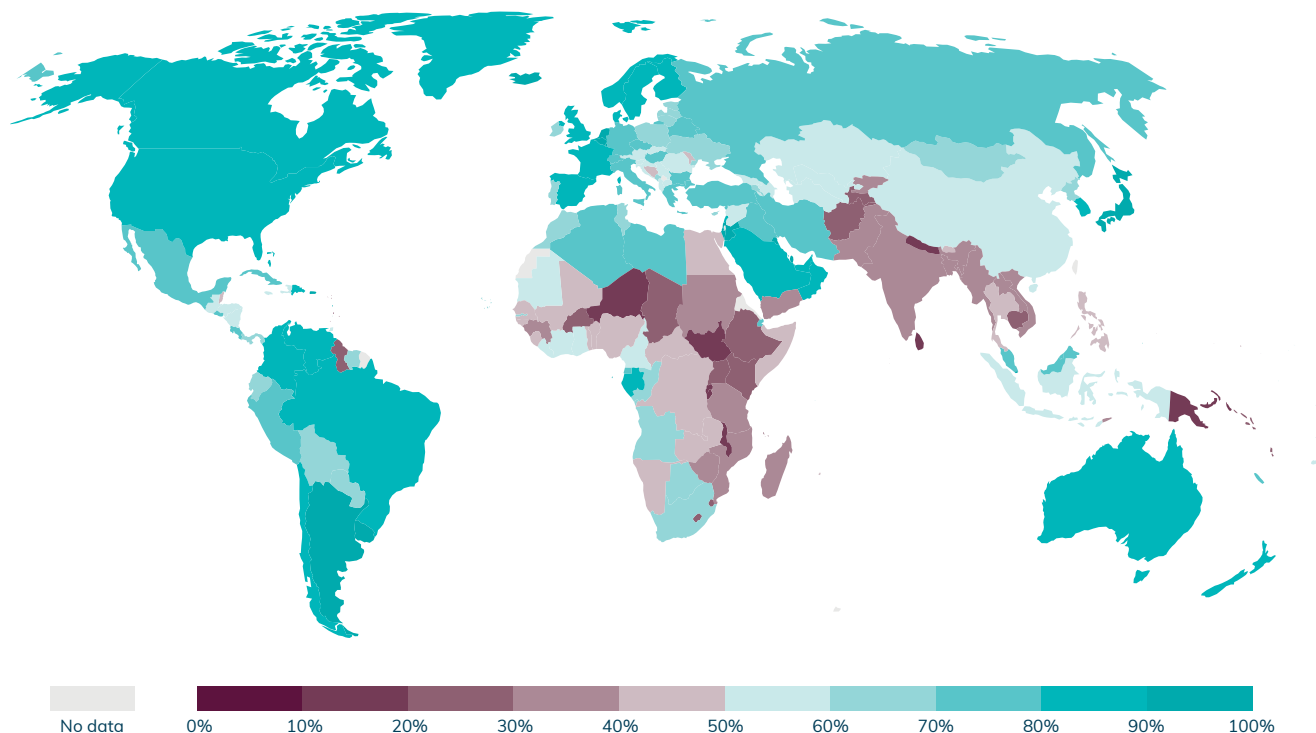
Source (adapted) and credit: Our World in Data.

Covid-induced reverse migration

During 2020 and into 2021, many millions of migrant workers joined modern history's largest "reverse migration" phenomenon. Predominantly urban-to-rural and domestic, return migration was driven by the effects of lockdowns, curfews, workplace closures, suspension of salary and other earnings, quarantine, fear of family separation for an unknown period, and fear of contagion. It affected millions of workers throughout less developed and middle-income countries in East Asia, South Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas in the Global South. It also manifested to a lesser extent in Global North countries such as Italy, the US, and France, where far more government safety nets and economic security

measures were provided. In the South, return migration not only helped spread the pandemic to rural areas but generated hardships and vulnerabilities for individuals and communities. The urban exodus in India was dramatic and much publicised. Somewhere between the official government figure of 10 million and as many as 60 million migrant workers returned home.[17] International reverse migration involving Indians was also huge in scale. In Kerala state, for example, more than 12 million returned from the Gulf States between May 2020 and March 2021.[18]

In Peru, an estimated 200,000 people attempted to migrate from Lima to their home villages after the

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15   OECD/SWAC (2020) Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics. Africapolis. Mapping a New Urban Geography.
16   World Economic Forum (2020) 70 years of urban growth in 1 infographic.
17   Misra, U. (2021) What 2020 taught us about India's internal migration. The Indian Express.
18   Harigovind, A. (2021) State sees largest reverse migration. The Hindu.

country imposed an extended lockdown in late April 2020. Even some Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Peru returned home during 2020, as they did from other Latin American countries. Some reports suggest that as of late 2020, up to 130,000 Venezuelans had returned to Venezuela because of the Covid-19 pandemic and its economic impact.[19] Similar situations were reported in Uganda, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and numerous other places in Sub-Saharan Africa.[20]

Human trafficking

Given the hidden nature of human trafficking, understanding the full scope and scale of the issue is problematic and further complicated by definitional aspects. Contemporary analysis of human trafficking employed by relevant agencies includes modern slavery, which covers a set of specific legal concepts, such as forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, other slavery, and slavery-like practices. Human trafficking may

or may not entail crossing borders and does not always include mobility at all. According to 2017 data compiled by a collaboration between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Walk Free Foundation, in 2017, 40.3 million people were in situations of modern slavery, including 24.9 million in forced labour and 15.4 million in forced marriage.[21] Extracting from these figures those that involve mobility and those that do not is not practical but the relevant observation for this essay is that the vast majority of the world's forced labour occurs in the Global South and involves people from the South. North-North human trafficking exists, as does South-North trafficking, but the majority is South-South. It includes high levels of often-hidden (involuntary) human mobility and is associated with severe human rights violations. Graphic 6 below shows the global sexual and labour exploitation distribution of detected trafficking victims, who, because of the paucity of confirmed data, represent just a small fraction of the full extent of human trafficking.

Graphic 6. Share of detected trafficking victims, by form of exploitation, by subregion of detection, 2018 (or most recent)
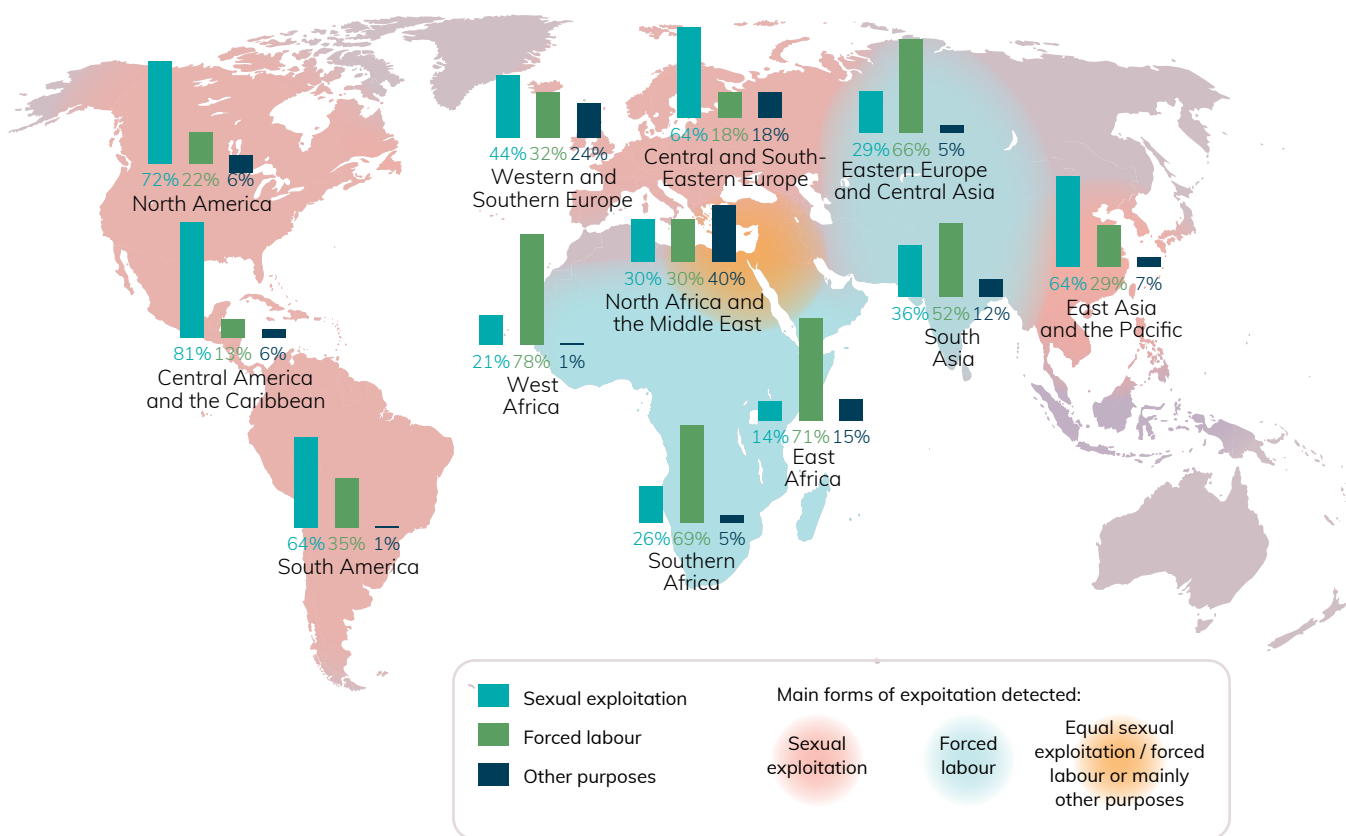
Source (adapted) and credit: UNODC [22]

Irregular migration

Like human trafficking, irregular migration is difficult to track as it occurs intentionally outside the regulatory

norms of countries and is typically clandestine. In terms of irregular flows, the phenomenon refers to the movement of people in an undocumented fashion, and in terms of

19 Human Rights Watch (2020) Venezuela: Abusive Treatment of Returnees.
20 Saunders, D. (2020) Hot zones – the first global pandemic of the urban migrant district. Mixed Migration Review 2020. Mixed Migration Centre.
21 ILO/Walk Free Foundation (2017) Global Estimates of Modern Slavery.
22 UNODC (2020) Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020.

irregular migrant stocks it refers to migrants who reside in a country irregularly or undocumented. Migrants can go in and out of irregularity as laws and policies change (for example as a result of the regularisation of people with an irregular status) and the phenomenon is worldwide, occurring in all continents both in the Global North and South.

Some estimates of stocks suggest that between 3.6 million and 5.5 million irregular migrants reside in Europe, and the latest figures from the US suggest around 11.3 million undocumented migrants live there.[23] Elsewhere, available information and data is fragmentary, although in 2009 the UN reported the number of irregular migrants globally to be around 50 million.[24] If we use this figure and extrapolate from 2009 to the current date at the same growth rate as global migration, we find there may be around 65 million irregular migrants in 2021.

The estimated numbers of irregular migrants in other destination countries in the Global North, such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Canada are very low, but in Russia they are said to number at least one million, mainly from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[25] Added together, the Global North may account for around 19 million of the 65 million irregular migrants globally, under 30 percent of the total stock. Again, although less publicised, if the numbers, estimates, and assumptions made here are correct, the majority (at least 70 percent) of irregular migrants reside in countries in the Global South.

The millions of individual stories behind these statistics in the South include the untold tales of irregular migration: journeys between countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as crossings into South Africa from neighbouring states and from the Horn of Africa and much further afield (China, Pakistan and Bangladesh); Egyptians and Tunisians going to Libya; Bolivians and Haitians going to Brazil; Chinese migrating irregularly within Asia, including into Japan and some further into the Caribbean; Indonesians going to Malaysia; Cambodians to Thailand; Comoros islanders to (French) Mayotte; Ethiopians to Yemen and Saudi Arabia; Central Americans into Mexico; and countless other multi-directional journeys. Data is sparse and hard to come by as irregular migration flows do not appear in official census data and require dedicated data collection, through monitoring and surveys. Depending on factors such as interest, resources and access, some mixed migration routes are better monitored[26] than others, and some destination or transit countries have borders that allow for more reliable counting. This is particularly true of coastal borders, such as Yemen's before its current war, and those of European states and Malaysia, among others. This inconsistency means that data and knowledge on the volume of irregular migration remains patchy and ad-hoc: well-documented in some contexts, only partially available or completely absent in others. A global overview of irregular migration volumes is thus non-existent, omitting a substantial aspect of global migration, particularly in the Global South.

Voluntary and involuntary immobility

The vast majority of people in the world do not migrate at all but rather stay put, either voluntarily (i.e. they do not aspire to migrate) or involuntarily (as explored below). To avoid a "mobility bias"—that is to say, focusing on migration while most of the world's population never migrates—to reduce the risk of overlooking the countervailing forces or drivers that prevent people from migrating, those who are involuntarily immobile should be taken into account, not least because, again, they are almost entirely in the Global South.

Applying the aspiration/capability model for migration decision-making and outcomes, involuntary immobility can be broadly defined as, having the aspiration (or need, in cases of pressing factors forcing people to flee) but not the ability to migrate or flee.[27] This is not to be confused with "acquiescent immobility", where there is neither the capability nor the aspiration to migrate.[28] There are also those who, having departed, become immobilised before they reach their hoped-for destination. Gallup has been asking people around the world about their migration aspirations and actual plans for some years.[29] As Graphic 7 below illustrates, the latest data (2015-2017) shows a rising trend almost everywhere in the desire to migrate, but the proportions are far higher for most regions of the Global South. Sierra Leone was the highest with 71 percent of its adult population desiring to move permanently. Asia is a notable exception within the Global South: here the desire to migrate permanently is lowest.

23 Europe estimates are taken from a 2008 analysis of the range with figures of new arrivals between 2015-2020 added by author; Budiman, A. (2019) Key findings about U.S. immigrants. Pew Research Centre.
24 UNDP (2009) Human Development Report 2009 Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development. Earlier, in 2005 other analysts reckoned the global total to be 30-40 million: Papademetriou, D. (2005) The Global Struggle with Illegal Migration: No End in Sight. Migration Policy Institute.
25 The Moscow Times (2021) Russia Tells Illegal Migrants from Post-Soviet Countries to Leave By June 15.
26 For example through IOM's Data Tracking Matrix and Flow Monitoring.
27 Carling, J. & Schewel K. (2017) Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration.
28 Schewel, K. (2019) Understanding Immobility: Moving Beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies. Gallup.
29 Esipova, N., Pugliese, A. & Ray, J. (2018) More Than 750 Million Worldwide Would Migrate If They Could. Gallup.

Graphic 7. Desire to migrate worldwide

Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to move PERMANENTLY to another country, or would you prefer to continue living in this country?

	2010-2012	2013-2016	2015-2017
Sub-Saharan Africa	30%	31%	33%
Latin America and Caribbean	18%	23%	27%
Europe (non-European Union)	21%	27%	26%
Middle East and North Africa	19%	22%	24%
European Union	20%	21%	21%
Commonwealth of Independent States	15%	14%	15%
Northern America	10%	10%	14%
Australia/New Zealand/Oceania	9%	10%	9%
East Asia	8%	7%	8%
South Asia	8%	8%	8%
Southeast Asia	7%	7%	7%
World	13%	14%	15%

Note: Figures represent percentage who would like to move if they could.
Source: Gallup.[30]

When aspirations are compared to actual plans and preparations to migrate (see Graphic 8 below) the number of those actively preparing to move in the coming year (19 million) is about 3 percent of the total of those desiring to migrate (630 million). In the "mobility gap" between 630 million and 19 million are many millions who for various reasons are unable to migrate or have not started to plan their migration yet, let alone taken active preparations. The bulk of these are in the Global South. Although we should resist drawing too many conclusions from this data, it is useful as an indication of potential levels of involuntary immobility, even though many may, for a variety of reasons, not yet have started planning, and this would not necessarily make them involuntary immobile. However, in cases where reasons to migrate for significant numbers are compelling but where capability is severely lacking, humanitarian or political crises may ensue, with potential regional consequences.

As the impact of climate change combines with other threats, the risk of such situations developing in the future grows. With states in the South being most affected by, and least prepared for or protected from, the impact of climate change, the numbers of future involuntarily immobile migrants in the South may be substantial and far outnumber any in the North.[31] New political events such as the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan in mid-2021 and the resurgence of the Taliban also threaten to create as yet unknown numbers of involuntarily immobile people and prompt cross-border flight.

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30 Ibid.
31 This is further explored in the essay on climate and mobility by Caroline Zickgraf - *Stifling silos: The need for a more holistic approach to mixed migration in a warming world* in this MMR 2021, while a full discussion of immobility can be found in the essay by Kerilyn Schewel - *Staying put: why it's time to pay more attention to mixed immobility.*

Graphic 8. Global desire to migrate vs plans vs preparations

	Global percentage	Projected adult 15+ population
Desire to migrate permanently	14%	630 million
Planning to migrate on next 12 months (among those who desire to migrate permanently)	8%	48 million
Actively making preparations (among those planning to move in next year)	39%	19 million

Based on surveys conducted between 2008 and 2010 in 146 countries.
Source: Gallup[32]

'Migration states' of the Global South

The above overview of *global* aspects of (mixed) migration shows how the different forms of migration that, taken together, characterise societies across the South occur mainly between states of the Global South. While the North still dominates in terms of South-North economic migration (with numbers increasing through additional family reunifications etc.), in the South there is such a diversity of movement, displacement, and migratory situations that the term South-South migration ends up oversimplifying and generalising a complex situation, one where "it would be challenging to find a single country that was not simultaneously, to varying degrees, a country of origin, destination, transit, and return for migrants."[33] Additionally, "it also has powerful political implications, in that it helps counteract the rhetoric that would see migrants 'invading' the 'Global North.'" It also suggests that the policy discourse should no longer take place predominantly in the North.[34]

The term "migration state" has normally been used to describe advanced economies dependent on migrant labour as a permanent feature of post-war globalisation.[35] But here we see states of the South are not only "migration states" in terms of labour migration but also in all other categories of movement and displacement, formal and informal, regular and irregular. In other words, mixed migration is a key characteristic of mobility within, through, and between many states of the Global South.

Lessons for the North

In dealing with large-scale displacement and migratory movement, the South may offer some important lessons to the North on how to manage mobility and be more creative in responding to the influx of refugees and migrants.

In responding to the exodus of around 5.5 million Venezuelans since 2014, Latin America is seen as a laboratory for innovative practices and flexible requirements for the regularisation of displaced Venezuelan refugees and migrants hosted in numerous cities and towns in Columbia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil and Argentina. By 2020, these countries had issued residence permits or regular stay status to more than 2.4 million Venezuelans, with more than 800,000 additional asylum or residency cases pending.[36] By contrast, most of those Venezuelans who fled to the US are not permitted to present themselves as migrants but only as asylum seekers and, as of late 2020, about a third (around 105,000 people) have pending asylum claims, with only a minority (about 16,000) recognised as refugees.[37]

In the Middle East, the displacement of Syrians resulted in almost six million refugees being absorbed and hosted by neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt, countries where they now make up a large proportion of the total population—in Lebanon they comprise almost a quarter. Jordan (with a total population of 10 million) already hosted an estimated three million Palestinian

32 Esipova, N. & Ray, J. (2012) Nearly 50 Million Worldwide Planning to Migrate Soon. Gallup.
33 Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. & Carella, F. (2020) The Position of "the South" and "South-South Migration" in Policy and Programmatic Responses to Different Forms of Migration An Interview of Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh. Migration and Society.
34 Ibid.
35 Hollifield, J. (2004) The Emerging Migration State. International Migration Review.
36 Wolfe, G. (2020) Where Are Venezuelan Migrants and Refugees Going? An Analysis of Legal and Social Contexts in Receiving Countries. Center for Migration Studies.
37 Ibid.

refugees before it took in almost a million Syrians and through the Jordan Compact agreements allowed over 80,000 Syrians to have work permits to work in specially created economic zones.[38] Meanwhile, the European Union (population 450 million) experienced policy panic and political disruption after a million Syrians entered in 2015/2016.

In Uganda, refugees—mainly from South Sudan and DR Congo—enjoy most of the same rights and access to jobs and services as Ugandan citizens and the country is seen as a global leader in implementing an integrated approach to refugee management.[39]

There are many other examples of refugee hosting and integration as well as de jure or de facto integration of migrants (regular and irregular) in the South, but also some notable exceptions. For example, violent xenophobic reactions to refugees and migrants in South Africa so specifically targets Africans that it has been dubbed "Afrophobia", and its periodic public outbreaks are often lethal.[40] In Kenya, the repeated government denouncements of hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees as posing a terrorist/security threat lies in ambiguous contrast to its hosting of Somalis for three decades. Another example is Malaysia's well recorded history of xenophobic reactions to foreigners from elsewhere in Asia and from Africa, which were exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic.[41] There are more examples, but despite evident discrimination and human rights abuses or workplace exploitation, and despite dire conditions and prospects for millions of camp refugees or internally displaced people facing protracted limbo, the Global South as a whole tolerates extensive multicultural integration and migration without it developing into political crisis. By contrast, far smaller levels of migration and displacement (proportionally and in absolute terms) are treated in the North almost as existential threats and lead to significant socio-political crises resulting in harsher immigration regulations and more fortified and militarised frontiers.[42]

Increasing regional cooperation and processes

Increased economic cooperation between states and regions in the South may be key to a greater capacity to absorb and integrate current and expected future mobility. Mercosur in South America (also known as the Southern Common Market), the Caribbean Community

(CARICOM), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Economic Community of West African States, and the Southern African Development Community, not to mention the African Union itself with its "2063 agenda" and its vision of free movement across the whole continent, are strong examples of regional cooperation in the South. Enhanced regional cooperation and integrated approaches that create a stronger economic and protection environment can build greater support for migration and asylum and harness the dividend and dynamism mobility can bring to host countries.

Disconnect in government in the South between migration and other policy areas, including development and employment, and a lack of coordination between different levels of governance (local, national, bilateral, regional, etc.) could be remedied through burden-sharing agreements, bilateral labour migration agreements, or increased regional South-focused consultative processes such as the Regional Conference on Migration (Puebla Process), the South American Conference on Migration, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, and the Colombo Process.[43]

There are other long-standing dialogues in the Global South that can be harnessed for important development in relation to mobility. What is now known as South-South cooperation, for example, derives from the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries by 138 UN Member States in Argentina, in 1978.

The lesser-known United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) was established as early as 1974 by the UN General Assembly to promote, coordinate, and support South-South and triangular cooperation globally and within the United Nations system. UNOSSC and IOM signed a memorandum of understanding in 2019 to cooperate in areas of mutual concern and enhance the effectiveness of their development efforts including supporting the UN Network on Migration and the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Cities, and more active mayoral roles are already showing potential in addressing migration, displacement, and refugee issues in both the North and the South with, amongst others, new initiatives such as the Mayors Migration Council.[44]

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38 Al-Mahaidi, A. (2020) Syrian refugees in Jordan: How a focus on human rights can help secure economic livelihoods. Refugee Law Initiative blogpost.
39 Idris, I. (2020) Integrated approaches to refugee management in Uganda. GSDRC.
40 Amusan, L., & Mchunu, S. (2017) An Assessment of Xenophobic/Afrophobic Attacks in South Africa (2008–2015): Whither Batho Pele and Ubuntu Principles. South African Review of Sociology.
41 Ding, E. (2020) Malaysia's Coronavirus Scapegoats. Foreign Policy.
42 In this MMR 2021 these trends and events are more fully described in the 'Normalising the Extreme' section.
43 Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. & Carella, F. (2020) Op cit.
44 The role and engagement of the Mayors Migration Council is further described in their report on Page 268 of this MMR 2021.

No time to lose

When considering the current global context and current and projected factors affecting mixed migration flows, it seems clear that the policy challenges and opportunities of the inevitable rise of SSM require deeper reflection and action plans in the South. Consider the implications on mixed migration and SSM of factors such as:

- Population growth and regional differences in population growth (especially Africa and Asia)
- Asylum space: reduced settlement options and hardening of attitudes in countries of the North blocking large movements
- Location of major disasters
- Location of conflicts and war and insurgency
- Continued growth of urbanisation (especially in Africa and Asia)
- Entry of women into workforces and the demand for labour (especially in Africa and Asia)
- Climate change and related environmental stressors (where will this hit hardest and cause most SSM)
- Production transformation: AI and automation and the potentially reduced need for migrant workers in the Global North
- Governance: inability to control population movements or implement policy
- Evidence-based economic theories of migration (migration transition theory), suggesting that as development continues more rather than fewer people in the South will seek to migrate.[45]

These factors are pressing and indicate that there is no time to lose. Greater recognition is needed by countries in the North and the South that immigrant integration is not only a policy domain for "rich" countries. SSM is, and can continue to be, an important development phenomenon for the South but should not be encouraged simply because it may act as a vent for potential South-North migration. However, behind the Global North's support to regional migration dialogues, regional economic communities, and the implementation of regional free movement protocols in the Global South seems to lie the increasingly explicit objective that regional mobility will promote economic development in the South and reduce irregular movement to the North. The thrust of recent (post-2015) support and capital transfers to the South from the North in some regions (such as the EU Trust Fund and the EU's new €79.5 billion Global Europe fund with their migration-related conditionalities) has increasingly focused on stemming unwanted irregular migration. Nevertheless, a harmonised approach to migration and displacement often remains elusive.

While this overview analysis highlights high levels of mobility, the discussion needs to be understood in a context where the vast majority of people globally (an estimated 96.5 percent) are residing in the country in which they were born. However, in view of the predominance of all forms of mixed migration in the South, some critical questions emerge: Should current and future SSM be treated as a threat or an opportunity? If as an opportunity, for whom? Migrants themselves, their host or origin countries, or countries in the Global North? How will SSM be allowed to develop? To what extent can SSM in all its forms be harnessed for development and maximised? ("South-South migration has the same potency to contribute to inequality, but also to reduce inequality—as the South-North migration."[46]) What does migration in the South demand in terms of governance and policy developments, and how can the rest of the world and global institutions support this? Finally, what do we miss by downplaying South-South movement? What learning opportunities are missed from the South when, in contrast to the Global North, it adapts to, absorbs, and manages large numbers of people on the move with a fraction of the dilemmas and crises that face the North?

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45 There is some recent re-visiting of some assumptions of this theory but in the main it is held to be resilient as one predictor of mobility. See: Johnson, K. (2020) International Migration, Development, and Policy: Reconsidering Migration Transition Theory—A Way Forward. The Hatfield Journal of Public Affairs.

46 Joseph Teye, director of the Centre for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana and co-director of MIDEQ, quoted in: Reidy, E. (2021) op cit.

Re-thinking migration determinants

What makes people consider leaving to be a better option than staying? This year has seen an innovative meta-research initiative on migration determinants that contributes to answering two longstanding questions in the sector: "What makes people want to migrate?" and "What makes it possible to convert this wish into actual migration?" These questions echo the reduction of migration dynamics to "aspiration" and "capability". Migration specialist Jørgen Carling and his colleagues have worked for the last decade on models that explore the aspiration/capability nexus; have they now applied that two-step analysis to create a systematic literature review that offers new insights into migration determinants.[1]

The most important difference between determinants is the degree to which they steadily affect migration aspirations. The influence on migration outcomes of a given determinant can vary wildly between location and population group, creating a confusing and complex picture when amalgamated. Outcomes were revealing when the researchers focused on the key criteria of (a) how **consistently** a given determinant affects migration decisions and (b) with what degree of **certainty** it affects outcomes. Carling and his colleagues aim to provide a "birds-eye overview of all determinants of migration aspirations" that plots the consistency/certainty relationship for key ones (see graphic below). Many of their findings are surprising in that they illustrate the importance of many factors previously deemed marginal, and vice versa. For example, dissatisfaction with public services in a country of origin does not feature as a major migration determinant in most analyses, but Carling et al suggest it affects individual decision-making almost as much as insecurity and violence. They also shed fresh light on the relationship between level of education and a migration decision's degree of certainty.

Graphic 1. Determinants of migration aspirations, concluded from a systematic review of 72 analyses across 49 articles based on survey data[2]
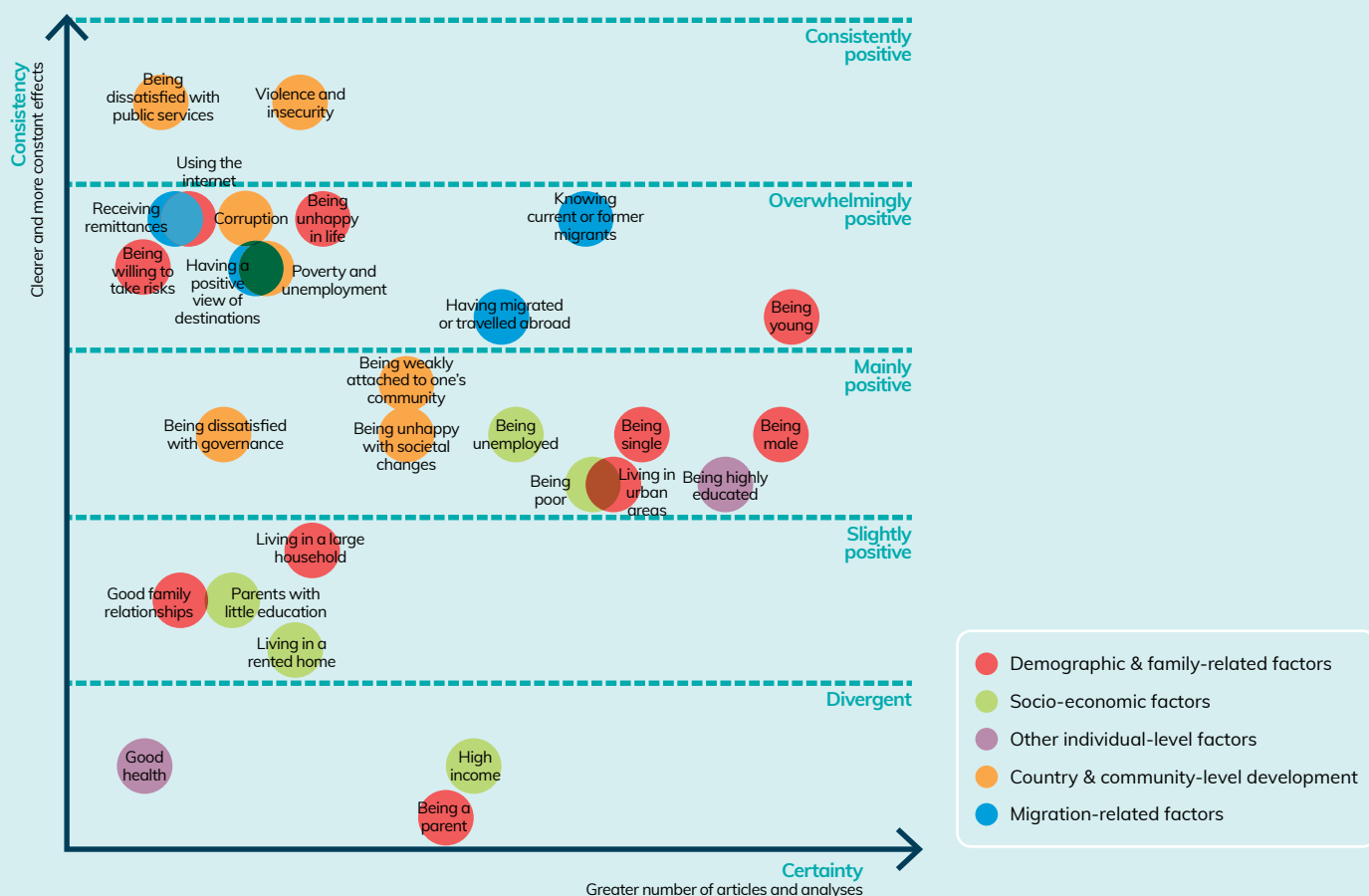
1   Aslany, M. et al (2021) Systematic review of determinants of migration aspirations. PRIO Migration centre. Using narrow inclusion criteria for research articles to be used in their systematic review they based their review on 49 studies of the general population (no specific groups) and which had used multivariate regression analyses to identify determinants of migration aspirations.
2   Source: Ibid.

Interview

Turbulence ahead

The short-term future of migration flows will be characterised by considerable volatility, predicts **Alan Gamlen**. While the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated economic hardship and humanitarian crises, it has also brought about greater risk aversion and, in many hotspots, lockdowns and travel bans have "bottled up" migration. What happens when restrictions ease is hard to predict.

Alan Gamlen is an associate professor of geography at Monash University in Melbourne. He is also a high-level advisor for the International Organization for Migration and a research affiliate at Oxford University's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society. His recent book Human Geopolitics *won the 2020 International Studies Association Distinguished Book Award for best book in the field of ethnicity, nationalism and migration studies.*[1]

Should economic principles of labour supply and demand govern global immigration policy? If so, what would you do about those migrants in supply, but not in apparent demand?

I think that supply and demand isn't completely sufficient to capture all the important factors around migration. Certainly, labour is one aspect of human beings' lives and one of the factors in deciding where people should live. But I don't think that governing migration solely in terms of the principle of supply and demand is the right way to go about it. There are also questions of freedom and where people should be allowed to live their own version of the good life, where they should be allowed to go to escape a predicament that they find intolerable, and whether they should be allowed to join a group that feels ambivalent about having them. I think these are all important principles that must be incorporated into the way that migration is managed and governed.

Three years after its adoption, the Global Compact for Migration seems to have delivered meagre results. Do you ever think this will become a relevant text, or is it just a well-meaning expression or aspiration of some kind?

Well, it can be both. Remember that for a long time, migration was something so deeply related to state sovereignty that there could be no international cooperation over it. But 30 years ago some key people started saying, "We've got to change the mindset. We've got to change the norms around migration and cooperation." In order to do that, they created a range of forums where people essentially just talked about the issues. They've been criticised as talk shops. But when people just talk about what their key issues are, they get to know each other. That was incredibly effective at getting people to share a sense of identity, to begin to feel that they shared interests, and ultimately to be able to negotiate some tentative agreements about

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1   Gamlen, A. (2019) Human Geopolitics: States, Emigrants, and the Rise of Diaspora Institutions. Oxford University Press.

migration. That's why we have the compact. Although it's not a binding agreement, it's one step further along the path of well-meaning expressions that lead to cooperation rather than conflict over migration. Historically it's actually a pretty major step.

About 10 years ago, you wrote about the "new migration and development optimism", arguing that "migration booms generate arguments in favour of migration, just as credit booms generate arguments in favour of globalized finance."[2] A lot has happened in migration in the last few years. Would you take a different position now?

I wouldn't take a different position on the cyclical nature of optimism and pessimism about migration. I still think that's cyclical. But in 2014, I wrote a follow-up paper called 'The New Migration-And-Development Pessimism'.[3] The 2010 paper was written right after the global financial crisis. I remember around 2007, when I was living in the UK, you'd hear about the investment banks in London. The guys with their bonuses down on Canary Wharf buying cocktails with diamonds in them. It was 1920s-style levels of exuberance. That was underpinned by a lot of cross-border mobility of all forms, it was the height of neo-liberalism. And in this context, there was a big migration boom. And then, crash, it all came down. The 2010 paper you're referring to was written right afterwards, and I said in the paper that it might be the highwater mark of the migration optimism. That turned out to be right. We saw a massive populist backlash against migration, just like after the crash in 1929. Suddenly, some people were reversing their positions and saying, "migration is actually bad for development." A classic example of the negative argument was Paul Collier's book *Exodus*, which came out right after I'd published the 2015 paper. It was a pretty clear articulation of the pessimism I was talking about in the paper.

> " **My hunch is that Covid-19 likely marks the end of a big cycle of migration boom, and now we are having a migration bust. "**

Last year you asked whether the Covid-19 pandemic had brought about sufficient change as to bring us to the end of the so-called "age of migration". Please sum up what you mean.

Again, I think these things are cyclical. When I raise the question, "Is this the end of the age of migration?" I don't mean is it the end of history, or the end of migration full stop. I mean, this is probably the end of a big cycle

that began after World War II. It was not a great time to travel internationally from about 1914 to about 1946. You didn't really want to be moving around much internationally unless you were on an army ship. It was really a much more gated globe. And after World War II, the world opened up again. If you look at net migration figures, they've risen steadily since then and expanded particularly rapidly since the 1990s. They predictably levelled off after the financial crisis in 2008-09. And my hunch is that Covid-19 has not just brought this to a temporary stop, it's more likely the end of a big cycle of migration boom. The whole populist authoritarian movement and associated politics is largely about ending globalisation of all kinds—trade, finance, and migration. So, I think we have had a migration boom and now we are having a migration bust.
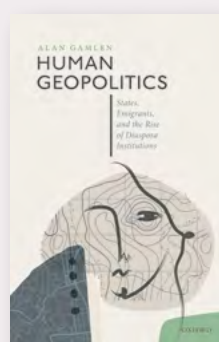
A major conclusion in your recent book *Human Geopolitics* is that the key driver of the global rise of diaspora policies is the United Nations' ambition to create a global governance regime for migration. Can you explain what you mean by this, and what exactly is a diaspora institution?

A diaspora is a dispersed imagined community linked to a professed place of origin, and a diaspora institution is a formal government office that is dedicated to emigrants and their descendants living in diaspora. We've seen a massive proliferation of these institutions over the past 30 years. Until about 1980 they were very unusual, not least because they seemed to violate some of the key principles underlying the modern international system—such as the idea that a state should not interfere with domestic populations in other states, or the idea that states shouldn't interfere with freedom of exit of its own citizens, or the idea that states were confined to their own territorial containers, and so forth. Then, from about 1980 to 2015, more than half of all the countries in the world suddenly established some form of diaspora institution. The question behind *Human Geopolitics* is, why did this happen?

My answer to that question is that the norms were changed through the concerted action of a coalition of groups who are optimistic about migration. This began as a deliberate strategy of Kofi Annan's United Nations administration. They realised migration was an area where international cooperation could help, but also that it was an area where interests conflicted over difficult issues like security and migration of highly trained essential workers. So they decided to

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2   Gamlen, A. (2010) The New Migration and Development Optimism: A Review of the 2009 Human Development Report. Global Governance.
3   Gamlen, A. (2014) The new migration-and-development pessimism. Progress in Human Geography.

get cooperation going in the area of development. Everybody could agree on development. It's an area of high consensus and it's well-funded. So the thinking was, if we start conversations about migration as an aspect of development, we're likely to get a higher degree of buy-in from states. We can get them talking to each other. Then hopefully they'll start to expand the conversation to negotiate on more difficult issues.

And so the talking starts within the development issue area. What do they talk about? One question is, "Well, how can migration possibly benefit origin countries when they don't even have their migrants anymore? The people are gone! How could it possibly benefit them?" The migration optimists say, we have an answer to that: diasporas. Because they send money home. They send skills home. They send new ideas and technologies home. They connect businesses and decision-makers in the origin country to centres of excellence and decision-makers and opinion-shapers in other countries. So, the idea the experts had was, if you want to turn migration into development, you have to harness the diaspora. This became one of the key talking points in all of the new talk shops. States took note, and started founding diaspora institutions.

> **" In 40 years, things could look quite different in terms of which places send migrants and which places receive them based on their overall levels of development. "**

The Economist Intelligence Unit wrote an article called 'The Great Unwinding,' talking about the regionalisation of global supply chains as a direct result of Covid-19.[4] A winding back of globalisation. If that's accurate, do you think this will impact migration?

Yes, I read it and was really struck by that report. I mentioned it in a working paper that I wrote last year called "Migration and Mobility after the 2020 Pandemic: The End of an Age?"[5] One of the questions in that paper was, "Will 'travel bubbles' become economic regions?" The background thinking is, this pandemic is not over yet. It's likely the virus will become endemic and we will need to mass mobilise against it periodically for quite a while. This is really not being alarmist. To give a sense of scale, Europe went through bouts of black plague for something like 700 years before they finally got rid of it. If this novel coronavirus pandemic keeps flaring up for another two, five, ten years or whatever, we're still way ahead of previous generations. But the longer it rumbles along in the background, the more incentives there

will be to reorganise production, manufacturing, and supply chains to minimise the higher risks associated with distance. As an example, I recently had a discussion with someone involved in hiring a new senior executive in their organisation, which would normally automatically involve a global search. What struck me was that they said they would not be attempting to recruit outside Australia and New Zealand, because it would be too difficult to meet the candidate. This seems to me an example of how economies may revert quite quickly back to match the areas where there are travel corridors, air bridges, travel bubbles, and so on. The great unwinding and the regionalisation of supply chains, if it happens like the EIU predicted, is probably going be driven by the fact that physical mobility of people is likely to be quite a lot harder for some time.

For example, I think we're going see a dramatic fall in mobility for work. Particularly high-skilled work, because there's less need. A company hit by the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic needs to cut costs. And at the same time, there's all these new technologies like Zoom which we're using now, which obviate the need to travel. So the travel budget is the quickest one to go. It's obviously not going to be as simple as that in the non-tradable sectors. However, there may be some automation there too. The pandemic has provided a big stimulus to automation in some low-skilled jobs, but I think there will still be a number of sectors like agriculture, care work, construction, cleaning, hospitality, which really remain dependent on migrant labour for quite some time. It's just it might be a more Singapore-like situation, where you've got a very tightly controlled low-skilled labour force on one hand, and competition to try to attract the highly skilled because they've got a choice.

Given population growth prospects in the coming years and the demographic profiles of developing countries with high youth cohorts, isn't there going to be a massive imbalance of demand and supply for labour globally?

Potentially, yes. Imagine a chart where we plot migration rate on the vertical axis and income on the horizontal axis. What happens is we get an inverted U-shaped curve. The poorest of the poor can't afford to move, so their migration rate is very low. As their income rises, they tend to emigrate more, until they reach middle-income, when life starts to feel reasonably good where they are. After that point there is ever less incentive to escape, so the emigration rate declines again. That's the theory. And we're already seeing it happen in practice. There's been a big shift in the centre of geopolitical power towards Asia. There's rapid economic expansion happening in countries which we still think of as developing. They've already entered the phase of "shaking loose" the rural population

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4   Economist Intelligence Unit (2020) The Great Unwinding: Covid-19 and the regionalisation of global supply chains.
5   Gamlen, A. (2020) Migration and Mobility after the 2020 Pandemic: The End of an Age? IOM.

that accompanies industrialisation in those countries. In 40 years, things could look really quite different in terms of which places send migrants and which places receive them based on their overall levels of development. But this is a long-term story.

In the short term, I think there's going to be a lot of volatility in migration flows for quite a while. For the highly skilled, right now is a risky time to be moving, and the payoff is long term. People become more risk-averse and impatient after a major life shock like this pandemic. They figure it's best to hunker down for now. On the other hand, dire economic deprivation and humanitarian situations are being made much worse by the pandemic. For many people, that is increasing the existing high pressures to get out of horrific situations. The various war zones in sub-Saharan Africa, in Afghanistan, in Syria and in the Middle East, in Myanmar, in Venezuela, these are major humanitarian hotspots from which migration is either being bottled up or diverted along different routes. That pressure is being bottled up by lockdowns. So when some places start to open up more, we may see surprising spurts of migration to and from surprising places for a while. There will be some turbulence and non-linear changes.

> ❝ **In the short term, I think there's going be a lot of volatility in migration flows for quite a while. For the highly skilled, right now is a risky time to be moving, and the payoff is long term.** ❞

Why is it so hard for us in the migration sector to predict future trends accurately?

It's because predicting the social future depends on decisions that haven't been made yet, and people can change their minds. That's not the case when scientists are trying to predict other things in the natural world, like how much water will flow down the river next year. The water doesn't change its mind the way humans do. There's a great quote from the Roman stoic philosopher Seneca. He says, "There is a sort of inborn restlessness in the human spirit and an urge to change one's abode; for man is endowed with a mind which is changeable and unsettled: Nowhere at rest, it darts about and directs its thoughts to all places known and unknown, a wanderer which cannot endure repose and delights chiefly in novelty." We are mercurial creatures. That's why it's hard to predict future migration trends accurately.

Having said that, you only have to see one of those creepy personalised ads on Facebook to see how good AI is getting at predicting human behaviour. However, it doesn't seem to me that migration research has really tapped those tools in any meaningful way. That's a real

frontier for research, particularly with the ethical and privacy concerns it raises.

Australia has been much criticised for its treatment of irregular maritime migrants, and its unequivocal no-boats policy. At the same time, it's had one of the most active labour migration and refugee settlement programs in the world. Can their approach be defended?

Health warning: I'm a dual New Zealand-Canadian citizen, and one of the important things for me about living in Australia is trying to better understand that apparent contradiction. On one hand Australia really is in some ways one of the world's most successful multicultural countries. And it has the third biggest refugee resettlement program in the world. But then there is this sort of opposite, one could even say nasty, approach to asylum seekers. I don't agree with it. There are many people who say that Australia's stance on asylum seekers is completely unprincipled. I'm not sure I agree with that either. The standard justification for the policy is extremely utilitarian: they say that treating some asylum seekers harshly deters others and ultimately saves lives that would otherwise be lost at sea, with smuggling boats sinking. That seems like a very extreme application of a moral principle to me. In many cases it's surely unjust. The legal scholars working on these issues often claim with good grounds that it could be illegal. But saying it's extreme, unjust, or illegal is quite different from saying that it is amoral. I disagree with the moral reasoning on which it is based and think that reasoning is flawed. These are extremely important and difficult issues and it's important to get them right, and I don't think that Australia has got them right. But I don't think it would be quite correct to say that there has been no attempt at moral reasoning in the formulation of the policy. It's just a kind of moral reasoning that I don't agree with at all.

> ❝ **AI is a real frontier for migration research, particularly with the ethical and privacy concerns it raises.** ❞

As of early 2021, Denmark is starting to further develop its already hard-line approach to refugees and migrants. The UK is also planning to alter its rules and treatment around refugees and asylum seekers. What are we seeing here? A hardening that is going to be contagious, or are these just anomalies?

I think this is part of a pattern that began after the global financial crisis, and lurched forward through successive crises, including the refugee crisis in 2015, the Brexit vote, the election of Donald Trump on the basis of anti-immigrant electioneering, and then finally

the pandemic, which brought a halt to everything. These successive crises have fundamentally changed the political landscape regarding migration. The populists want to close down the borders effectively, and that means scapegoating refugees.

> ❝ **Some of the political actors who are pushing these hard-line ideas on migration, perhaps they are not really fascists, perhaps they just want to win votes. But they are really playing with fire.** ❞

Everyone knows that the race card and the immigrant card are powerful cards to play in politics. Politicians know you can really mobilise people by activating their prejudices and fears. Those cards were thankfully off the table for decades after World War II because we saw what it led to: a complete collapse of the world order. Unfortunately, now they're back on the table. That is something to be really concerned about. And I think this pattern of increasingly hard-line treatment of refugees and humanitarian migrants is a really concerning element of that shift. Some of the political actors who are pushing these ideas, perhaps they are not really fascists, perhaps they just want to win votes. But they are really playing with fire.

Australia and New Zealand aside, are migration issues and refugees high on the agenda in the Pacific and Asia?

They are very high on the agenda in terms of sending people. In Australia and New Zealand, when people talk about migration, they are generally talking about immigration. But in many Asian Pacific countries, they are talking about people leaving and staying connected from afar—that's what they need to understand and manage. If you're a sending country, that's what you're mostly worried about.

In addition, there's also a great deal of interest across Asia about cross-border irregular migration. There's a lot of turning a blind eye, just like in the US. Milton Friedman once said, "Migration is good for the economy as long as it remains illegal". In other words, it's good for the economy as long as migrant workers can be paid less and laid off easier. And so, across countries where there are high irregular migration rates and where there's cross-border groups and it's just sort of a normal part of life that you commute regularly across a border a few times a year, I think that there's the same sort of understanding that there was for a long time across the US-Mexico border. But that is not to say these issues are not on the agenda: they are definitely on the radar of states in the region.

Often, it's connected with security concerns regarding ethnic separatism, or dissident militias.

Why do you think the global appetite to assist refugees and asylum seekers is at such an all-time low? Is it universal, or are there some geographic regions that are acting differently from others?

Some places are really much more welcoming than others, there's no question about that. But yes, I think we are seeing a trend across regions as part of this cyclical dynamic I've described, the economic downswing, through a series of recent crises that have made people fearful for their economic wellbeing, their jobs, their livelihoods and so forth. At times like this, people are afraid about the future, and potentially angry with the bankers for creating the financial crisis, angry with the big corporate CEOs for offshoring jobs and so forth, angry with the politicians for somehow messing everything up in a way that nobody quite understands. It's very convenient for political and economic elites to deflect all that anger by scapegoating migrants and asylum seekers. We see that same logic operating at different points throughout history, appearing at moments of crisis. It's a worrying trend right now.
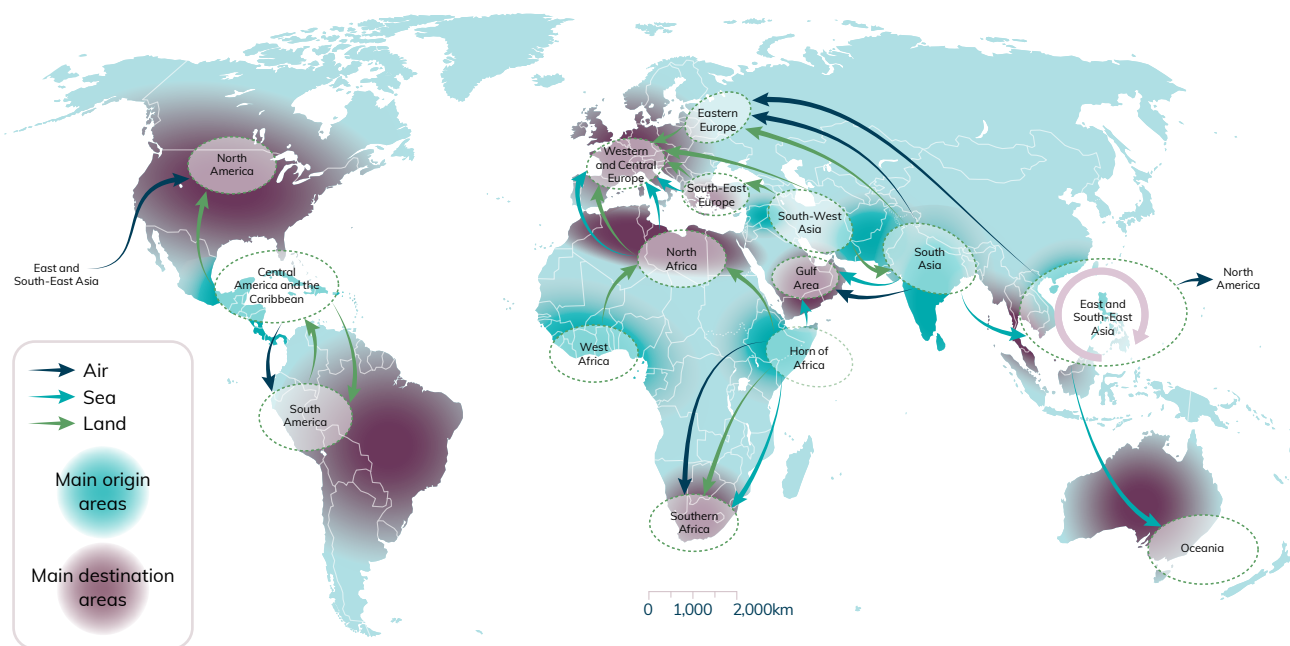
> ❝ **It's very convenient for political and economic elites to deflect citizens' anger by scapegoating migrants and asylum seekers.** ❞

Beyond the limelight: A selective overview of lesser-known irregular migration routes in the Global South[1]

By Chris Horwood[2]

Graphic 1. Routes - migrants are smuggled in all regions of the world

Source (adapted) and credit: UNODC, Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants, 2018, page 11

Introduction

Most analysis and media coverage of mixed migration focuses on movements along well-used routes that depart from, and arrive at, well-documented hubs.

The "anxious politics" that has surrounded irregular migration, causing what some academics describe as the "continuous exclusionary rhetoric of othering" through the increased "mediatization" and "mediation" of politics, is primarily evident in Europe, the United States and Australia.[3] Policymakers, researchers and journalists overwhelmingly focus on irregular movements along a

small number of routes as the "great disruptors" that cause the most socio-political dilemmas in the Global North.[4] Consequently, these routes and movements of refugees and migrants dominate the Global North-centric discourse even though mixed and irregular migration occurs—albeit often with less scrutiny—all over the world between and within every region.[5]

Movements along these lesser-known routes are critical to the survival and livelihoods of millions of people who also face hardship, uncertainty, rights violations, and fatalities when they travel. Re-visiting the geographical scope of irregular migration with a focus on the Global

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1   This essay does not attempt to document the full scale and scope of global irregular migration, but instead offers highlights of less prominent routes within regional movements where smugglers are active in different ways facilitating most movement. More detailed global analysis can be found in flagship reports such as: UNODC (2018) Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants; US Department of State (2021) 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report; IOM (2020) World Migration Report 2020. Sub-regional details are found in reports such as the Organisation of American States (2016) Irregular Migration Flows to the Americas from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean; OAS/OECD (2017) Fourth Report on the Continuous Reporting System on International Migration in the Americas; UNODC (2018) Migrant Smuggling in Asia and the Pacific; and Europol (2021) European Migrant Smuggling Centre's 5th Annual Report 2021.
2   Chris Horwood is a migration specialist and co-director of Ravenstone Consult.
3   Krzyżanowski, M., Triandafyllidou, A. & Wodak, R. (2018) The Mediatization and the Politicization of the "Refugee Crisis" in Europe, Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies.
4   Horwood, C. (2019) It's Time for a More Honest, Less Partisan Debate on Mixed Migration. Refugees Deeply
5   Ibid.

South, this essay offers snapshots of less publicised irregular journeys, untold stories, and unchallenged rights violations. It reveals a more heterogenous global mixed migration story. Those moving often travel in smaller groups using less expected or obvious routes and towards less obvious destinations that may surprise even seasoned migration observers. Just as they do on the world's better-known irregular migration routes, people smugglers often facilitate travel along those that are out of the limelight.

The Americas

Migration northward is extensively reported in Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. The magnetic lure of the United States and the latter's battle to stem irregular migration through its southern border with Mexico is the dominant narrative of movement in the Americas. Migrant smuggling is a major feature of the subregion, as people attempt to bypass border controls using smugglers known locally as *coyoteros* and *chilingueros*. They face a variety of risks, including death, extortion, kidnapping, trafficking in persons, sexual violence, arbitrary arrest and incarceration, torture, and environmental exposure.[6] The presence of hardened drug cartels in Mexico has led to particularly brutal violence against and abuse of passing migrants.[7] Unaccompanied children and families have become a permanent but relatively new feature of irregular migration flows, with about 54,000 unaccompanied children apprehended at the US-Mexican border in 2018.[8]

Although irregular migration into the US by Mexicans—and the subsequent apprehension and deportation of many—is an established phenomenon that typically involves hundreds of thousands of people every year, the profiles of those taking this route are changing and there are new trends. Although a large proportion of movements involving continentals and extra-continentals are part of northbound networks that ultimately lead to the US and in some cases Canada, they are not the whole story.

The residence agreements adopted by the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR)—comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela—allow for high levels of licit intraregional labour migration, thereby reducing irregular migration.[9] More recently there has been the well-documented movement of over 5.6 million Venezuelans to neighbouring countries

such as Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil.[10] Nevertheless, there are important, less reported multi-directional migration routes and movements within South America, including from the Caribbean into South America, and from the mainland to Caribbean islands.

The Northern Triangle

The politicised controversies of the migrant "caravans" in 2018 and 2019 led to relatively brief international media coverage of those, many of them families, moving northwards from Central America's Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) through Mexico towards the US.[11] Less covered was the fact that by 2018, an estimated 200,000-400,000 Central American migrants were being smuggled across Mexico towards and into the US every year, surpassing the number of Mexicans doing the same.[12] The caravans were merely one aspect of this growing movement of people fleeing poverty, the impact of climate change, and violence, often at the hands of urban drugs gangs. In a shift from its more open policy announced at the start of 2019, and under US pressure, Mexico began detaining migrants from Central America in April 2019. However, amid rising economic opportunities in Mexico and harsher US immigration barriers, many migrants and asylum seekers from Central America now target Mexico as their preferred destination.[13] After a pandemic-induced dip in 2020, migration into Mexico from the Northern Triangle started to increase again in early 2021.[14]

Caribbean exodus

The Caribbean is not only a transit location for extra-continental migrants moving on to the US or South American states: many thousands of Caribbean nationals leave their countries each year (using smugglers or without facilitation), mainly also aiming to reach the US as well as South American countries. Territories such as Guyana, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, have high levels of emigration, but in absolute terms, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti have the largest diaspora communities: over a million emigrants each, with most living in the United States.[15]

The numbers of rights violations, reports of mistreatments, and deaths at sea from the active and multi-directional irregular movement associated with the Caribbean are remarkably low when compared with even short

6   UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2018) Protect the human rights of Central American migrants, UN expert committees urge States.
7   The notorious 2010 and 2011 San Fernando massacres were widely publicised examples, but the abuse and violence has been ongoing for many years and continues. See, for example: Leutert, S. (2018) Organized Crime and Central American Migration in Mexico.
8   Bialik, K. (2019) Border apprehensions increased in 2018 – especially for migrant families. Pew Research Centre.
9   IOM (2020) op. cit.
10   IOM (2020) Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Crisis.
11   Not all caravans were formed by the Central Americans who dominated media coverage: in February 2019, a caravan mainly comprising Cubans and Haitians, but also some African and Asian nationals, entered Panama from Colombia and later reached Mexico. IOM (2020) op. cit.
12   UNODC (2018) Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants.
13   Dominguez-Villegas, R. (2019) Protection and Reintegration: Mexico Reforms Migration Agenda in an Increasingly Complex Era. Migration Policy Institute
14   Associated Press (2021) 'There isn't capacity': Mexican shelters struggle as migrants head north again. The Guardian.
15   IOM (2017) Migration In the Caribbean: Current Trends, Opportunities And Challenges.

maritime journeys in Africa (see below). According to the Missing Migrants project, only three maritime deaths were recorded in the non-Cuba area of the Caribbean in the first seven months of 2021.[16] Meanwhile, 63 deaths were recorded in the waters between Cuba and Florida, which is another major route for Cubans: over 80 percent of irregular Cuban migrants head for the US.[17]

Around 60 percent of Haitian migrants try to enter the US but of the rest a significant proportion, since the 2010 earthquake, have taken long and convoluted journeys to Brazil and, to a lesser extent, Colombia.[18] The most common route to Brazil for Haitians is through the Dominican Republic, and then Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, often with the help of smugglers. Not only is Brazil's economy the largest in Latin America but the country also has had a progressive immigration policy that guaranteed basic rights such as access to healthcare and welfare benefits regardless of status. This made it a magnet for irregular migrants from all over the continent. A recent study on migration from Haiti cites an estimate of 47,000 Haitians having entered Brazil irregularly between 2011 and 2015.[19] Migrants travelling by air from Asia and Africa also favour Brazil as their first point of arrival in South America. Reportedly, they usually spend several weeks or months there before continuing to Colombia, later entering Panama, and then crossing several or all the Central American countries and Mexico to attempt entry into the US.[20] However, the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018 saw a reversal of Brazil's pro-migration policies, the closing of borders during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the country's withdrawal from the Global Compact for Migration.

Colombia

Colombia, where five million people are internally displaced and which hosts some 1.7 million refugees, is another example of a transit and destination country for tens of thousands of irregular migrants.[21] The northward journey through the Darien Gap, a perilous jungle straddling the Colombia-Panama border, is virtually impossible without **coyote** guidance and protection (from other gangs) and is not always successful, resulting in many people being stranded in Colombia.[22]

Officials in Panama claimed it had recovered, to date, the remains of 53 people who had died while trying to cross the Darien Gap in 2021 - more than double averages from previous years.[23] Furthermore, they said more than 90,000 migrants and refugees, many of them Haitians, have moved through the Darien Gap this year as they attempt to reach Mexico and the US border.[24] Thousands more (many Haitians) are grouping in Colombian coastal areas such as Necoclí waiting for boats to take them to locations to start their trek through the Gap.[25]

Other continental and extra-continental irregular migrants choose Colombia as a destination country (Graphic 2 below illustrates the diversity of Asian and African irregular arrivals in an eight-month period in 2016). Between 2016 and 2021, Colombia has hosted increasing numbers of displaced Venezuelans, rising to 1.74 million in 2021, representing 31 percent of all Venezuelans who fled their country.[26] More than half of them are undocumented and join the tens of thousands of other continental migrants who continue to move into Colombia irregularly.[27]

Graphic 2. Shares of citizenships among detected African and Asian irregular migrants in Colombia, January - August 2016
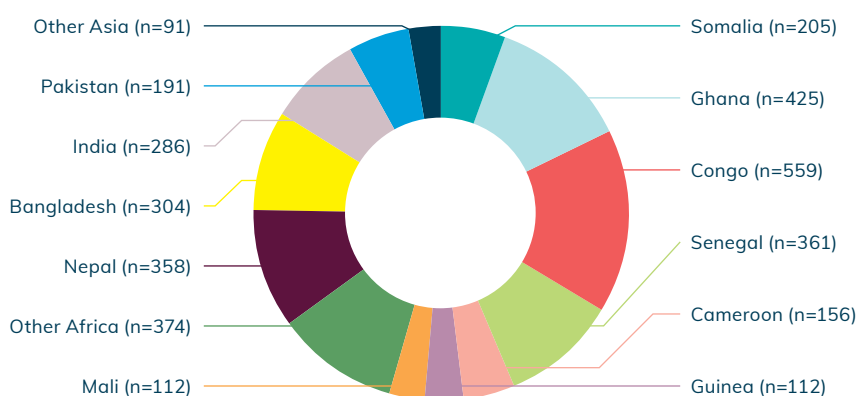
Source (adapted) and credit: OAS and IOM, 2016 (citing data from national authorities)

16 Missing Migrants Project (2021) The Americas.
17 Organisation of American States (2016) Irregular Migration Flows to the Americas from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.
18 Ibid; and Alvarez, M & Suarez, A. (2021) Colombia coastal city crowded with African, Haitian migrants. AP.
19 UNODC (2018) op. cit.
20 Ibid.
21 IDMC (2020) Colombia; and UNHCR (2020) Refugee statistics.
22 to be printed MMC (2021) Getting it together: extra-regional migration in South, Central, and North America and the need for more coordinated responses. MMC
23 France 24 (2021) More than 50 migrants died in 2021 while crossing Panama jungle
24 Zamorano, J. (2021) Panama burying more migrant victims of brutal Darien Gap. AP News
25 Otis, J. (2021) Thousands of Haitians prepare to trek through Panama's jungle and on to the U.S. NPR
26 Interagency Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (2021) GIFMM Colombia: Venezuelans in Colombia - June 2021 (EN).
27 Buschschlüter, V. (2021) 'We gave Venezuelan migrants a licence to dream'. BBC.

Trinidad and Tobago

Bucking the Caribbean trend of out-migration, the twin island state of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), with its relatively high level of development and employment opportunities (oil and gas) is a destination as well as a transit point for both regional and extra-regional migrants.[28] The same porous borders that allow high levels of human smuggling (and some human trafficking) are also vulnerable to transnational organized crime networks and are of concern to government authorities. A third of all intra-Caribbean migrants reside in T&T.[29] Irregular migrants from the Caribbean region and from Asia, in particular those lacking legal status, are at risk of forced labour in domestic service and the "hospitality sector": "traffickers lure women and girls from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela with offers of employment, many via social media, and subject them to sex trafficking in brothels and clubs".[30]

For those using T&T as a transit location for onward migration to Canada, the US, and Europe, there are earning possibilities there to finance onward travel, and smugglers and fixers available to secure necessary false documentation. Most human smuggling into the country relies on a combination of air and sea routes.[31] Most smuggled migrants detected in T&T are nationals of Colombia or Venezuela—Trinidad lies just 12 kilometres off the coast of Venezuela. The political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela prompted a sharp rise in the number of regular and irregular Venezuelans going to T&T; 60,000 were estimated to be there in May 2019, one of the highest per capita numbers of any host country. [32]

Africa

Most media coverage and research about irregular migration from Africa focuses on routes from the Horn of Africa, West Africa, and Central Africa through the Sahara to Libya and then across the Mediterranean. As explored in detail below, the dominance of this focus obscures several important facts. First, most of those entering Libya regard it as a final destination because of the employment opportunities there. Second, there are many other routes from Africa to Europe. For example, the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco, and the (Spanish) Canary Islands just 100 kilometres off Morocco's Atlantic coast have been transit/destination targets for many years, as has the French island territory of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean. Third, the world's busiest maritime route for migrants and asylum seekers does not cross the Mediterranean but runs from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian peninsula (notwithstanding anomalies during the Covid-19 pandemic). Fourth, more than half of the African nationals living in OECD countries originate from North Africa. Fifth, almost 75 percent of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa remain within the continent, a trend that has major demographic implications.[33]

The map below illustrates the complexity and dynamism of this intra-African mobility. Some fifteen key migration corridors have been identified on the continent, including those running from Burkina Faso to Ivory Coast (used by 1.3 million people in 2017) and vice versa (0.5 million); from South Sudan to Uganda (0.9 million) and from Sudan to South Sudan (0.5 million), both mostly due to conflict-related forced migration; and from Mozambique to South Africa (0.7 million), linked to labour migration in the mining, farm and domestic work sectors.[34]

28 UNODC (2018) op. cit.
29 IOM (2021) Trinidad and Tobago – Country Profile.
30 US Department of State (2020) Trafficking in Persons Report: Trinidad and Tobago; and Insight Crime (2021) Venezuela's Other Plight: Sex Trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago.
31 Waldropt-Bonair, L.-A. et al. (2013) Invisible immigrants: A profile of irregular migration, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons in Trinidad and Tobago. ACP Observatory on Migration.
32 Border Criminalities (2021) The Venezuelan Refugee Crisis in Trinidad and Tobago. University of Oxford.
33 "As a consequence of intense internal mobility, Africa is urbanising faster than any other region in the world, with much of this growth caused by intra-African migration." European Union (2020) Intra-African Migration.
34 UNCTAD (2018) Economic Development in Africa Report 2018. Migration for Structural Transformation

Graphic 3. Major routes of migration in Africa
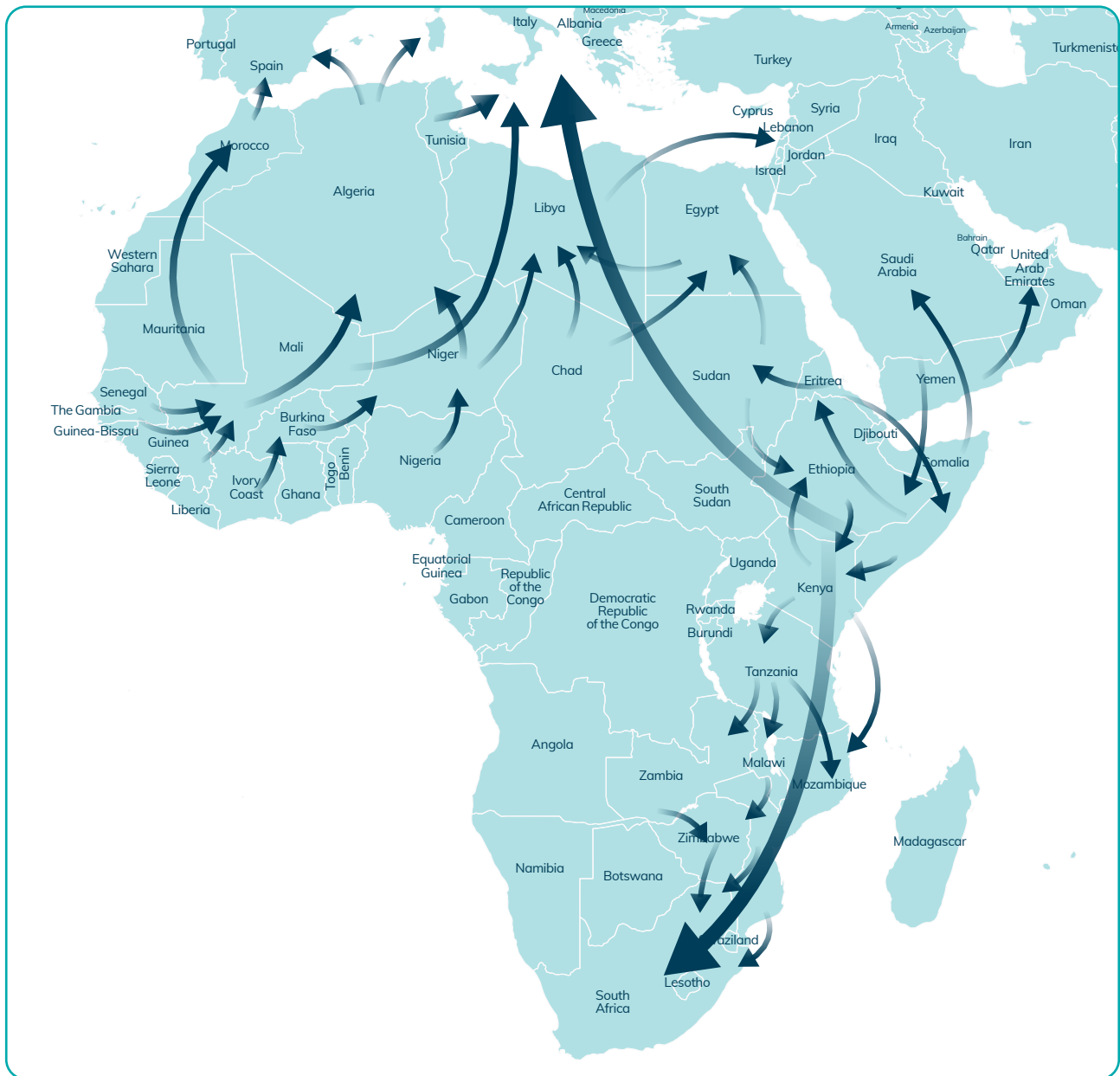
Source (adapted) and credit: Africa Centre for Strategic Studies[35]

Ceuta and Melilla

In the last decade or so, tens of thousands of sub-Saharan African migrants and asylum seekers have made their way across the Sahara into Morocco in an effort to reach, and then breach, the heavily guarded and fortified barriers around the two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Half tolerated by Moroccan authorities, their efforts are sometimes characterised by grouping close to the enclaves and simultaneously scaling their surrounding fences—like the 600 who forced access in January 2018, and the 1,000 who did so the following August.[36] Some attempt to swim around enclaves' fences that extend into the sea: 6,000 migrants entered Ceuta by sea in a single day in May 2021, prompting Spain to deploy troops.[37] Also in 2021, 120 migrants scaled the fences around Melilla.[38] Some of those who gain access to the enclaves are eventually taken to mainland Spain and released; others are returned to Morocco, often before being able to apply for asylum.[39]

35 Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (2019) African Migrant Flows Reshaping Security Challenges in Africa.
36 EUROACTIV.com/Reuters (2018) Over 600 migrants force entry into North African Spanish enclave.
37 BBC (2021) Migrants reach Spain's Ceuta enclave in record numbers.
38 Arab News (2021) 150 migrants storm border with Spain's Melilla enclave.
39 Asylum Information Database/European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2021) Access To The Territory And Push Backs – Spain.

Cabo Verde

Since 2010, Cabo Verde has graduated from a lower- to a middle-income country, partly as a result of extensive emigration (which has taken place for centuries, and especially in the 20th). The Atlantic archipelago has benefitted from considerable amounts of remittance income, human and technical capital transfers, and return migration investments from the diaspora and returning migrants. The number of Cabo Verdeans living abroad is estimated to be double the number of domestic residents (0.5 million), with most living in the US, Portugal (Cabo Verde's colonial administrator until 1975), France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain.[40] Previously, emigration predominantly took the form of regular labour migration and family reunification, but the tighter restrictions imposed by the EU and the US have left many Cabo Verdeans abroad in an irregular status, mainly because of visa overstays (rather than as a result of irregular maritime migration). The islands also attract a steady stream of migrants, mostly from West Africa and specifically Senegal, some 600 kilometres to the east.[41] However, as Cabo Verde is a member of the Economic Community of West African States, which has a free movement protocol, labour migration is permitted. According to earlier research, the archipelago was also used as a stepping-stone for mainland Africans travelling with the help of smugglers to the Canary Islands.[42]

Canary Islands

Since the 1990s, and with an uptick in recent years, West Africa migrants and asylum seekers have used boats to access Spain through the Canary Islands off the disputed territory of Western Sahara.[43] More recently, the majority travel from Morocco, Algeria, Senegal, and Mali.[44] Almost half of the 41,000 arrivals by sea into Spain in 2020 were to the Canaries.[45] The journey to the islands is long and dangerous and accidents and drownings are common, such as the El Hierro incident in April 2021.[46] Between January 2020 and July 2021, some 750 migrants were reported to have died on the Atlantic route.[47]

Mayotte

Mayotte, an overseas department of France comprising the two southeasternmost islands of the Comoros archipelago, sees high numbers of irregular migrants from the islands in the independent Union of the Comoros as well as from Madagascar. Reportedly, migrants from Madagascar and other countries use Mayotte as a transit location for onward travel.[48] In a department said to feature France's "leakiest border", almost half of the population is estimated to consist of irregular migrants, a demographic mix that sometimes sparks social unrest and protests by the local population.[49] Nearly three-quarters of births in 2017 were to irregular (mostly Comoran) migrants; in some cases these children will gain French citizenship when reach the age of majority.[50] Many irregular migrants are deported when they reach Mayotte but the numbers of arrivals—and of deaths at sea—continue to grow.[51] However, Mayotte, despite being a French territory, is not part of the EU's 26-state Schengen Area, so migrants arriving there cannot automatically benefit from the area's lack of internal border controls and just fly on to Europe without passports or visas.

Not surprisingly, Mayotte is an attractive magnet for citizens of the non-French Comoro islands, where poverty and unemployment are high. They travel using smugglers in overcrowded fishing boats often at night, across up to 230 kilometres of ocean.[52] According to a report from the French Senate, between 1995 and 2012, some 7,000–10,000 people died in these crossings— around one percent of the total Comoros population.[53] The Comorian authorities describe these waters as "the world's largest marine cemetery"; in 2015 the governor of the Comoran island of Anjouan put the number of fatalities at 50,000.[54]

40 Carling, J. (2002) Cape Verde: Towards the End of Emigration? Migration Policy Institute.
41 MacGregor, M. (2020) More than 380 migrants arrive in Cape Verde and Canary Islands. Infomigrants; and Jung, P. (2015) Migration, Remittances and Development: A case study of Senegalese labour migrants on the island Boa Vista, Cape Verde. Cadernos de Estudos Africanos.
42 Carling, J. (2002) op. cit.
43 De Haas, H. (2008) Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union: An Overview of Recent Trends. IOM; and Garver-Affeldt, J. & Seaman, M. (2021) A Gateway Re-opens: the growing popularity of the Atlantic route, as told by those who risk it. Mixed Migration Centre.
44 Hucal, S. (2021) Echoes of Lesvos as migrants get stuck in limbo on Canary Islands. Politico.
45 El Pais (2021) Tensions rising in Spain's Canary Islands over irregular immigration.
46 Al Jazeera (2021) Several migrants found dead on boat off Spain's Canary Islands.
47 IOM (2020) Death Toll in West Africa Sea Route Tops 500 Amid Uptick in Departures; and IOM (2021) Migrant deaths on maritime routes to Europe in 2021.
48 UNODC (2018) op. cit.
49 The Economist (2018) France's leakiest border is in the Indian Ocean.
50 Marie, C-L., Breton, D. & Crouzet, M. More than half of all adults living in Mayotte were born elsewhere. Population & Societies. The *jus soli* citizenship rights of those born in Mayotte to foreign parents are more limited than elsewhere in France.
51 Carver, E. (2018) Mayotte: the French migration frontline you've never heard of. The New Humanitarian. More than 27,000 people were deported from Mayotte in 2019. Journal de Mayotte (2020) 27 421 reconduites à la frontière en 2019, du jamais vu.
52 The distance depends on the island of departure. Anjouan, for example, is just 70 kilometres from Mayotte, while Moroni, the national capital on Grande Comore island, is more than three times further away.
53 Senate report cited in: Wicker, E. (2015) France's migrant 'cemetery' in Africa. BBC.
54 UN General Assembly (2013) Comoros - H.E. Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President - Statement summary ; and Wicker, E. (2015) op. cit.

Bab-el-Mandeb strait

Another perilous, if relatively short, sea crossing, used predominantly by Ethiopian and Somali migrants and asylum seekers heading mainly for Saudi Arabia and Oman, is the eastern route from the Horn of Africa to Yemen, across the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. The numbers using this route have been consistently higher than those of sub-Saharan migrants crossing the Mediterranean; IOM describes it as "the world's busiest maritime migration route.[55] Even though it has received extensive coverage over the past decade from journalists and through reports by NGOs, think tanks and international organisations, the general public and policymakers, especially in the Global North, are largely unaware of this route as the movements take place far away and out of sight.[56] Despite the persistent insecurity, egregious rights violations, and other risks on this route, every year over the last decade approximately 100,000 migrants and asylum seekers (85-90 percent Ethiopian on average) make their way to coastal departure points in Djibouti and Somaliland, often with the help of smugglers. They then use other smugglers to cross the Bab-el Mandeb strait to Yemen and thence into Saudi Arabia to seek work, running a gauntlet of unscrupulous smugglers, brutal extortion gangs, abductions and trafficking, hostile authorities, the civil war in Yemen, and repeated cycles of mass deportation by Saudi authorities.[57] In 2019, a reported 138,000 migrants used this eastern route but the impact of Covid-19 resulted in a steep decline in 2020 and 2021.[58] This route also operates in the opposite direction, from Yemen to mainland Africa. It is so used, often with the help of smugglers, by Yemenis fleeing the civil war in their country and by Somalis and Ethiopians returning home due to the hardships in Yemen and especially during Covid months. Almost 13,000 African migrants were estimated to have travelled from Yemen to Djibouti along this route between May 2020 and April 2021.[59]

Other terrestrial routes

Beyond these maritime routes there are journeys made within Africa by hundreds of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers in multiple directions within and between regions. Some of this is reported by UNHCR as refugee displacement, but there are many other significant migrant routes, such as from West and Central Africa and the Horn of Africa towards southern African states such as Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia as alternatives to the previously most popular destination of South Africa itself.[60] Migrants from South Asia travel to South Africa with the help of smugglers. A little-known, long, and convoluted route to the United States also involves South African and other African migration hubs: migrant smugglers and document-generating agents organise flights into South America, where migrants and refugees join multi-national groups going through South and Central America and Mexico with the aim of crossing into the US through its southern border.[61]

Asia

As with the American and African continents, irregular movement in the vast Asia region is multi-directional, complex, and prolific. Much of it is absent from international media coverage or research, while relevant data tends to be scarce and fragmented. Stretching from Western Asia to the Far East, there are no simple directional movements but rather a plethora of short and long migration routes, often convoluted and often involving smugglers.

Extensively reported and well known is the huge refugee displacement from Syria to neighbouring countries, which host most of the 5.6 million Syrians registered as refugees in 2021.[62] The exodus has also led to onward secondary irregular movement for over a million Syrians, mostly heading for Europe, where many received refugee status.

In the Central Asia sub-region, refugees from Afghanistan have been hosted by neighbouring countries for at least three decades. Since 2002, nearly 5.3 million Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan but just over 2 million remain in Pakistan and Iran.[63] Approximately 1.5 million Afghans live outside the region, mainly in OECD countries, and many initially arrived in their country of destination irregularly. The irregular movement of Afghans out of their region is less documented but remains relatively well-known and monitored by relevant agencies and rights organisations—the movement primarily is westward through multiple countries, towards Turkey and Europe. Almost always their journeys involve multiple smugglers for different sections. This movement continues today and is likely to increase after the Taliban take over of Afghanistan in August 2021—filling the power vacuum left by departing NATO and US troops. The extent of future migration and flight is not clear at

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55 2021 is proving to be an anomaly, however: the numbers (mid-year) arriving in Yemen have declined to just about a fifth of those crossing the Mediterranean. Strict Covid-19 restriction at borders in mainland Horn of Africa are the main barriers for those aspiring to reach Yemen. Once restrictions end, it is expected that higher volumes will resume along this eastern route.

56 IOM (2020) Journey from Africa to Yemen Remains World's Busiest Maritime Migration Route.

57 Human Rights Watch (2019) Ethiopians Abused on Gulf Migration Route.

58 Abebe, T. & Daghar, M (2021) A dangerous road home for Horn of Africa migrants. Institute for Security Studies.

59 Ibid.

60 UNODC (2018) op. cit.

61 Nyowe, C. (2020) Rising migration restrictions are driving African refugees into the hands of Latin American smugglers. Quartz Africa.

62 UNHCR (2021) Operational Data Portal – Syria Regional Refugee Response.

63 UNHCR (2021) Operational Data Portal – Afghanistan Situation.

the time of writing but expected to be significant and to re-ignite migration and asylum polemics in Europe and elsewhere.[64]

Further east, the third well-publicised mass movement in Asia is the flight of Rohingya from persecution in Myanmar to Bangladesh, where they now number 800,000.[65] Some Rohingya have travelled on from Bangladesh using smugglers towards Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Pacific.

Considering the size and complexity of other irregular movements in the Asia region, only a selection of thematic and geographic examples are highlighted below to represent the wider reality.

The Commonwealth of Independent States

The Russian Federation and the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—all members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)—are important transit countries for less-documented irregular migration and migrant smuggling from South, South-West, and East Asia to Europe. Most of the migrants and asylum seekers on these routes endure some of the world's longest and most convoluted journeys. They include people from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and further east, including Vietnam and China as well as the six CIS republics themselves and even some Africans.[66] The precise volume and extent of this movement is not known but is considered significant and long-standing. In 2006, one analyst estimated that 300,000 irregular migrants use these diverse routes through Russia and the CIS every year.[67]

Most people using these routes are aiming to access Europe and, after transiting Central Asia and the Russian Federation, many continue through the Ukraine and Belarus, from where they enter the European Union via Poland, Slovakia or Hungary.[68] In the past, smaller groups travelled north after entering the Russian Federation, accessing the Nordic countries through Baltic states, but it is not known if this route is still used to any significant degree.[69] Often using smugglers, migrants from Iran and Iraq reportedly travel to Azerbaijan, then continue to Georgia and also go through Russia, whereupon they head either to the Baltic countries and/or Belarus and

Ukraine, and then into the European Union along the Eastern borders route, with some arriving in Lithuania.[70] Rather than moving clandestinely, migrants using this route and from these countries use fraudulent documentation to cross borders.[71]

Thailand and the Mekong sub-region

Thailand is a major economy in the Mekong sub-region and a significant magnet for people from its poorer neighbours, namely Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar. Most irregular movement is related to job opportunities, but some people on the move are fleeing persecution. Smugglers not only provide safe passage through unmanned border areas (often in jungles, mountainous areas or across the Mekong river) but also offer to set migrants up with jobs and accommodation.[72] Irregular migration is a low-risk enterprise in term of detection, but human trafficking thrives in these conditions, with high numbers of victims coming from Thailand's three neighbouring countries and many others, including Thailand itself.[73]

As an illustration of its long-standing attraction, in 2013, UNODC estimated that more than 660,000 irregular migrants enter Thailand each year, 80 percent of whom were reckoned to have used smugglers. A significant proportion, but by no means all, come from neighbouring countries.[74] Official Thai government figures in that year indicate that of this total an estimated 84,500 were from Myanmar, 60,500 from Cambodia and 42,000 from Laos. Although more recent figures are hard to come by, a 2016 study of over 1,800 migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam living in Malaysia and Thailand found that 74 percent of respondents had migrated through irregular means.[75] Also, Thailand reported that from 2012 to 2016, between 190,000 and 240,000 people were detected attempting irregular entry.[76] In 2019, IOM published data indicating that of almost five million non-Thai residents in Thailand, most came from neighbouring Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam, accounting for an estimated 3.9 million documented and undocumented migrant workers.[77] These figures are a clear indication of the levels of repeated irregular movement into Thailand from its immediate neighbours.

64 Muhammadi, A. et al. (2021)Afghanistan: when migration is the only lifeline available all efforts must be ensured to provide safe passage. Mixed Migration Centre. Also; Giuffrida, A. (2021) Expected Afghan influx reopens divisions over refugees in Europe. The Guardian
65 IOM (2021) IOM Bangladesh Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Response - Monthly Situation Report.
66 IOM (2010) Migration between the Russia Federation and the European Union.
67 Ivakhnyuk, I. (2006) Migration in The CIS Region: Common Problems And Mutual Benefits. UN DESA.
68 UNODC (2018) op. cit.
69 UNODC (2015) Migrant Smuggling in Asia: Current Trends and Related Challenges.
70 Gerdžiūnas, B. et al. (2021) Baghdad to Lithuania: How Belarus opened new migration route to EU. Euractiv.
71 UNODC (2018) op. cit.
72 Ibid.
73 US Department of State (2020) op. cit.
74 UNODC (2013) Transnational Organized Crime in East Asia and the Pacific: A Threat Assessment.
75 United Nations (2020) Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020: Assessing Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.
76 UNODC (2018*) Migrant Smuggling in Asia and the Pacific: Current Trends and Challenges Volume II.
77 IOM (2019) United Nations Launches Thailand Migration Report 2019.

Maritime Southeast Asia (the Malay archipelago)

Maritime Southeast Asia includes Brunei, East Malaysia, East Timor, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines. These are all territories of destination, transit, and origin in a complex criss-crossing of routes and different modes of movement. The main players with regard to irregular migration are Malaysia and Indonesia. Extensive smuggling reportedly involves unlicensed recruitment agencies in both the origin country and in Malaysia, facilitating both irregular entry and job placement. Malaysia is a regional economic powerhouse with labour shortages—especially in plantations and the construction and manufacturing sectors—and therefore a magnet for thousands of irregular migrants every year, despite evident xenophobia and discrimination, particularly since the onset of Covid-19.[78] During the coronavirus pandemic, Malaysia's attitude to irregular migrants has toughened, resulting in raids on migrant communities and deportations.[79]

Malaysia is currently estimated to host between 2 and 4 million undocumented migrant workers, with a high proportion being Indonesians.[80] From time to time, Malaysia offers regularisation to irregular migrants; for example, in 2011 it registered approximately 1.3 million undocumented workers. Most of these were Indonesians, but they also included 270,000 Bangladeshis, offering an indication of the numbers involved.[81]

Smuggled migrants enter Malaysia clandestinely or openly but with false documentation, from sub-regional states including Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and the Philippines, as well as those beyond, such as Vietnam, Nepal, and especially Bangladesh. For example, regular passenger boats, fishing trawlers and shipping containers are used to transport Indonesian migrants clandestinely to Malaysia, normally across the Strait of Malacca. Smuggler-facilitated movement of Indonesians to Sabah and Sarawak states involves entering Malaysia overland from Kalimantan, the Indonesian portion of the island of Borneo.[82] Rohingya, coming directly from Myanmar or Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, enter Thailand via the Andaman Sea before travelling overland to Malaysia, joining established Rohingya communities in Kuala Lumpur and Penang.[83] UNHCR estimates that between 2012 and 2015, some

170,000 refugees and migrants left Myanmar and Bangladesh by boat.[84] This trend virtually ended in 2016 and 2017 but later resumed with almost 1,600 sailing from the Bay of Bengal through the Andaman Sea between January 2018 and June 2019.[85] During the Covid-19 pandemic, vessels have continued to leave Bangladesh undertaking harrowing journeys to Malaysia and Indonesia.[86]

Before Australia stopped all migrant boats reaching its shores (from 2013 onwards), some Myanmar nationals as well as Bangladeshis and many other nationalities (including Somalis, Sri Lankans, and Iranians) used Malaysia as a transit country before travelling onward to Sumatra in Indonesia, with the intention of ultimately reaching Australia. Cambodians travel by air and sea, often entering with tourist visas before looking for work. Bangladeshis use multiple routes and combinations of sea and land. Indonesian and Filipino migrants are believed to comprise the bulk of flows into Malaysia and the route between Malaysia and Indonesia, in particular, is reportedly "busy and lucrative" for smugglers.[87]

Commercial flights

Irregular migration by land and sea is widely covered by mainstream media, in articles about, for example, stranded ships laden with refugees and migrants in the Andaman or Mediterranean seas, large groups entering countries on foot, and face-offs between migrants and security forces at European borders. Hidden in plain sight, however, is the reality that tens of thousands of irregular movements occur using commercial airlines, often organised by smugglers who provide the requisite— but often counterfeit or fraudulently obtained—travel documentation and who, where necessary, deal with corrupt officials. Many migrants in irregular situations globally are visa overstays.

Smuggler-facilitated journeys using commercial flights with accompanying documentation tend to cost much more than other types of travel, but rights violations and loss of life are virtually unheard of. However, there are risks of human trafficking and potential detection by authorities. As examples: in 2015 people typically paid smugglers US$12,000–18,000 to fly from Pakistan to Western Europe, US$27,000–47,000 to fly from Nepal/India to the United States, and US$7,000–15,000 from

78 Ayub, Z. et al. (2017) Discrimination Against Migrant Workers In Malaysia, Mimbar Hukum.
79 Reuters (2021) Malaysia to deport thousands of undocumented Indonesian migrants
80 Nguyen, H. (2021) A perfect storm: Malaysia's forced deportation of refugees and migrants from Myanmar amid the military coup. Mixed Migration Centre; and Gallagher, A. & McAuliffe, M. (2016) South-East Asia and Australia. In McAuliffe, M. & Laczko, F. (eds.), Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: a global review of the emerging evidence base. IOM.
81 UNODC (2018) op. cit.
82 UNODC (2018*) op. cit.
83 Ibid.
84 UNODC (2018) op cit.
85 UNHCR (2019) Refugee Movements in South - East Asia 2018 – June 2019.
86 Paul, R. (2021) Rohingya refugee boat lands in Indonesia after 113-day voyage. Reuters; Reuters (2021) Over 30 Rohingya caught arriving in Malaysia by boat in January: police; and Amnesty International (2021) Rohingya stranded in Indian Ocean must be immediately rescued and disembarked to place of safety
87 UNODC (2018) op. cit.

Vietnam to Western Europe.[88] Chinese "snakehead" gangs have a long tradition of smuggling Chinese nationals around the world, especially to North America. Various reports suggest that the cost ranges from US$20,000 to $70,000 per person, with one study claiming the median price was $50,000.[89]

Use of commercial flights for irregular movement occurs in every continent—but especially in Asia—not only for short legs of journeys that might also need supplementary sea and land transport, but also for longer journeys that take migrants and asylum seekers directly or indirectly to their target destination. Some key long-haul routes include those from South, East, and South-East Asia to North America and Eastern Europe (for onward movement). Irregular migrants also fly into Asia from numerous locations within and outside the region. Some irregular migration involves regular air-travel components. For example, Syrians used to be able to fly without visas (and therefore regularly) to Khartoum, from where they travelled on irregularly to Europe via Libya or Egypt.

Conclusion: the normality of irregular movement

Some of the major routes taken by asylum seekers and migrants, as well as some selected less publicised journeys, are highlighted in this Mixed Migration Review 2021, but behind them there are hundreds more. Migration and the search for asylum involves many roads, many of which, while not necessarily less travelled, are less publicised and researched than those in the media limelight. Some are new routes, while others are well established, having been used for decades. They are best understood as a part of a demand-and-supply dynamic that responds to multiple changing variables, such as population growth, increased aspirations and capabilities, economic conditions, immigration regimes, asylum opportunities, levels of corruption by state officials, the rising impact of climate change, and geographical proximity.

All of this illustrates that irregular movement is common and a normalised aspect of international movement. Although every state and every nationality has its own response to irregular migration, the extent to which irregular migration is problematised and even weaponised in politics varies considerably and changes over time. For millions of people each year, irregular movement, often assisted by smugglers, offers the only hope of finding new opportunities and security, while for many economies, the labour supply of irregular migrants is critical to growth.[90]

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88 UNODC (2015) op. cit.
89 Zhang, S. & Chin, K. (2003) Characteristics of Chinese Human Smugglers: A Cross-National Study, Final Report. US Department of Justice.
90 In 2018, UNODC reported that approximately 2.5 million people had been smuggled globally in 2016. The true number is not known but even if this figure is accepted then the total number of people who migrated irregularly that year was higher as not all of them would have engaged smugglers for any part of their journey.

No time to procrastinate

For now, climate may only play a limited role in global migration, but the inevitable growth of its influence as the climate crisis deepens means the time to prepare and to take decisive action is now, rather than quixotically banking on future technological magic bullets, argues **Abrahm Lustgarten**.

Abrahm Lustgarten is a journalist specializing in environmental issues, with a focus on how the spheres of business, climate, and energy intersect. He writes for ProPublica and the New York Times Magazine.

To what extent are the factors that are pushing the environment to the brink also driving global displacement?

It's all inextricably intertwined. To start semi-micro, the first thing that I learned about migration and climate migration is that it happens for a whole lot of reasons and there's a mixture of factors that drive people out and it's difficult to isolate exactly what the influence of environment is.

The planet has too many people. We've overused the resources on the planet as a result of that over-population but also as a result of the extraordinary industrial growth and economic growth, especially by the developed world, and these two things have created a pressure tank for the evolving circumstances under climate change. So we basically have a squeeze coming from both sides. It's the most vulnerable communities that are least able to defend themselves against these pressures. The impact comes first for the places that bear the least responsibility or have the least engagement in that economic and capitalist system and that have also emitted the least amount of greenhouse gases contributing to climate change. So all of these factors absolutely weigh in together. This is almost like

the culmination of everything we've done wrong over the last two centuries.

You titled your recent investigation "The Great Climate Migration Has Begun", suggesting this is just the start of a longer journey or process. How do you see it playing out?

Slowly. It's important to start to recognise the influence of climate change in the migration that we're already seeing and we're seeing those pressures around the world, whether it's from Syria or North Africa into Europe, or what's happening at the US border. Depending on the situation and the location, only a small amount of that current migration is due to climate in particular, but if we can start to see that signal, or recognise that signal, I think it can help prepare for what the models suggest will be a growing pressure and a growing number. The warning signs for what happens if you can't prepare are there and obvious, when you see it in the political strife around the US southern border, and you see it in the political tensions that have arisen in Europe.

It's very difficult to measure the degree to which the migration challenge is driving or influencing the rise

of nationalistic sentiment around the world, but it's a factor in there somewhere, whether it's small or large, and the concern is that it grows, and if you can't prepare adequately for the movement, the demographic change that the planet's going to see—and I am convinced that that demographic change will happen—then you're going to see more conflict arise as a result. That's basically why I think migration is a natural process. It's a very natural and instinctual response to environmental change. It's always been that way from the beginning of time, and what we have now is the constraint of borders, of political boundaries, and so our modern challenge is the intersection of that political system with this natural biological process of moving around to different environments.

> ❝ **It's important to start to recognise the influence of climate change in the migration that we're already seeing.** ❞

In the same article you wrote that by 2070, 20 percent of the world will be unlivable and you ask where people in those areas will go. What's your answer to that question?

They'll either stay and suffer or they'll move. Some research that I've relied on is a study out of Stanford University by Marshall Burke that estimated economic growth for northern countries and essentially correlated climatic conditions with economic prosperity and population change. It suggests that as the climate changes, it's the far northern regions of the planet that will see the most opportunity to evolve economically and that will probably need increased population to do that.

So you take those two things together and it roughly suggests or at least points the arrow in the direction of the poles. And because the greater land mass and the greater historical movement of populations has been northward, that's where I expect people to go: Canada, the United States, Northern Europe, perhaps eventually Russia—which I explored through part of my reporting—basically wherever the boundaries allow people to flow.

To what extent did Burke account for AI and automation, which in OECD countries and other developed states will, it is said, lead to less people, and certainly less migration, being needed to run the economy in the future?

That's a fair question. As far as I know, it wasn't taken into account in the research and your question points to a bigger issue, which is that [with] all of these studies—they could be wrong, but there's something sort of intuitively correct, that feels correct about them to me, when you look at the bigger body of research—the bottom line is, no models are accurate, and no one knows for sure exactly what will happen.

When you were investigating climate migration, were there any aspects that particularly surprised you?

When I began my reporting on migration pressures in Central America I expected that people would be evaluating a list of pros and cons, if you will, sort of making a very pragmatic or logical decision, and I wanted to understand what the things were in those different columns. But what I found instead was that the people who didn't have a history of migration were just acting out of sheer desperation, and there was no list of pros and cons. There was really an issue of last resort for them and that everything that they had tried was an effort to stay put or stay close or move the shortest distance possible, and by the time that a Guatemalan family was deciding to separate their family and take a stab at coming to the United States, for example, it was just an absolute act of desperation. And that was kind of heartbreaking, but it was also eye-opening to understand that at a certain economic stratum, the movement of people is an act of last resort, and then below that stratum, the people who can't move at all and assume that they're equally desperate will remain trapped with a whole different set of deteriorating circumstances.

> ❝ **At a certain economic stratum, the movement of people is an act of last resort, and then below that stratum, the people who can't move at all and assume that they're equally desperate will remain trapped with a whole different set of deteriorating circumstances.** ❞

Many in the migration and refugee sector find that the extent of climate-induced mobility is often disguised behind other overtly stated drivers. Do you think climate change will become more explicit as a migration driver?

On one hand, I do think that environment and climate change as drivers are going to be more explicit, more exaggerated in the future, and also more obvious to people looking at situations around the world, so they will drive more people, lead to more displacement. But migration tends to ebb and flow based [more] on policy and opportunity than anything else. To use the United States as an example, you see higher rates of migration when there's a perception that that opportunity exists, that it is possible to cross the border or that it is possible to get a job. So I think we'll just see this complex interaction, like an ugly dance, between possibility and driving forces like climate change for decades into the future.

Do you think that those forced to move because of climate should have their own category? Should they be treated as refugees or economic migrants or a different category altogether?

In my view they're refugees, and I use that word in the dictionary definition, not the United Nations' definition. The people that I'm most interested in, those that are being forced to move and don't want to, in my mind certainly meet every definition of refugee. And then, if you look at who's responsible for the changing climate, the disproportionate contribution the United States has made to global emissions, that Europe has made, I do think there is some responsibility to be taken. I don't know if the law should require exactly the same treatment that other refugees' status officially offers to people, but I do think that there is some special recognition that's warranted, and this recognition will be more urgent as climate-displacement grows.

> **We'll see this complex interaction, like an ugly dance, between possibility and driving forces like climate change for decades into the future.**

The global appetite to resettle asylum seekers and refugees is at an all-time low. Channels for legal, permanent migration are also highly restricted. How will the world deal with this new climate-induced movement? Are we set on a collision course?

Unfortunately I think that in many places a collision course is being mapped out. But I also think that there'll be breaks in that line and I hoped that the world was going to respond to this challenge out of the goodness of its heart, but I don't think that'll be the case. I think that it will respond where it sees opportunity. Canada might be the best example. The country has abundant land and abundant resources and is in a northerly position and has great economic potential but has a relatively small population and recognises that its population is small and even has an active campaign to triple its national population. Right now it's about 39 million people. There's a campaign run by the business community and the economic community called the Century Initiative to expand Canada's population to 100 million people by the end of the century. Now there's a subtle increase in the number of asylum allowances that Canada has made, but you can see the potential between that agenda and the outflow of migrants from other parts of the world to be compatible.

The United States' position is more challenging. Our economy thrives with more inexpensive and often migrant labour. Somehow Americans' preferences, because of who those people often are, tend toward xenophobia and essentially choosing the economic challenge over more migration. That might change in

the future, but that's kind of the challenge in a nutshell. And I look at Russia through a similar lens. Russia is another country that has great aspirations for growth, has enormous land and an opportunity, but there's a fundamental question whether Russians accept people of colour, people of different ethnicities and different national backgrounds from different parts of the world. If they do, they've obviously got place for them and use for them.

How would you characterise global environmental crisis in all its forms today?

I think humanity has pushed the planet to its absolute limit for what it can bear in terms of the resources that it can provide and the pressures on the systems that make the planet work, whether that's atmospheric systems and precipitation or it's temperature or even the Earth's wobble. We see that our extraction of ground water has changed the balance of the planet's spin on its axis, and that's just extraordinary. So I think it's an urgent moment, requiring everything that we can do to address it, as fast as we can possibly do it, and small and large efforts are all welcome, but they're all equally urgent. I don't think we're quite at the brink of apocalypse, but we can see that possibility unfolding and we're headed in that direction.

In relation to new technologies, is there a case to be made that as the climate crisis becomes more acute we will respond more acutely and manage to find a way to avert a full-blown catastrophe? In other words, are you a techno-optimist or pessimist?

First, I would say, the climate crisis is already acute now. Our opportunity to ramp up slowly was decades ago. I would welcome a technological evolution that can address this, and I hope that that does happen, but I think that history suggests we can't count on that. I hope that other technologies evolve that can help solve the crisis and we need multi-pronged solutions. I don't want to be entirely pessimistic about it, but unless you can point to exactly what they are with some suggestion that they can scale up enough to be meaningful, I don't see that happening yet.

I have a strong belief in our technological capabilities, and your point is well taken that humanity has managed to steer back from the brink in the past, but climate… The thing about climate is that there isn't necessarily a singular brink, it's a gradual decline, so it's really a question of severity, and we're in it now, and those solutions are not yet apparent at scale enough to make a difference.

This confidence in a currently unknown future silver bullet seems to me more of a justification for maintaining the status quo, and I think the perpetuation of the belief that we can solve this crisis without changing our habits and our lifestyles and our levels of consumption,

the over-reliance on a technological solution, is extraordinarily dangerous.

Concerning the relationship between the Global North and the Global South, is culpability clear-cut? And if so, what should be done in relation to climate migration?

In terms of carbon emissions, culpability is clear-cut, everything else gets more complicated than that, but we know what's driving climatic change and we know where those emissions came from and who's benefited from them, and I don't think that automatically answers the question of whether wealthier and developed nations will or have to care for the rest of the world, but it definitely answers the question of whether they are responsible for the changes that are coming. I think that's pretty well factually established at this point. Beyond that, to be crude about it, it's not clear that the world has ever been a fair place or will be in the future. It would be nice. I think that it's morally appealing to think that we'll all take care of each other, and if that's the case, then we should strive towards caring for the people most impacted and least able to defend themselves against climate change. But I don't consider that to be kind of an automatic assumption that that'll happen.

> **Humanity has pushed the planet to its absolute limit of what it can bear in terms of the resources that it can provide and the pressures on the systems that make the planet work.**

How would you characterise global migration?

I think more about what's going to happen in the future rather than just about the mobility that's happening now. But I think that the world will look significantly different in the future, decades from now, 100 years from now, in terms of where people live. I think that the concept of political boundaries will run up against this concept of the natural evolution of our species, and part of that evolution is movement to habitable environments. And I don't know exactly how that will pan out, but I think it's going to be a persistent tension for a long time. And when the adjustment is finished, or at least when we're further along in it, the physical appearance of the way we envision the world's nations will just be different. It's the process of getting from here to there that's going to be a little bit fraught, involving conflict, involving a lot of difficult decision-making, and probably a lot of suffering as well. But my hope is that that happens slowly enough over time so that we can collectively wrap our heads around the challenge at the same time, similar to the climate crisis itself. There's an opportunity; we're resisting it now in most shapes and forms, but there's an opportunity to begin to accept those pressures and find ways to take advantage of them, find ways to allow them, find ways to help more people, and maybe change that dynamic a little bit in the future.

> **The world will look significantly different in the future, decades from now, 100 years from now, in terms of where people live.**

Stifling silos: The need for a more holistic approach to mixed migration in a warming world

A climate-changed world is one of mixed migration taking place across a spectrum of time, space, and agency, with both positive and negative outcomes. Addressing climate-induced migration as though it were a discrete phenomenon inhibits essential collaboration and integrated responses.

By Caroline Zickgraf [1]

Introduction

Climate change and migration are defining geopolitical issues of the 21st century. They both challenge existing notions of national sovereignty, social justice, human rights, and moral responsibility in an increasingly globalised world. Despite their structural division into different policy silos, these are not separate issues at all. With global average temperatures on track to exceed the global target of two degrees specific warming levels established in the 2015 Paris Agreement, a major concern is what this will mean for geopolitical landscapes, including migration and displacement patterns.[2]

Forced migration has long been touted as one of the key threats posed by a warming world.[3] Many "futurologies", especially those coming from European and North American perspectives, warn of an impending migration crisis if urgent climate action is not undertaken.[4] With their emphasis on large-scale forced migration, rarely do these fear-based narratives acknowledge the spectrum of agency involved in population movements—both voluntary and involuntary—associated with climate change that is so characteristic of mixed migration. Migration is not always evidence of a failure to adapt to changing conditions. In some cases, studies show the opposite: migration is adaptation.

Even though current migratory responses and historical analogues provide valuable sources of information about what might happen in the years to come, environmental narratives that are exclusively focused on the future

conditional fail to recognise that migration is already underway. The volume, character, and geographies of mixed migration are being affected by the slow and sudden impacts of climate change, especially in vulnerable deltaic areas, small-island states, and sub-Saharan Africa. However, sea-level rise, increasing temperatures, climatic variability, and extreme events do not create a new type of migrant but rather transform the existing mobility landscape, necessitating the development of coalitions of actors and integrated, evidence-based strategies.

This essay focuses on the challenges of envisioning, and responding to, mixed migration in a warming world based on existing quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence.

Mixed drivers, mixed migration

Policymakers and the public alike have demonstrated a strong appetite to focus on numbers when it comes to the intersection of climate change and human migration. Although often misused and misrepresented, estimates help stakeholders grapple with the weight of the issue, and, subsequently, to plan for the future, including how and where to allocate resources and plan interventions.[5] Despite being a notoriously difficult task, scientific methodologies have been advanced significantly in the past two decades. A group of experts gathered by the World Bank, for example, used gravitational modelling to produce a possible range of the number of internal climate migrants for three world regions in the first

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1   Caroline Zickgraf is the deputy director of the University of Liège's Hugo Observatory, which is exclusively dedicated to the study of environmental migration. In this capacity she is also the scientific coordinator of the HABITABLE project, which is discussed later in this essay.
2   Nationally determined commitments (NDCs) are currently being revised and some countries are setting more ambitious targets, but it is certainly unlikely they will meet the more ambitious goal of 1.5 degrees also included in the Paris Agreement.
3   IPCC (1992) Climate change: The 1990 and 1992 IPCC Assessments.
4   Baldwin, A., Methmann, C. & Rothe, D. (2014) Securitizing 'climate refugees': The futurology of climate-induced migration. Critical Studies on Security.
5   Such misrepresentation is explored in: Gemenne, F. (2011) Why the numbers don't add up: A review of estimates and predictions of people displaced by environmental changes, Global Environmental Change.

Groundswell Report in 2018.[6] The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) uses information about recorded and forecasted hazards to model the risk of future displacement and to estimate how many people will be forced to flee a given location each year, decade, or century.[7] However, neither model accounts for mixed migration, diverse migration motivations, trajectories, or destinations. The World Bank focuses on internal climate migrants, the IDMC on disaster displacement. The same issue extends to contemporary estimates: we know that in 2020 more than 30 million new internal displacements occurred as a result of a sudden-onset disasters,[8] but we have no figure that encompasses all forms of migration, including as a result of slow-onset events, voluntary movements, or international migration.

Indirect relationships

One reason that researchers struggle to grapple with mixed migration in the context of climate change is that the relationship between climate and migration is indirect; it is mediated by a number of intervening structural and individual factors, and this results in a range of non-linear migration patterns and outcomes.[9] The assumed direct link between climate change and human mobility is not clear and future prognosis is ambiguous because the ways in which climate change and human mobility collide are complex, dynamic, and rooted in local landscapes, including policy decisions. Climate change acts as a threat—or rather a vulnerability—multiplier, exposing and exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities of those affected, rather than creating them outright.[10] This, too, holds true for the ways in which climate change affects mixed migration. Changing environmental conditions interact with other drivers of migration, be they social, political, economic, environmental, or demographic.[11] In turn, they can transform mixed migration dynamics by making certain destinations or routes less attractive, for example, or by increasing the intensity and frequency of disasters and associated loss and damage.

The impacts of climate change do not result in new or distinct "climate migrants" or "climate refugees." All migration is multi-causal, and climatic factors are not necessarily the most prominent motivation for migrants, internally displaced people, asylum seekers or refugees moving within fragile environmental contexts. Studies in various regions of the world repeatedly demonstrate that one of the most significant pathways between climate change and human mobility is the indirect livelihood pathway, especially in the face of more gradual environmental changes. People who are amongst the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are those whose livelihoods depend on their physical environment, as are countries whose economies depend on agriculture.[12] This vulnerability, in turn, can make people likely candidates for migration when changing maritime currents, erratic rainfall, or soil salinisation, for example, render livelihoods dependent on natural resources unsustainable *in situ*. Frequently, in surveys and qualitative interviews, people moving in response to gradual climate impacts describe their motivations as largely economic (seeking more stable income, job opportunities, etc.). In these circumstances, the scientific consensus is that economic migration is environmental migration.[13]

Conflict complexities

The obfuscation of environmental drivers is not unique to livelihood pathways or more "voluntary" forms of migration. Conflict and environmental change can amplify each other to drive mass displacement, such as when armed forces destroy or deplete local resources (which may, in turn, fuel local tensions) or when a population ravaged by war is then devastated by a natural hazard. Conflict and climate change can also act in opposition to one another, forcing people affected to evaluate various risks and respond to the gravest threats through movement or stasis. Women who traditionally migrated in response to drought in wartime Mozambique were prevented from doing so because of surrounding conflict, becoming what one scholar referred to as "displaced in situ".[14] Burkina Faso has witnessed one of the most rapidly evolving humanitarian crises in the world, with more than 1.2 million displaced since 2019.[15] According to local and international organisations working on climate, conflict, and migration, Burkinabés' primary and most pressing concern was physical security and escaping conflict. Though the country faces severe environmental degradation, environmental conditions do not play a big role determining their subsequent migration patterns.[16]

Quantitative research into mixed migration in Africa demonstrates that people themselves seldom identify as

6   Rigaud, K. et al. (2018) Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration. World Bank.[a second updated Groundswell Part 2 report was published in 2021]

7   IDMC (n.d.) Disaster Displacement Risk Model.

8   IDMC (2021) GRID 2020 – Internal displacement in a changing climate. Although not all extreme environmental events can be directly attributed to climate change, almost all these 30.7 million displacements were tied to hydrometeorological events such as floods and droughts.

9   According to the IPCC 5th Assessment report, issued in 2014, there is low confidence in quantitative projections of changes in mobility, due to their complex, multi-causal nature.

10   UN News (2019) Climate change recognized as 'threat multiplier', UN Security Council debates its impact on peace.

11   Black, R., et al. (2011) The effect of environmental change on human migration. Global Environmental Change.

12   Cai, R., et al. (2016) Climate variability and international migration: The importance of the agricultural linkage. Journal of Environmental Economics and Management.

13   Afifi, T. (2011) Economic or Environmental Migration? The Push Factors in Niger. International Migration 49.

14   Lubkemann, S. (2008) Involuntary Immobility: On a Theoretical Invisibility in Forced Migration Studies. Journal of Refugee Studies.

15   Humanitarian Insight (2021) Burkina Faso Humanitarian Response Plan 2021.

16   Zickgraf, C., Castillo Betancourt, T. & Gemenne, F. (2021) Climate Change, Conflict, and Migration in the Sahel G5. Internal study for the Robert Bosch Foundation. [Public version forthcoming].

environmental migrants or climate refugees. In a 2021 survey of more than 2,000 refugees and migrants in West and North Africa, few respondents listed "natural disaster or environmental factors" as playing a role in their departure (two percent in West Africa and six percent in Central Africa), and none of these respondents cited this as their sole reason for leaving.[17] This does not mean, however, that the environment played no part in their migration. When asked directly whether environmental issues were a factor in their decision to leave their country, 48 percent of the survey's overall respondents indicated that environmental factors or natural disasters contributed to their decision to migrate (47 percent in West Africa and 53 percent in Central Africa), which was mainly related to economic drivers.[18] This supports previous studies showing that when explicit questions about the possible linkages between environment and migration are avoided, environmental stress was not mentioned as a key driver of migration.[19]

Mixed dynamics

Accepting that climate is only one element in a mix of migration drivers helps to explain where people go and where they may move to in the future, and thus to identify critical intervention points. People on the move in a warming world join and travel within the same "migration circuits" as other migrants or displaced people. Rural-to-urban migration is the most frequently observed trajectory (although it is not the only one) when rural agricultural livelihoods become untenable and as people move to cities seeking better opportunities. In these circumstances, one cannot isolate climate migration patterns from broader rural-to-urban migration trends.

Urban risks

Urbanisation is likely to continue in the future given the concentration of opportunities and capital in cities even when urban spaces are environmentally fragile. Cities are the main destinations of migration (regardless of motivation), but they are also exposed to the impacts of extreme environmental events.[20] Migration into cities increases risk, especially when migrants or refugees find themselves in precarious living conditions and socially or economically marginalised. People moving into informal settlements built on flood plains or hillsides, without access to infrastructure or social services, are at risk of secondary displacement when floods, landslides, or other urban disasters strike. The same people may be economic migrants at one stage, and disaster displaced persons at another. Likewise, they may begin as conflict refugees and then be displaced by climate impacts. Cities can also be primary origin points of displacement and outward migration in developing countries and developed countries alike, the former demonstrated famously by the case of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and recently during the July 2021 floods in Germany and Belgium. Cities are also origin points of livelihood migration, as in the case of coastal fisheries in urban and peri-urban areas.[21] Therefore, effectively addressing climate and migration in cities requires preparing for in-migration, transit migration, and out-migration, decreasing urban displacement risk, and generally incorporating planned migration in sustainable development strategies.[22]

Internal migration is the most frequently documented dynamic associated with climate change. International mixed migration flows can also include those who were affected by climate change in their communities of origin or at another point in their migration journey. Studies on international migration, which are less common than those detailing internal migration, are somewhat ambiguous in their findings.[23] One study on asylum applications in the European Union from 103 source countries found a statistically significant relationship between fluctuations in asylum applications and weather anomalies over the period 2000 to 2014.[24] Holding everything else constant, its authors predict a 28 percent increase in annual asylum applications under representative concentration pathway (RCP) scenario 4.5 and by 188 percent under RCP 8.5.[25] However, other studies challenge the idea that the European Union should expect more migration. A 2021 study found no evidence that drought in a sending country increased irregular migration flows to the European Union.[26] Rather, drought seems to exert a negative, albeit moderate, impact on the size of migration flows, especially those from countries dependent on agriculture (although this is not a conclusive finding). In different contexts, this may be explained by the negative

17 Garver-Affeldt, J. (2021) Migration drivers and decision-making of West and Central Africans on the move in West and North Africa: A quantitative analysis of factors contributing to departure. Mixed Migration Centre.

18 Ibid.

19 Romankiewicz, C., & Doevenspeck, M. (2015) Climate and Mobility in the West African Sahel: Conceptualising the Local Dimensions of the Environment and Migration Nexus. In Heike Greschke, H. & Tischler, J. (eds) (2015) Grounding Global Climate Change - Contributions from the Social and Cultural Sciences. Springer.

20 Horwood, C. (2020) Climate exposure – the complex interplay between cities, climate change and mixed migration. Mixed Migration Centre.

21 Zickgraf, C. (2018) 'The Fish Migrate And So Must We': The Relationship Between International And Internal Environmental Mobility In A Senegalese Fishing Community. Medzinarodne Vztahy (Journal of International Relations).

22 For more research on the inclusion of migration in urban sustainability governance, see the MISTY project.

23 Zickgraf, C. (2021) Climate Change, Slow Onset Events and Human Mobility: Reviewing the Evidence. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability.

24 Missirian, A. & Schlenker, W. (2017) Asylum applications respond to temperature fluctuations. Science.

25 Ibid. RCPs are scenarios that describe alternative trajectories for carbon dioxide emissions and the resulting atmospheric concentration from 2000 to 2100. There are four scenarios ranging from 2.6 to 8.5. RCP 8.5 represents the extreme, or worst case, scenario.

26 Cottier, F., & Salehyan, I. (2021) Climate variability and irregular migration to the European Union. Global Environmental Change.

impact of drought on migration resources, where the household diverts all resources towards basic survival and functioning (e.g. food, water, shelter) or because households become accustomed to cyclical drought and do not perceive it as a "shock" event.

Not always a last resort

Generally, public and media narratives on the climate-migration nexus emphasise forced migration at the expense of more voluntary forms, demonstrated by the common usage of "climate refugees" despite the lack of legal standing of the term.[27] That is because migration, even when not spontaneous, is seen as an indication of a failure to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Statistically, the figures used to highlight the significance of environmental migration are disaster displacement statistics, giving the impression that environmental migration is first and foremost about sudden-onset disasters forcing people to flee. Some individuals or households exhaust all other options before engaging in migration, most clearly in response to rapidly occurring disasters, but also in response to impacts of creeping environmental changes. Migration and even displacement in these cases is a coping strategy, a short-term survival mechanism.

Migration as adaptation

However, empirical evidence shows that migration is not always a last resort.[28] Some people depart entirely voluntarily, some are forced to flee, but most people fall somewhere in between these two ends of the agency spectrum.[29] Not all who move do so because they have no other choice. Especially for those living in "migration cultures", where migration is a normal part of life, migration is one of many adaptation options. Households can and often do prefer it to negative coping strategies such as selling off assets or decreasing food intake.[30] They may send one or more members elsewhere to diversify income and take the pressure of off local livelihoods. In coastal areas of Senegal, fishers migrate to Mauritania in response to overfishing and maritime climate impacts, returning with income gained abroad and then financing self-relocation away from coastal erosion.[31] For pastoralist populations, such as those in the Sahel, migration is a traditional strategy to navigate harsh or changing environmental conditions. In fact, for such communities it is immobility or sedentarism that represents a disruption to daily life.

Mixed immobility

Standing in contrast to those who migrate—by choice or by force—are those who do not leave at all. Research on immobile populations rebuts the purported mass migration threat frequently associated with future climate change and challenges the assumption that as the magnitude of climate impacts increase, so too will migration. Externally, it may seem logical that the more unstable a local climate is, the more likely people are to move. However, an important emerging line of research demonstrates that, in some cases, the opposite may be true. That is to say, people may be less able to migrate as environmental conditions adversely impact their assets, leaving them without the resources necessary to move out of harm's way.[32] Consequently, these people may be among the most vulnerable to an array of climate impacts, including those on health and wellbeing, and face a higher risk of mortality and displacement.

But all those who are immobile are not necessarily "trapped". People who stay in fragile areas do so for a number of reasons, including place attachment and land ownership. Despite experiencing adverse impacts of climate change on health and livelihoods, indigenous people of the Pacific in places like Fiji are increasingly expressing a preference to stay on their lands for cultural and spiritual reasons.[33] Therefore, the spectrum of human mobility associated with climate change includes not only mixed migration but also mixed immobility. A nuanced understanding of the nexus between climate change and mixed migration needs to consider the full spectrum of mobility and immobility drivers and outcomes associated with climate change. Mobility can be variously a sign of positive coping or adaptation and a negative measure of last resort. Similarly, immobility can be both a sign of positive adaptive capacity to stay in place and one of desperation and extreme vulnerability. Each of these outcomes offer insight into how communities and households are affected and how they adapt, and suggest different programmatic and policy responses.

Perceptions of habitability

The notion of habitability is set to be at the core of future thinking on migration and climate change. Mass migration is expected to occur when places reach a climate tipping point, becoming uninhabitable in a physical sense, for example when temperatures in the Middle East exceed the limits of the human body. Yet, as explained above, migration is not determined by

27 Bettini, G. (2013) Climate Barbarians at the Gate? A Critique of Apocalyptic Narratives on 'Climate Refugees'. Geoforum.
28 Tacoli, C. (2009) Crisis or Adaptation? Migration and Climate Change in a Context of High Mobility. Environment and Urbanization.
29 Lazcko, F., & Aghazarm, C. (eds.) (2009) Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence. International Organization for Migration.
30 Afifi, T., et al. (2015) Human Mobility in Response to Rainfall Variability: Opportunities for Migration as a Successful Adaptation Strategy in Eight Case Studies. Migration and Development.
31 Zickgraf, C. (2018) op. cit.
32 Foresight (2011) Migration and Global Environmental Change. Future Challenges and Opportunities. Final Project Report. UK Government Office for Science.
33 Farbotko, C. (2018) Voluntary Immobility: Indigenous Voices in the Pacific. Forced Migration Review.

environmental concerns alone.[34] Thus, models of future migration and displacement often consider a number of socio-economic and development pathways alongside climate parameters.

Ground-level views

Most available models, however, are based on objective determinations of environmental changes, using, for example, data on rainfall or temperature variations. But populations' decisions to evacuate, flee, or migrate are made based on their own perceptions of climate impacts and other environmental changes, their own vulnerability, and their aspirations and capabilities to move or to stay.[35] People's choices of whether, when, and where to go are based on what they perceive to be happening to their surroundings, which does not always align with externally observed climate data.

Using the household African Monsoon Multidisciplinary Analysis survey in Burkina Faso, one study found that that respondents perceived increasing temperatures and worsening rainfall conditions over the period 1988–2007, which was inconsistent with the trends observed in rainfall data.[36] In some cases, opinions about rainfall conditions varied within the same populations: in one site, 64.5 percent of respondents perceived a decrease in the intensity of rainfall events, while 28.9 percent reported an increase. Likewise, opinions about whether migration is a positive or negative consequence of climate variability were divided. Other qualitative studies have also showed that the perceptions of climate change can influence migration decisions.[37]

Work on perceptions of migrants, displaced people, and non-migrants may help to produce knowledge grounded in local experiences and perspectives. Considering the perceptions of populations also entails collecting data on their migration aspirations and capabilities—whether, for example, they see migration as a viable adaptive strategy or a last resort. For this reason, new scientific research sets out to capture how migrants and non-migrants alike perceive changes in their physical environments, the drivers of their (actual or potential) migration, and the perceived outcomes in conjunction with climate data. The HABITABLE project, launched in 2020, is deploying a series of methods to capture how people themselves understand the links between migration and climate change, including fuzzy cognitive mapping, in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, in order better understand current movements and to inform future modelling and qualitative scenarios.[38] The project conceptualises habitability as a social and physical construct that results

from the perceptions of the affected populations about all aspects of their lives, including economic, political, social, economic, and demographic considerations. A "social tipping point" may be reached well before a "climate tipping point", but adaptive migration may also make places more inhabitable. In the former case, the negative economic consequences of climate change may overwhelm socio-ecological systems before they become physically uninhabitable. In the latter, out-migration may generate social and financial remittances that facilitate technological adaptation solutions in communities of origin and/or decrease population pressure on dwindling natural resources.

The current policy silo approach: developing shared tools to address mixed migration

Responding to and preparing for mixed migration (and immobility) requires the participation of a number of actors in the traditionally separate domains of climate change, development, and migration, but also those in a number of other fields: disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action, development, and urban planning. Currently, governmental structures bound by institutional and operational mandates are ill-equipped to treat such complex, and cross-cutting issues. This results from a silo approach at the international, national, and local scales.

Policy and organisational silos hinder the development of comprehensive durable solutions for mixed migration in a warming world. Representatives of ministries responsible for migration are rarely seen at the annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate negotiations. The same can be said for environmental representation in the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) discussions. Each realm is then left without the range of expertise necessary to make informed, cohesive decisions. Coordination across policy processes then falls to international organisations and civil society members tracking parallel negotiations and developments, such as the Platform on Disaster Displacement or the International Organization for Migration.

Questions of priority

Mixed migration related to climate change has predominantly been taken up in the climate policy arena

34 Black, R. et al. op. cit.
35 Zickgraf, C., et al. (2016) The Impact of Vulnerability and Resilience to Environmental Changes on Mobility Patterns in West Africa. Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD).
36 De Longueville, F., et al. (2020) Comparing Climate Change Perceptions and Meteorological Data in Rural West Africa to Improve the Understanding of Household Decisions to Migrate. Climatic Change.
37 Borderon, M., et al. (2018) A Systematic Review of Empirical Evidence on Migration Influenced by Environmental Change in Africa. International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis.
38 HABITABLE (n.d.) Linking Climate Change, Habitability and Social Tipping Points: Scenarios for Climate Migration. (Project website).

rather than in migration governance. Frequently (though not always), these discussions centre on the risks of forced migration posed by unabated greenhouse gas emissions, thus focusing on mitigation rather than pre-emptive migration and relocation as a policy solution. In UNFCCC processes, averting, minimising, and addressing displacement remains the priority, as demonstrated by the establishment of the Task Force on Displacement under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Executive Committee.[39] However, migration as adaptation was recognised in the 2010 Cancun Framework and, as of 2021, technical guides are being developed that help parties address a range of human mobility outcomes.[40] These are promising developments that shift away from (exclusively) "doom and gloom" migration discourses and towards more nuanced policy approaches on mixed migration.

States and stakeholders have afforded relatively less attention to issues of climate change and environmental degradation in international migration governance, perhaps in part because of the thorny legal issues they raise. Successive drafts of the Global Compact on Refugees watered down wording on disasters after concern from states about broadening the scope of refugee status.[41] Eventually, they merely recognised that "climate, environmental degradation and natural disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee movement."[42] The GCM engaged more strongly with environmental issues, acknowledging the role of environmental degradation, disasters, and climate impacts as "root causes" of migration that should be addressed by governments. The GCM recognises that its success rests on a number of global instruments beyond migration governance: the UNFCCC and the Paris Climate Agreement, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.[43] This opens up opportunities for future policy coherence across migration, climate change, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction. However, with environmental concerns only now emerging within migration governance, implementation will rely on political will, adequate funding, and the establishment of coalitions interested in transformative governance.

Scaremongers

Without improved coordination and communication across silos and between international, national, and local

scales, actors in one policy domain have at times acted against the interests of another. The issue of climate and migration gathers a set of governmental and civil society actors that do not always agree on policy objectives and the strategies to achieve them. Environmental activists often play into fears of mass migration from the Global South to the Global North to inspire climate action in the form of mitigation—the cutting of greenhouse gas emissions to address the "climate emergency."[44] These discourses posit migration as both a humanitarian and security threat and hinge on aquatic language—such as "tide", "waves", "floods" and "surges", etc.—implying that migration linked to climate change is a negative outcome for migrants and destinations alike.[45] This leaves little room for migration to be considered as a policy solution rather than a policy problem. In 2007, one leading international aid agency warned that without urgent action, an "emerging migration crisis will spiral out of control."[46] It predicted some one billion people would be forced to flee by 2050.

Since early interest in climate migration, in fact, narratives on future displacement have claimed millions or even billions of climate refugees will be on the move by 2050. Although quantitative methodologies have advanced, we still see such numbers being put forth without scientific rigour. In 2020, one think tank claimed that some 1.2 billion people would migrate because of climate change, a large portion of which would go to Europe, bringing with them political instability.[47] This claim was then picked up by the international press and widely circulated despite being severely criticised by experts for the author's reliance on fear rather than facts.[48] The danger here is that in the quest to achieve one kind of climate action (mitigation) migration is weaponised. This can have impacts on migration policies that reduce international protections and restrict legal migration channels.[49]

A better way forward

One possible pathway towards transformative approaches to climate and migration, in science and governance, that is inclusive of mixed migration and facilitative of cross-sectoral coherence is the co-production of a shared set of tools based on evidence. The development of a common set of migration scenarios with qualitative and quantitative components, rather than a single (numeric) vision of the future, may help to prepare for several possible worlds in a way that considers the multi-faceted causality of migration, the full

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39 UNFCCC (n.d.) Task Force on Displacement.
40 Led by the Expert Group on Non-Economic Losses in coordination with the Task Force on Displacement.
41 Claire, A. & Élie, J. (2019) The difficult legal consideration of climate migrants. Humanitarian Alternatives.
42 UNGA (2018) Global compact on refugees.
43 Ionesco, D. & Traore Chazalnoel, M. 10 Key Takeaways from the GCM on Environmental Migration. IOM.
44 See for example this 2020 tweet from Greta Thunberg.
45 Frouws, B. (2021) Op-Ed: Negative narratives, mistaken metaphors. The need for careful language on migration. Mixed Migration Centre.
46 Baird, R. et al. (2007) Human Tide: The real migration crisis. Christian Aid.
47 IEP (2020) The Ecological Threat Register.
48 Nash, S. & Zickgraf, C. (2020) Stop Peddling Fear of Climate Migrants. Open Democracy.
49 Gemenne, F. & Zickgraf, C. (2019) Op-Ed: Refugees shouldn't be used as props to alert to the dangers of climate change. European Council on Refugees and Exile.

spectrum of mobility and immobility, the diverse patterns that occur, and the positive and negative outcomes that result. Such an approach would also facilitate science-policy collaboration. Research helps inform evidence-based policy responses, but scientists underline that policy is also part of a feedback loop: an important factor influencing how climate change affects diverse patterns and outcomes of migration. Therefore, instead of "giving" scenarios to inform policy, this approach co-produces them with the range of interested and influential policymakers and other stakeholders, integrating multiple policy perspectives for more cohesive and collaborative decision-making.

Conclusion

The impact of climate change is unfolding against a backdrop of globalisation and urbanisation, in which mobility is already a significant feature of many societies. Climate change alters the existing mobility landscape. It is just one of many elements shaping human settlements. Thus, envisioning climate mobility in a warmer world requires thinking about the future of all mixed migration.

Boxing "climate migrants" or "climate refugees" hinders cohesive policy strategies and alliances across a number of relevant domains: climate change, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian response, sustainable development, and migration governance. The silo approach, which has thus far dominated policy responses at all governance scales, has proven ineffective and even counterproductive to addressing mixed migration in a warming world. The dysfunctionality of treating migration and climate change as separate policy-making silos or as a future hypothetical will become increasingly obvious as the impacts of climate change intensify and become more important drivers of human mobility.

A common, co-produced set of scenarios of future habitability may not banish silos, but it may help create shared understandings and tools for cross-sectoral decision-making. The development of such scenarios will also benefit from the inclusion of local populations. In general, voices of affected populations, whether they are immobile or mobile, are rarely elevated in public discourses or international policy discussions on climate change such as the UNFCCC's annual Conference of the Parties (COP). This presents an obstacle for policy strategies tailored to the needs and desires of those directly and indirectly affected by climate change, including migrants and displaced persons but also those who are immobile. Bringing together the diverse perspectives of these stakeholders can build more accurate pictures of what mobility may look like in a climate changed world, inclusive of a spectrum of migration rather than distinguishing forced from voluntary migration, or internal from international migration.

Interview

The 'external irritant'

The UN's refugee agency is far from irreproachable, as former staffer **Jeff Crisp** frequently reminds his Twitter followers and reiterates in this interview, especially in relation to the Rohingya crisis and on the migrant vs refugee question. But with the help of outsider critics such as himself, Crisp believes UNHCR can be coaxed to better navigate the tension between its obligations towards states and its responsibility to protect people on the move in a world marked by growing unilateralism and disdain for human rights.

Dr Jeff Crisp is a research associate at the University of Oxford's Refugee Studies Centre and an associate fellow at Chatham House. He has previously held senior positions at UNHCR and the Global Commission on International Migration.

In your 2020 Global Governance article, you wrote: "The international environment has become increasingly hostile to the work of UNHCR and the task of refugee protection…"[1] Why do you think this is happening?

You have to look at the geopolitics of the global situation, particularly the rise of a number of very nationalistic, unilateralistic states that are not committed to international cooperation and responsibility. I'm thinking here of Russia, China, India, Turkey, the US under Trump, of course, all of which, despite their differing ideologies and approaches, nevertheless have what I describe as this disdain for international cooperation and responsibility, international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

The combination of those states plus, more specifically,

the dysfunctionality of the Security Council in recent years… In a number of new emergencies and ongoing emergencies, it's been difficult for the Security Council to come to any clear statements, only statements, let alone action. Even agreeing on statements has proved very difficult. And it's for that reason that Mr. Guterres, the UN secretary-general, has talked so often about the failures of global governance. And when he talks about failures of global governance, he points particularly to the dysfunctionality of the Security Council.

If I could point to one particular situation, we have a Security Council with five permanent members, the primary function of which under the UN Charter is to maintain international peace and security. But if you look at the Syrian conflict, for example, four of the five permanent members of the Security Council have been militarily involved in that conflict. So rather than maintaining international peace and security, one

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1   Crisp, J. (2020) UNHCR at 70 – An Uncertain Future for the International Refugee Regime. Brill Nijhoff.

could quite easily argue that the permanent members of the Security Council are actually undermining and challenging international peace and security.

> ❝ **It's absolutely certain that the climate change-mobility nexus is going to be one of the big issues of the years to come.** ❞

This retreat from solidarity for refugees and the UNHCR comes as we may be about to face the largest forced displacement movement ever, as the impact of climate change starts to bite. How do you see the nexus between climate and mobility?

It's absolutely certain that this nexus is going to be one of the big issues of the years to come. The precise way in which that nexus works is still subject to some discussion and differences of opinion. There is absolutely no consensus on the actual number of people who may be displaced as a result of climate change and natural disasters. It's become increasingly clear, to the extent that climate change and disaster-related movement takes place, that initially at least, it's going to be within countries rather than across international borders. You could guarantee that if there was any indication that large numbers of people were moving to the Global North as a result of climate change and natural disasters or those factors mixed in with armed conflict and human rights violations, then the countries of the Global North would do whatever they can to block that movement into the Global North. So, there may well be large-scale movements of people, but mitigating action can be taken in the interim. But also we have to take on board the fact that the world's most prosperous states would almost certainly try to obstruct and deter people from heading in their direction.

If climate-induced displacement is a distinct phenomenon, should those affected be called refugees or have a distinct category?

My personal position is that we should see climate change and natural disasters as a kind of reinforcing factor, reinforcing other drivers, or all of them interacting with each other, rather than as a standalone driver. I would take the UNHCR position saying let's retain what we have with the existing refugee definition as found in the Refugee Convention and subsequent instruments of international refugee law, and then find other protective mechanisms for people who appear to be moving largely as a result of climate change and natural disasters. Given the fragility of the international refugee regime at the moment, I would probably go along with UNHCR in saying that it's probably quite a dangerous

idea to start trying to revise or expand the definition, and that if one did try to do that, then one would probably find you would end up with a more restrictive definition introduced by states.

Is there an inherent contradiction in UNHCR's mandate, i.e., on one hand they're mandated, governed, and fully funded by states, but on the other they strive to safeguard people from the human rights violation perpetrated by states?

There's always been a tension between the fact that UNHCR is there to protect the victims of state action in most cases, and at the same time is funded, governed, and indeed was originally established by states. Given the developments of recent years, the deep growing disdain for human rights and humanitarian law, the growing unilateralism of some of the world's most powerful states, these tensions have come into the open much more dramatically than they did in the past. I don't think UNHCR's helped itself by not really coming clean on this issue. It projects itself as an all-powerful defender of refugee rights, indomitable protector of human rights, the voice of the voiceless, as it's sometimes described itself. We have to take account of the fact the UNHCR is not just a giant NGO. It's an intergovernmental, interstate, very state-oriented organisation.

> ❝ **UNHCR has for many years lacked credibility with the Rohingya population of Myanmar.** ❞

In Bangladesh with the Rohingya crisis, UNHCR lost some credibility in 2019, suggesting it was safe for Rohingya to go back to Myanmar, when it clearly was not. And more recently, they don't seem to oppose relocation of refugees to Bhasan Char Island.[2] What kind of pressure is UNHCR under in situations like this?

Let me start by saying that UNHCR has for many years lacked credibility with the Rohingya population of Myanmar. UNHCR was involved in two major repatriation operations of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh, one in the late 1970s, and another one in the early 1990s. On both occasions, Bangladesh put a great deal of pressure on UNHCR to become involved in a repatriation operation back to Myanmar, even though most of the refugees at the time did not feel it was safe for them to do so, and were not prepared to go back really until their citizenship of Myanmar had been respected and their rights had been granted to them. But on both occasions UNHCR went ahead with

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2   For details of this relocation, see, for example, Subramanian, N. (2020) This is where Rohingya are being sent: a newly surfaced island in Bay of Bengal. The Indian Express and Ganguly, M. (2021) Bangladesh's Unplanned Relocation of Rohingya Refugees to Bhasan Char Island is Risky. Human Rights Watch.

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an active involvement in repatriation to Myanmar. And so the organisation has always had a reputation to live down amongst the Rohingya population. More recently, following the coup in Myanmar, we have to recognise that the generals who have taken over the country were the people responsible for expelling them on numerous occasions. And it would seem that for the military of Myanmar, they've finally got their way and got rid of the Rohingya, and it's difficult to see them willingly admitting them back, and even more difficult to see them admitting them back with citizenship and with rights.

I think UNHCR is really worried that Bangladesh will begin to put more and more pressure on the Rohingya to return, as it did in 1978 and 1992 and '93. And so UNHCR has been desperate to keep Bangladesh on side. And of course, part of that is what I would consider to be quite a compromised position on this relocation to Bhasan Char, which is a remote cyclone-prone island, quite a few miles off the coast of Bangladesh, where Bangladesh has supposedly introduced a voluntary relocation programme, I think about 18,000 Rohingya have taken advantage of that opportunity.

It's claimed that they went voluntarily, but there were another group of Rohingya who were essentially intercepted at sea and then taken to Bhasan Char. Just in the last two or three days,[3] a number have tried to escape and have been arrested, and at the same time, yesterday, for reasons I've not quite understood, a very high-level delegation from UNHCR went and visited Bhasan Char to look at the situation there with very strong hints that UNHCR would finally become operationally involved in the operation on Bhasan Char, which it's held off on so far. As soon as the two senior UNHCR staff members arrived on the island, there was a big demonstration of Rohingya refugees, saying that they were not satisfied with conditions on the island. And that was quite predictably met with a show of force from the Bangladeshi security services. So the big question now is what is the future for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh? We know the situation in Myanmar is getting much worse and not any better.

Is there merit in saying the UNHCR is essentially a flawed model, but the best we could hope for in a complex world? Or is the problem the Refugee Convention?

The UNHCR is probably the best one can do within the confines of the UN system. And although there are some internal constraints on what it says and what it does and the way it positions itself, that's also conditioned by its membership of the UN system as a whole, and it's for that reason I think it's very much an obligation on those of us who have got some understanding

of the organisation to act as external irritants and to encourage it to go a little bit further than it would normally go. UNHCR is susceptible to pressure. Of course it relates in the first instance to states because that's the nature of the beast, but it also has to maintain relationships with a wide variety of other stakeholders, including civil society, NGOs, refugee-led organisations, academia and think tanks, and I think there is scope for those of us outside of UNHCR to push and promote change within the organisation.

> **" It's very much an obligation on those of us who have got some understanding of UNHCR to act as external irritants and to encourage it to go a little bit further than it would normally go. "**

Do you see yourself as an external irritant?

Exactly that, yes.

You are very active on Twitter as a commentator and critic of the aid scene in general and especially issues to do with refugees and migrants. How important is social media in influencing policy these days?

It's a really great question, and I think those of us who spend time on Twitter and other social media, we probably should be asking ourselves more strongly than we do, "So what?" Does it have an impact? As usual, in terms of our advocacy and action, you can demonstrate a correlation, but it's much more difficult to demonstrate direct causation.

UNHCR coined the term "mixed migration" around 20 years ago, and used it extensively, then stopped using it, and now it seems to distance itself from the term quite entirely. What does this reflect?

The question of how that concept arose is a very interesting one. If you go back to 1992, there was a joint publication put out by UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, and the International Labour Organization, which talked about "composite flows". At some point after that, composite flows became mixed migratory movement. What is very true to say is that UNHCR has flip-flopped quite a lot on the whole refugee/migrant relationship and distinction. And for many years it held a very conservative position that refugees were refugees, migrants are migrants, and never the twain shall meet. Even the notion of mixed migratory movements actually serves that purpose because you could say that within that a broader flow, you have groups, some people who are refugees and

3   This interview was conducted on June 1, 2021.

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some who are not refugees, but the mixed migratory flow concept didn't actually challenge the notion of a very specific group of refugees, recognised under the Refugee Convention.

I worked very closely with Guterres during his times on the commission to challenge the traditional UNHCR notion of refugees on the one hand, and economic migrants or migrants on the other. I've tried to show that there were many connections between the two different types of movement and that you couldn't make the very simplistic distinction that UNHCR had been making at that time. And then Guterres also published an article in The Guardian, which was called "People on the Move".[4] We chose the notion of people on the move, specifically to get around the notion of refugees on the one hand, and migrants on the other. The assumption was, let's talk about people on the move as people who are often in need of protection, whether they're refugees or not refugees is perhaps a secondary consideration. The primary consideration should be to ensure that protection solutions are available for all people who are on the move, irrespective of their legal status. And I think we were quite successful in breaking down that traditional distinction. What has happened in recent years is that I left, he left, and then you had the Syrian refugee emergency and then the big influx into Europe. I see UNHCR has reverted to a much more traditionalist and binary categorisation, emphatically stating that a refugee is not a migrant.

Kenya is threatening to close their refugee camps again this year. What do you think is their objective here?

It's a combination of political posturing to a home audience, security scapegoating in light of past insurgency attacks in Kenya, and some refugee diplomacy, where Kenya is hoping to just get an advantageous deal in relation to the Global North. Kenya has periodically talked about closing its two camps in Dadaab and Kakuma. In the latest round of events, in early 2021, Kenya announced that the camps will be closed and the majority of refugees would be expected to return—we are talking about up to half a million people. But the idea that so many people will go back to countries which are very fragile, such as Somalia, such as Ethiopia, such as South Sudan, the whole idea that so many refugees will be able to go back there in such a short period of time was never really a starter. I think the announcement was partly to do with domestic electoral considerations, but also Kenya has become very adept at squeezing money out of the international community, and it's found that it's quite a successful tactic to periodically threaten to close the refugee camps and to expel the refugees back to their countries of origin.

The irony is that the people who want to be most inclusive and have the most open borders and offer the most protection may actually do the biggest disservice to the whole asylum protection regime, because as a reaction states may implement stricter borders and asylum systems. Do you agree?

Yes, I've always been very wary of moving into open borders direction because I don't think it gives you credibility in discussion with states. If you're a completely independent academic writing for an academic intellectual audience, then I think it's fine to talk about open borders, and I think there's an interesting discussion to be had there. In terms of practical, on-the-ground advocacy, it's not a concept that I would ever use, particularly in relation to states or indeed to UNHCR, because UNHCR would also not find it a credible position to take.

> **The primary consideration should be to ensure that protection solutions are available for all people who are on the move, irrespective of their legal status. But UNHCR has reverted to a much more traditionalist and binary categorisation, emphatically stating that a refugee is not a migrant.**

Do you think the notion of refugee resettlement being seen as a permanent condition rather than a temporary one has damaged the refugee cause? Temporary refuge is perhaps no longer believed or trusted. At what point did it stop becoming temporary?

What is for sure is that for many years, it was generally accepted that if an asylum seeker came to a prosperous country like Denmark, or indeed the UK, and gained refugee status, basically they would have permanent residence rights with the opportunity to naturalise and eventually become citizens of those states. There does seem to have been a reaction against that traditional position in recent years, with Denmark right now playing an important role in challenging that principle, but also the UK. And my sense is that the UNHCR has actually taken the UK position on this maybe even more seriously than the Danish, because I think the UK has seemed to be something of an opinion leader within the international refugee regime, more so than perhaps Denmark is.

Now, in the UK context, it's not an entirely new proposal. There was a proposal, perhaps under the [Conservative David] Cameron government, that all refugees should

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4   Guterres, A. (2007) People on the move. The Guardian.

have their cases looked at every five years, to see whether they still needed a refugee status in the UK. And so that was kind of the beginning of the trend, which seems to be gaining momentum. And my take on this is that UNHCR has really realised that if this goes ahead and the UK and Denmark start to implement this kind of approach, this really could be a major challenge to the international refugee regime as a whole. If refugees are living in a country like the UK or Denmark, with the constant threat of deportation over their head, not knowing whether they'll be allowed to stay there or not, why should they make an effort to join a labour market, to become integrated culturally there to avoid radicalisation. It's a recipe for marginalisation.

Do policies that are initiated and pursued in the Global North eventually trickle down to the Global South?

For sure. If Bangladesh is criticised for relocating people to Bhasan Char, it will say, "Well, Australia has been relocating people to Nauru and Manus Island for years and you didn't make much of a fuss about that, so why shouldn't we do it?" I think you're going to find a situation where a country like Tanzania, which has just recently closed its borders to people from Mozambique, can say, "Well, the European countries are putting out up barriers, new frontiers, doing everything they can, using sophisticated technology to exclude asylum seekers. Why shouldn't we, in the Global South, do the same, particularly as we have so fewer resources than those countries?"

So I think there will be a ripple effect, whereby policies pursued by countries in the Global North are used to justify and legitimise policies in the Global South. And that one about how long do people remain refugees could be another example of that trend, whereby countries in the Global South, getting fed up with refugee situation lasting for many years or even decades, would eventually say, "Well, European countries are saying that you're not a refugee forever, so why shouldn't we go down the same route?"

But at the same time, the Refugee Convention was not designed with permanent settlement as the preferred mode, or was it?

That's a very interesting point. If you actually read the Refugee Convention, then you can't deny that the idea that people may at one point in time cease to be refugees is definitely in the convention.[5] At the same time, the convention talked about assimilation—it's not a word very fashionable to use these days—it talks about the assimilation of refugees into their new societies, which to me, means this also held out the

prospect for naturalisation and citizenship. So that a refugee may come into a country, stay there for some time, but then become a citizen and then become... [assimilated] not only socially and economically, but also legally by means of citizenship. So I don't think that the Refugee Convention gave *carte blanche* to governments to simply say, "Well, we've had these refugees for five years, now it's time for them to go back home." Even, if conditions have improved in the country of origin.

> **Some of the people who say that they're talking about safe and legal routes are actually talking about open borders, and I find a certain element of dishonesty in that approach.**

Are we becoming inured to the "normalisation of the extreme" in terms of harsher treatment of refugees and migrants?

In any sphere of life, things that appear shocking when they first appear on the scene, as they're pursued over a period of years with greater vigour and with force, then some degree of normalisation, I think, is almost inevitable, yes.

There was maybe a naive assumption that if you started doing really bad things to refugees, eventually public opinion would turn, and there would be a backlash. If you look at Australia, for example, and the progressively draconian measures that were brought in against refugees, a lot of us naively thought that eventually the Australian public simply won't tolerate this, it's a relatively liberal democratic country, and increasingly, such acts will be seen as illegitimate and unacceptable. But it didn't happen. And it's not happened whatsoever in the European and Mediterranean context with what's happening to refugees who are trying to leave Libya by boat, and who are either drowning at sea or being intercepted by the Libyan coast guard, and then returned to very abusive detention centres in Libya—a process which is fully supported by the EU, and I just saw yesterday, the European Commission came out with a statement saying it takes no responsibility whatsoever for the death of people leaving Libya.[6] There's clearly not going to be any major public backlash against that kind of statement. The question in my mind, I guess, is to what extent this is the states pursuing such courses of action deliberately, knowing that if they pursue such actions, consistently and persistently over a period of years, there may be protests against them in the initial phases, but eventually they will become normalised and accepted.

5   For a recent detailed analysis of this subject, see O'Sullivan, M. (2021) Legal Note on the Cessation of International Protection and Review of Protection Statuses in Europe. European Council on Refugees and Exiles.
6   See, for example: Nielsen, N. (2021) EU rejects UN blame for migrant sea deaths. EU Observer.

Many in our sector argue that safe and legal migration channels are a solution to the challenges of irregular migration. You have been critical of this position, can you elaborate?

To my mind, and I've said this a little bit on social media, safe and legal routes, or "complementary pathways", as UNHCR prefers to call them, it's become a little bit of a slogan. But some hard work needs to be done to show exactly what these routes are, how they are going to work, and whether they're going to solve the problem in its entirety.

A few years ago, UNHCR and OECD put out a report on so-called complementary pathways that shows that the number is going up.[7] My basic problem has been that whatever safe and legal routes you can establish, the number of slots available are never going to be commensurate with the demand for migration opportunities. So you're going to have to put in some kind of a selection process to determine who actually has access to these safe and legal routes, and who doesn't. Those who don't get access, those who are not selected are probably just going to continue to use the unsafe and irregular routes. Who should run the selection process? What should the criteria be? Who should get precedence? And who should be left behind? So I think it's a completely admirable goal to try and establish safe and legal routes but at the same time, we need to do much more detailed work about how they make headway in practice. If you look at the argument advanced by some of the people who say that they're talking about safe and legal routes, they are actually talking about open borders. Some of the open borders people are using the safe and legal routes argument as a little bit of a proxy, and I find a certain element of dishonesty in that approach.

7   OECD & UNHCR (2018) Safe pathways for refugees.

Staying put: Why it's time to pay more attention to mixed immobility

Hundreds of millions of people across the world choose not or are unable to migrate despite facing migration drivers such as socioeconomic insecurity, dire geoclimatic conditions, conflict, and failed governance structures. This "mixed immobility" has major implications for humanitarian action and policymaking.

By Kerilyn Schewel[1]

Introduction

There are 7.8 billion people on our planet, and of these, only 272 million, or 3.5 percent, are international migrants. In almost every country—rich or poor, peaceful or insecure—most people do not migrate across national borders.[2] Moreover, according to Gallup World Polls, 85 percent of the world's population would not migrate even if given the resources and opportunity to do so.[3]

Given wide disparities in wages, work, and wellbeing between countries around the world, the general propensity for people to stay put is perplexing. Conventional wisdom and prevailing theories assume people will migrate—or should at least aspire to migrate—to places that offer higher incomes, employment, and other opportunities.[4] Yet, the reality is that migration flows are far more modest than this basic assumption would predict.[5] Why, then, are more people not migrating?

Long neglected by migration researchers, immobility is the subject of a mushrooming body of literature that sheds new light onto this fundamental question. Using a selection of research from around the world, this essay highlights new theoretical and empirical perspectives emerging from this research agenda in order to widen understanding of different ways of not migrating for individuals and communities across the globe. It will show that some of the most vulnerable populations lack the resources to migrate, even as their livelihoods are threatened by climate change, economic insecurity, or political conflict. It will also question why, even in resource-poor or insecure places, many people prefer to stay where they are. It argues that those working with mixed migration need to take two elements more seriously: 1) the significant financial, legal, or even physical barriers many aspiring migrants face in realising a migration project; and 2) the social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of human motivation and behaviour that can motivate a preference to stay put. The essay concludes by considering the implications of immobility for humanitarian and other actors working with mixed migration, and introduces the "capability to stay" as a one important area for further research.

Theoretical perspectives

Understanding immobility has an important contribution to make to our understanding of migration. Although it is reasonable that migration scholars focus primarily on the causes and consequences of migration, too often this focus treats immobility "as a static, natural or residual category."[6] This mobility bias leads to lopsided migration theories that overemphasise the drivers of migration and neglect the countervailing forces that resist or restrict these drivers, leading researchers to frequently overestimate actual migration flows.[7] To counteract this mobility bias, a growing number of scholars are beginning to study immobility as a process with its own determinants.[8] Mirroring definitions of migration, immobility may be defined as spatial continuity in a person's place of

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1   Kerilyn Schewel is a visiting research scholar at the Duke Sanford Center for International Development and a senior researcher at the International Migration Institute.
2   Exceptions where emigrant stocks are greater than 50 percent of the population include small nations: St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten (Dutch part), Antigua and Barbuda, West Bank and Gaza, Tonga, Samoa, Monaco, Guyana, Grenada, Curaçao, and Dominica. See: KNOMAD (n.d.) Migration.
3   Gallup (2018) More Than 750 Million Worldwide Would Migrate If They Could.
4   De Haas, H. Miller, S. & Castles, M. (2019) The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world. Guildford Press
5   Hammar, T. & Tamas, K. (1997) Why do people go or stay, in Hammar, T. et al (eds) (1997) International Migration, Immobility, and Development: Multidisciplinary Perspectives. Routledge.
6   Gaibazzi. P. (2015) Bush Bound: young men and rural permanence in migrant West Africa. Berghahn Books.
7   Schewel, K. (2020) Understanding immobility: Moving beyond the mobility bias in migration studies. International Migration Review.
8   In addition to the examples reviewed in this article, see Hjälm, A. (2014) The 'Stayers': Dynamics of Lifelong Sedentary Behaviour in an Urban Context. Population, Space and Place and Stockdale; and Haartsen, T. (2018) Editorial introduction: Putting rural stayers in the spotlight. Population, Space and Place.

residence over a designated period of time. Immobility is always relative to local, regional, or national borders. For example, if we are concerned with understanding who does not migrate internationally, we may examine immobility relative to national borders—i.e., who stays in their home country—recognising many will still be internally mobile. Alternatively, we could also look at who stays put in a particular village or city for their entire lives, or periods of immobility across the life-course.

As greater attention is given to immobility, it would be unproductive to treat it as a fundamentally separate or distinct phenomenon to mobility or migration. Rather, we need conceptual approaches that jointly examine migration and staying as potential outcomes to the same forces of individual, social, and environmental change. This requires rebalancing our understanding of the drivers of migration and displacement with a sophisticated understanding of migration constraints and motivations to stay. This promises to reveal the more multidimensional reality of immobility, and will help us to develop more realistic assumptions, models, and predictions about migration.

Building on the aspiration/ability model and the aspiration-capability framework—two similar yet distinct approaches for analysing micro-level migration processes—one fruitful conceptual step is to separate the aspiration to migrate (or to stay) from the ability to do so. [9] This distinction allows us to see that both are prerequisites for migration and that the lack of either one leads to different forms of immobility.[10] As Figure 1 below illustrates, this distinction reveals three types of immobility: involuntary, voluntary, and acquiescent. Involuntary immobility refers to those who aspire to migrate but are unable to do so. Voluntary immobility refers to those who have the capability to migrate, but who aspire to stay where they are. The term acquiescent immobility describes those who do not wish to migrate and are unable to migrate.
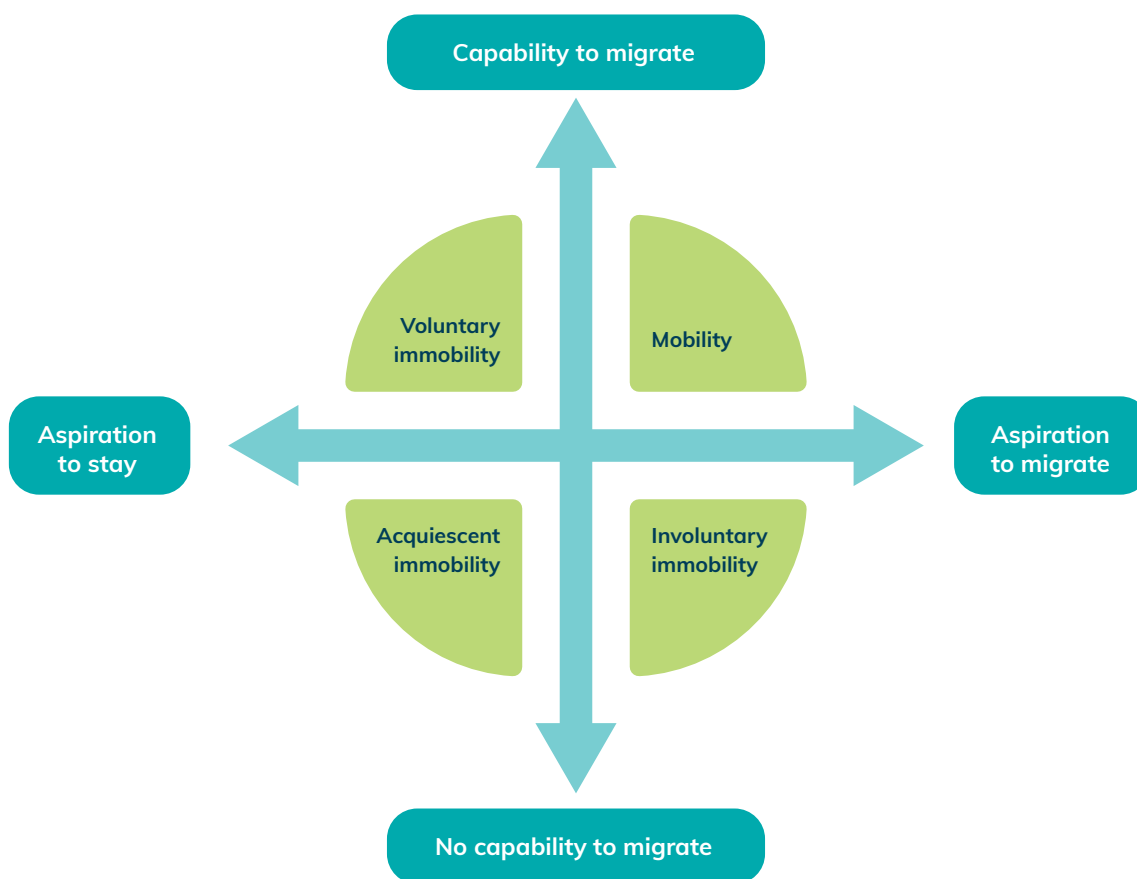
Source (adapted) and credit: Schewel 2020, 335

9 See Carling, J. & Schewel, K. (2018) Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies; and de Haas, H. (2021) A theory of migration: The aspirations-capabilities framework. Comparative Migration Studies.

10 Carling, J. (2002) Migration in the age of involuntary immobility: Theoretical reflections and Cape Verdean experiences. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.

The (im)mobility types suggested by this model should be treated as ideal types rather than rigidly distinct empirical categories. They can help researchers see often-overlooked experiences and heterogeneity in immobility. In applying this framework, the tension between these neat categories and our messy reality is also a fruitful friction that can reveal new dimensions to migration and staying processes.[11] In that light, ongoing efforts to apply this framework are generating many important questions. For example, how do aspirations and capability interact over time? Are there important differences in the intrinsic or instrumental nature of migration aspirations? To what degree do aspirations predict future behaviour? How well do these categories hold up in contexts of "forced migration"? Much work remains to flesh out the implications of this conceptual approach for our study of mixed migration and mixed immobility, both in the theoretical and empirical domains.

Nevertheless, this simple framework already reveals much more about different ways of being immobile than indicated by the previous binary division between migration and non-migration. It shows that immobility can result from motivations to stay in place, from constraints on mobility, and/or from the interaction of the two over time. The following section of this essay uses the immobility categories suggested above as an orienting frame to review a wide range of research investigating causes and consequences of immobility in order to shed light on the nature, causes, and consequences of "mixed immobility" around the world.

Examples of mixed immobility

Involuntary immobility

Jorgen Carling first introduced the concept of "involuntary immobility" in a 2002 article that provocatively claimed our times are most likely characterised as much by involuntary immobility as they are by large migration flows.[12] Drawing on rich interview and survey data from Cape Verde, Carling explored the culture of migration that encourages young Cape Verdeans to aspire for a future abroad, and the increasingly restrictive "immigration interface" that deprives many of the ability to leave. His study shed light on the darker side of globalisation, which often facilitates the movement of the privileged at the same time as it introduces new barriers to the mobility of the "unskilled". He shows how involuntary immobility leads to widespread frustration and unfulfilled dreams. In a new project, Carling and his colleagues are

investigating further the consequences of unrealised migration aspirations for individuals, communities, and societies, this time in mainland West Africa, where some of the world's highest rates of migration aspiration exist.[13]

Stephen Lubkemann applied the term involuntary immobility in a very different context: to describe those who did not move during a fifteen-year civil war in Mozambique (1977-1992).[14] Using ethnographic methods, Lubkemann highlighted the important role labour migration played in the social and economic life of many drought-prone communities before the conflict began. When the civil war erupted, many of these mobility systems were disrupted, and the most disadvantaged were those who were trapped by surrounding conflict, unable to flee their villages. The new constraints on mobility-based livelihood strategies had devastating effects, deepening poverty and insecurity. Lubkemann encourages readers to question whether the disruption and disempowerment we associate with wartime movement are in fact greater for those who are immobilised in conflict settings. He argues that these populations—the "displaced in place"—are theoretically invisible in migration and refugee studies because of the implicit conflation of displacement with spatial movement.

Involuntary immobility in settings of conflict or disasters remains a pressing humanitarian concern. Consider, for example, the Tigrayans who have been immobilised by Ethiopia's civil war and currently face an impending famine. As Richard Black and Michael Collyer argue, those who have "lost control of the decision to move away from potential danger" present some of the greatest theoretical and practical challenges to research and humanitarian action in crisis settings.[15]

In addition to affecting those who cannot leave their homelands, periods of involuntary immobility can occur during a migration process. Joris Schapendonk interviewed irregular migrants from sub-Saharan Africa heading to Europe and showed how many get stuck in Morocco.[16] Many migrants ran out of money needed to continue their journey, and increasingly restrictive border controls make onward travel into Europe ever costlier and more dangerous. As a result, these migrants became immobilised "in transit". Similarly, refugees who have fled their home countries may become tied to camps for decades or even generations, unable to return yet never resettled elsewhere. Indonesia, for example, has

11 Remarks presented by Jørgen Carling during an online workshop on "Changing Aspirations in Contexts of Forced Migration" held at the18th annual IMISCOE conference in July 2021.
12 Carling, J. (2002) Migration in the age of involuntary immobility: Theoretical reflections and Cape Verdean experiences, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.
13 For more details about this project, see PRIO (n.d.) Future Migration as Present Fact (FUMI).
14 Lubkemann, S. (2008) Involuntary immobility: On a theoretical invisibility in forced migration studies. Journal of Refugee Studies.
15 Black, R. & Collyer, M. (2014) Populations 'trapped' at times of crisis. Forced Migration Review.
16 Schapendonk, J. (2008) Stuck between the desert and the sea: The immobility of sub-Saharan African 'transit migrants' in Morocco in Ritters-berger-Tiliç, H., Erdemir, A. & Ergun, A. (eds) (2008) Rethinking Global Migration: Practices, Policies and Discourses in the European Neighbour-hood. KORA, METU & Zeplin Iletisim Hizm.

long served as a transit country for asylum seekers and refugees en route to Australia. But after 2013, when Australian policies to curb irregular migration increased and opportunities for resettlement virtually disappeared, refugees and asylum seekers increasingly find themselves in a situation of "indefinite transit" in Indonesia.[17] As Jennifer Hyndman and Wenona Giles argue, protracted refugee situations are becoming the new normal; "waiting among refugees has become the rule, not the exception".[18] They argue that refugees who break out of this enforced limbo, daring to seek a life elsewhere, are often vilified as security threats, while the "good refugee" waits in place.

Voluntary immobility

Voluntary immobility refers to those who may have the resources and opportunity to migrate but prefer to stay where they are. When voluntary immobility exists in situations where there are compelling reasons to leave, it often reveals complex "non-economic" priorities that shape how people make decisions to go or to stay. These non-economic concerns are often missed in explanations for migration. Although it is well established that motivations for migration are complex—economic incentives are often interwoven with other social and cultural concerns—many scholars will bracket and set aside the more elusive social and cultural factors and focus primarily on income-maximisation and other material costs and benefits, which are easier to measure. Yet, when the economically rational decision would be to migrate (or at least aspire to migrate), and someone still expresses a preference to stay, researchers are forced to take seriously the social, cultural, and even spiritual values that shape migration decision-making.

Two case studies are worth highlighting in this respect. In the Pacific Islands, Carol Farbotko and Cecilia McMichael show that, even facing rising sea-levels and coastal degradation, many Indigenous populations prefer to remain on their ancestral homelands for cultural and spiritual reasons, including a deep connection to land and place-based identity, knowledge, and culture.[19] They highlight that Pacific indigeneity and spirituality are "important cultural resources for those at risk, helping to navigate an often tenuous balance between hope and despair."[20] Some islanders

even express a preference to die on their traditional territories over relocating, "representing a new type of agency and resistance to dispossession."[21] Climate justice, Farbotko and McMichael argue, requires taking seriously these desires to stay in place. Rather than defaulting to planned relocation in climate-affected sites and territories, the reality of voluntary immobility should be taken seriously and all opportunities to adapt in place should be considered thoroughly and carefully. A first step is for policies to explicitly recognise voluntary immobility as a valid measure and outcome in contexts of environmental degradation.[22]

Across the globe, in a very different setting, Jenny Preece examined residential immobility in "declining" urban neighbourhoods in England.[23] In many post-industrial settings, demographers and labour economists ponder why people are not moving to areas that could offer better employment opportunities. Preece shows that, in contexts of low-paid and insecure work, "place-based mechanisms of support" become particularly important, be they the social, emotional, and financial support of family and friends, or word-of-mouth connections to informal job opportunities. In this context, staying in place was often an active choice that enabled households to "construct networks of information and support that counterbalanced an insecure employment context."[24] By investigating the motivations behind immobility at the "bottom of the labour market," Preece reveals a rationality in migration decision-making that prioritises social networks and local community in the face of economic precarity. Motivations to stay in place, then, were neither strictly economic nor social; drawing on local social networks enabled people to actively adapt to their precarious economic circumstances.

Acquiescent immobility

The concept of acquiescent immobility applies to those who have neither the aspiration nor the ability to migrate. One might question whether their immobility is "voluntary" in the same way as someone with the ability to migrate who nevertheless decides to stay. The term 'acquiescent' implies an acceptance of constraints, and the Latin origins of the word mean "to remain at rest." This category can be difficult to identify empirically, as it is challenging to say who has the ability to migrate if someone has never tried and does not want to. Yet the concept has important theoretical value, if only to highlight

17 Lau, B. (2021) A Transit Country No More: Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Indonesia. Mixed Migration Centre.
18 Hyndman, J. & Giles, W. (2011) Waiting for what? The feminization of asylum in protracted situations. Gender, Place & Culture.
19 Farbotko, C. & McMichael, C. (2019) Voluntary immobility and existential security in a changing climate in the Pacific. Asia Pacific Viewpoint.
20 Ibid
21 Ibid
22 Farbotko, C. et al. (2020) Relocation planning must address voluntary immobility. Nature Climate Change.
23 Preece, J. (2018) Immobility and insecure labour markets: An active response to precarious employment. Urban Studies.
24 Ibid

that many people in very challenging circumstances still prefer (or resign themselves) to stay where they are.[25]

One survey of migration aspirations in Senegal, for example, found that almost one-third of young respondents who said they could not meet their basic needs had no desire to migrate.[26] This is particularly striking considering the research question was framed not in terms of whether they would migrate, but rather posing an ideal scenario: "Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to go abroad to live or work during the next five years, or would you prefer to stay in Senegal?" Qualitative interviews from the same study suggest many potential explanations for acquiescent immobility. Maybe people never meaningfully consider migration; their aspirational horizons are limited to what they know. Perhaps people feel committed to their home-place, and as Albert Hirschman once put it, choose "voice" (i.e., to express discontent and hope for change) rather than "exit" (i.e., migration).[27] Maybe, as one Senegalese respondent suggested, they value living in a spiritually rich community that is materially disadvantaged more than a materially rich culture that is spiritually deprived. Perhaps they simply want to stay with their parents or children.

In an ethnographic study of desired immobility in rural Mexico, Diana Mata-Codesal suggests another reason for acquiescent immobility.[28] She uses the term "acquiescent" to highlight that some people do not have clear desires around migration one way or the other. She describes the "inertia" that can lead people to remain "lukewarm about the role of (im)mobility in their range of available projects for life-making"[29]—regardless of their ability to migrate. One implication is that we should not assume everyone goes through an active process of "migration decision-making," the outcome of which is reflected in their mobility or immobility. Perhaps a more interesting question is when and why some individuals consciously engage in migration decision-making, while others never really consider it.

Mixing it up: transitions between categories

Lest the immobility categories reviewed above appear static, it is important to emphasise that aspirations and capabilities shift over time and thus individuals can move between migration and immobility categories. Research exploring these transitions are adding new dynamism to the aspiration/ability model and aspiration-capability approaches. One such study by Yasmin Ortiga and Romeo Luis Macabasag examines the experience of involuntary immobility for Filipino nurses who are unable to move internationally and, in response, become internally mobile.[30] They find that after graduating, many nurses move frequently within the Philippines to secure clinical work experience in order to remain employable to foreign hospitals. Yet, with time, the costs and burdens of constant internal movement compel many nurses to "either develop adaptive preferences that subdued their original aspirations or acquiesce to their inability to leave the country."[31] This study highlights that involuntary immobility is a difficult state to live in; difficult too are the demands of making life choices always in light of the desire to leave. Adjusting aspirations—and thereby moving into acquiescent immobility—is an important coping mechanism in the face of significant obstacles to migration.

Migration-immobility interactions

It is common to speak about "contexts of forced migration" or areas characterised by a "culture of migration." The implication of the words "context' and "culture" is that everyone leaves, or at least aspires to leave. But even in these settings, where the forces driving migration are strongest, many can remain involuntarily or voluntarily immobile. In this light, another study by Diana Mata-Codesal examines "different ways of staying put" in a village in the Andean Ecuador.[32] This village is shaped by a culture of migration; irregular migration to the United States is considered a rite of passage for young men. Those who were thwarted from realising this dream became involuntarily—and socially—immobile in the village. However, Mata-Codesal also describes those who, in the same setting, consciously decide to

25 An implicit assumption in many migration decision-making models is that when the benefits outweigh the costs of migration (whether defined in economic or broader utility-maximising terms), people will choose to migrate. In many instances, those who do not have the resources to migrate (i.e. those with limited financial, human, or social resources) are also those who would have much to gain from moving elsewhere. From this perspective, it is easy to assume that all those who do not have the resources to migrate are in some way *involuntarily* immobile, trapped by financial constraints. In fact, many explanations for why international migration increases with economic development are framed in those terms: as incomes increase and financial constraints to migration are eased, more people leave. The implicit assumption is that people always *wanted* to migrate and what changed is their ability to do so. What this explanation misses is that processes of "development" reshape not only capabilities but also aspirations. In this light, more attention needs to be given to understanding why, as economic development eases the financial constraints to migration, the social dimensions of development expand aspirations to migrate—moving many from voluntary or acquiescent immobility into involuntary immobility or mobility.

26 Schewel, K. (2015) Understanding the aspiration to stay: A case study of young adults in Senegal. International Migration Institute Working Paper Series.

27 Hirschman, A. (1972) Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organization, and States. Havard University Press.

28 Mata-Codesal, D. (2018) Is it simpler to leave or to stay put? Desired immobility in a Mexican village. Population, Space and Place.

29 Ibid.

30 Ortiga, Y. & Macabasag, R. (2020) Understanding international immobility through internal migration: "Left behind" nurses in the Philippines. International Migration Review.

31 Ibid.

32 Mata-Codesal, D. (2015) Ways of staying put in Ecuador: Social and embodied experiences of mobility–immobility interactions. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.

stay put. One voluntarily immobile woman, for example, finished her education and secured a job and steady income locally; aware of the hardships of life in the United States as an irregular immigrant, she did not desire to live abroad. Mata-Codesal highlights that this kind of voluntary immobility is more likely to exist for those who have opportunities for upward social mobility locally. In this place, it is more possible for women who are not expected to migrate, and thus have time to complete their education, but who rely on the remittances of their migrant family members to finish their schooling.

Zooming out from the individual and assuming a household, family, or even village-based perspective reveals complex interactions between migration and immobility.[33] The migration and remittances of some family members can enable the immobility of others, while those who stay put enable migrants to go by caring for land, local investments, children, or aged parents. This symbiotic relationship between migration and immobility has economic, social, and cultural dimensions. As Paolo Gaibazzi reveals in his ethnographic study of "rural permanence" in Gambia, villagers who stay are "committed to reproducing the agrarian institutions, sociality and values that make life and outmigration meaningful and acceptable."[34] In other words, migration often assumes meaning through the "mooring" of an origin.[35]

Future directions: the capability to stay

Just as migration in the future will ideally be more voluntary than involuntary, immobility will ideally reflect an active choice to stay rather than a denial of the right or resources to migrate. To advance research towards this goal, more theoretical and empirical attention needs to be given to the capability to stay.[36] The capability to stay is inspired by the "capability approach", a development theory that places the freedom to achieve wellbeing as the goal of development and suggests evaluating development in terms of people's capabilities to do and be what they have reason to value.[37] From this perspective, exploring capability to stay entails asking whether people have realistic options to achieve their life aspirations where they are.

The aspiration-capability framework presented here remains overshadowed by a mobility bias in the sense that migration and staying aspirations tend to be examined only in relation to the capability to migrate.

Yet, it is not clear how best to incorporate the capability to stay into this model because, unlike the aspirations to stay or to migrate, the capability to stay is not simply the opposite of the capability to migrate. The capability to migrate refers to the financial, human, and social resources required to change one's residence from origin A to destination B; it is revealed or confirmed when people migrate. The capability to stay is conceptually trickier: it refers to having real opportunities and resources to realise one's life aspirations in origin A. It is not necessarily revealed through immobility; those who stay in place yet are unable to realise their aspirations locally remain deprived of the capability to stay.

Calls to enable people to stay in place are often criticised for giving implicit support to initiatives to decrease migration, to migration controls. and to immigration regimes that deprive people of the right to movement. This critique is frequently voiced against development aid targeting the imagined root causes of migration. It was also voiced when former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata declared in 1993 that crisis-affected populations should have the "right to remain", because it may have indirectly supported policies that restricted the right to seek asylum.[38] When a focus on staying concentrates solely on outcomes, and when it implicitly portrays migration as something negative—a "problem that needs to be 'fixed' by appropriate policies"[39]—this usually results in superficial measures that restrict rather than enhance wellbeing.

The concept of the capability to stay is different, because enhancing the capability to stay does not require diminished migration. It builds on how Hein de Haas defines human mobility: as people's capability to choose where to live, including the option to stay, rather than as the act of moving or migrating itself.[40] From a normative perspective, then, all people should have the capability to stay, recognising that many of those who have it will still choose to migrate.

Conclusion

It is important to bring immobility into the mixed migration paradigm, and in doing so, recognise that immobility is itself "mixed". Just as there is a wide spectrum of forced to voluntary migration, so too is there a spectrum of forced to voluntary immobility. The different kinds of immobility described above—involuntary, voluntary, and acquiescent—give some indication of this heterogeneity.

33   See, for example, Stark, O. & Bloom, D. (1985) The new economics of labor migration. American Economic Review.
34   Gaibazzi, P. op. cit.
35   Hannam, K., Sheller, M. & Urry, J. (2006) Mobilities, immobilities and moorings, Mobilities.
36   Schewel, K. (2020) op. cit.
37   Sen, A. (1999) Development as Freedom. Penguin Random House.
38   Black, R. & Collyer, M. (2014) Populations 'trapped' at times of crisis. Forced Migration Review.
39   Castles, S. (2010) Understanding global migration: A social transformation perspective. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.
40   De Haas, H. (2021) A theory of migration: The aspirations-capabilities framework. Comparative Migration Studies.

Recognising these different kinds of immobility can enhance policy effectiveness in many settings. For example, as research into effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic grows, it reveals that for many low-wage workers, the pandemic has exacerbated the economic need to migrate, yet public health restrictions have simultaneously constrained the ability to do so.[41] Finding ways to alleviate involuntary immobility will be critical to restoring the livelihoods of affected populations. Similarly, in situations of humanitarian crisis, it is important to recognise that those who are trapped by conflicts or disasters are some of the most vulnerable. Identifying how humanitarian actors can best reach immobilised populations and how humanitarian practices can evolve to reduce the likelihood of involuntary immobility in crisis situations remains an urgent issue.

For policymakers working in areas threatened by climate change, it is helpful to exercise caution around sweeping accounts of either massive migration or massive trapped populations. Rather, the task is to better understand how environmental stresses interact with other well-established migration drivers and constraints to give rise to different migration and immobility outcomes. Further, policymakers should not assume all those whose livelihoods are threatened by climate change desire to leave; incorporating voluntary immobility as a reasonable aspiration of local populations demands significant investment in local adaptation strategies to climate insecurities, not only relocation programming.

Finally, in the field of development theory and practice, more attention should be given to the capability to stay, particularly exploring what is required to enhance the capability to stay without restricting or undermining the right to movement. Reducing migration remains the main objective of many development policies that seek to address the "root causes" of migration. Yet, often failing to achieve their objective, development resources are reallocated towards migration "management" and control. This is the worst of all possible outcomes: using development aid to restrict mobility without meaningfully improving lives and livelihoods in origin places—essentially trapping people in a state of involuntary immobility.

Development practitioners should return to the question of whether "development" truly enhances the wellbeing of local populations, and the capability to stay provides one conceptual lens through which to ask whether development is doing this. Beyond policy, there are also important implications for migration and development research. For example, a growing body of research shows that human and economic development tends to increase aspirations and capabilities to migrate from low-income countries.[42] But do these occur against the backdrop of decreased capabilities to stay, particularly in rural places? Understanding how aspirations and capabilities to migrate interact with aspirations and capabilities to stay can shed new light on the drivers of mixed migration and mixed immobility.

41 Mixed Migration Centre (2020). Impact of Covid-19 on the decision to migrate.
42 De Haas, H. (2021). A theory of migration: The aspirations-capabilities framework. Comparative Migration Studies.

Photo credit: Galyna Andrushko / Shutterstock

As environmental stressors and climate change contribute to displacement, migration, and planned relocations in different parts of the world, it is easy to overlook "trapped" communities and households that cannot move, or choose not to. Involuntary, acquiescent, and voluntary immobility in the face of ever-worsening climate conditions are all important concepts in today's understanding of mixed migration, human (im)mobility, and climate change.

Section 4

Policy and politics

This section offers essays, reports, and interviews to highlight key issues in the field of mixed migration politics and policies, with a particular focus on some harsher aspects of global trends: preventing migration and asylum, returning migrants to their home countries, and the impact of Covid-19. Robust border management—and the security industry that both delivers it and lobbies governments for it—is one of many issues addressed in our regular "Normalising of the extreme" feature that explores the mainstreaming of policies and actions that only a few years ago would have been seen as beyond the pale. As a counterpoint, this year we also offer an overview of policies and actions that go against these trends.

Normalising the extreme

Many policies, actions, and attitudes related to mixed migration—especially irregular migration—that were considered unacceptable just a few years ago are now becoming normalised. The following list is not exhaustive but offers snapshots from 2021 that illustrate the growing prevalence and range of such measures, as well as the ways Covid-19 has been used to justify and legitimise extreme action.

By Chris Horwood[1]

1. Roundups, segregation, isolation, and detention

The Global Detention Project estimates that there have been at least 2,000 formal detention facilities used for immigration-related purposes in approximately 100 different countries over the last decade.[2] In many countries, refugees and migrants continue to be segregated, isolated, and detained in 2021, sometimes because of putative health fears related to Covid-19. In some destination states, migrant workers have been "trapped (...) facing heightened risks of human rights violations and health risks, as well as expulsion and work permit denial or revocation."[3]

In **Singapore**, up to 300,000 migrant workers have been confined to dormitories and not allowed to move freely after work for the last 18 months, even though Covid restrictions on Singapore nationals have long been relaxed. Only in September 2021 did the authorities start to ease restrictions for some groups of migrants.[4]

Thousands of Ethiopian migrants held in harsh conditions in **Saudi Arabia** in 2020 started to be repatriated in 2021.[5] At an initially planned rate of 1,000 persons per week, the returns took place in response to mounting international pressure following a Human Rights Watch report in late 2020 concerning indefinite and harsh detention.[6] In the event, 40,000 people were deported back to Ethiopia in just two months.[7] It is not clear how

long repatriations took or if all detained Ethiopians have now been returned. Meanwhile, the UN's International Organization for Migration said that an estimated 6,000 migrants (mostly Ethiopian) were held in detention across **Yemen** in 2021. Reportedly, smugglers hold hundreds, if not thousands, more.[8] Illustrating the precariousness and vulnerability they face, scores of migrants burned to death and many more were injured in Yemen on 7 March after Houthi security forces launched what some witnesses said were tear gas cannisters into a Sanaa detention centre.[9]

On the Spanish **Canary Islands**, thousands of irregular migrants and asylum seekers spent 2020 and 2021 in limbo in specialised detention camps amid reports of hunger strikes, protests, and growing despair and international criticism of conditions.[10]

In **Greece**, as policies against irregular arrivals hardened, a new camp was built on the island of Samos with multi-layered fencing to detain asylum seekers in highly regulated and "prison-like" conditions criticised as "dystopian" by some.[11] At the start of 2021, over 14,000 people were detained in five island camps as part of the continuation of the "hotspot approach" of detaining migrants and asylum seekers as a form of control and deterrence first introduced in 2015 by the European Commission.[12] After a fire destroyed the Moria camp on the island of Lesbos in September 2020, authorities moved its residents to a temporary site that has been criticised for its inadequate shelter, lack of services, and

1   Chris Horwood is a migration specialist and co-director of Ravenstone Consult. Some parts of this report draw on Keeping Track in section 1 of this MMR 2021.
2   Freedom for Immigrants (n.d.) Detention by the numbers.
3   Hennebry, J. (2020) Quarantined! Xenophobia and migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. IOM.
4   Reuters (2021) Singapore to ease COVID-19 restrictions for migrant workers.
5   Juneja, Z. (2021) Saudi Arabia Repatriates Hundreds of Detained Ethiopians. Human Rights Watch.
6   Human Rights Watch (2020) Saudi Arabia: Migrants Held in Inhuman, Degrading Conditions.
7   IOM (2021) Response Capacities Stretched with Hasty Return of 40,000 Ethiopian Migrants.
8   Human Rights Watch (2021) Yemen: Scores Die in Migrant Detention Center Fire; and Al Jazeera (2021) Calls for international probe into fire at Sanaa detention centre.
9   Ibid.
10   Martín, M. (2021) Tension spreads through migrant shelters in Spain's Canary Islands. El País; and Amnesty International (2021) Islas Canarias: Conclusiones preliminares sobre la situación de las personas migrantes tras una semana de investigación.
11   Smith, H. (2021) Why Greece's expensive new migrant camps are outraging NGOs. The Guardian.
12   Greek Council for Refugees (2021) Reception and Identification Procedure – Greece. Aida & ECRE.

limited food supplies.[13] A promised permanent facility on Lesbos is not expected to be completed until mid-2022.[14]

In **Bangladesh**, thousands of Rohingya refugees have been moved from Cox's Bazar to Bhasan Char, an island formed from silt around 30 kilometres from the coast, with around 18,000 in place by June 2021. Despite the government's claims that these resettlements were voluntary, dozens of refugees who have subsequently attempted to leave the island have been arrested and returned.[15] Reports emerged during the year of torture, physical abuse, and intimidation by security forces of refugees on the island,[16] while at the end of May 2021 around 4,000 people staged protests against living conditions during a visit by UN representatives.[17] In **Malaysia**, irregular migrants have been held for long periods in detention with over 1,000 subjected to deportation to Myanmar in February in violation of a court order (see below).[18]

In an alleged breach of its own policies on data collection, consent, and sharing that has the potential to harm Rohingya refugees, the UNHCR gave Bangladesh personal data of some refugees, apparently to verify people for possible repatriation, data that was then shared with authorities in **Myanmar**.[19] The UNHCR denies any wrongdoing and claims it obtained consent. Between 2018 and 2021, the Bangladesh government submitted at least 830,000 names of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar along with their biometric data and other details, for repatriation eligibility assessments.[20]

Australia continued to use the notorious and re-opened Christmas Island Detention Centre in 2021, to hold some 225 people, mostly migrants who have had their visas cancelled due to criminal activity. Riots broke out among detainees in January in protest against the abusive conditions in which they were held.[21]

In late 2020, **Libya's** Directorate for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM), a department of the interior ministry, integrated into its jurisdiction detention centres previously run as informal entities by militias. It remains unclear how many refugees and migrants are detained as there is continued evidence of unofficial detention centres. According to official figures, 2,000–3,000 migrants and refugees were detained in Libya at the end of 2020—far lower than previous years—but analysts reckon the true number is far higher.[22] In the first half of 2021, Amnesty International calculated that more than 7,000 people intercepted at sea off the Libyan coast were forcibly returned to a new "gathering and return centre", where they reportedly face appalling conditions and violations.[23] (Libya's egregious treatment of refugees and migrants and the EU's complicity is discussed in more detail below.) In early October, a major crackdown in western Libya (in the town of Gargaresh, near Tripoli) resulted in the detention of over 5,000 migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, including hundreds of women and children, and at least one death according to officials.[24]

The **United States** government holds tens of thousands of asylum seekers and immigrants in detention under the control of Customs and Border Protection and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement. They are detained for unlawful entry to the United States, when their claims for asylum are received (and prior to release into the United States on one-year permits known as "parole"), and while in the process of deportation and removal from the country. Statistics for 2021 are not available but there are over 206 detention facilities in the US handling tens of thousands of cases every day throughout the year.[25] The case of the US is mentioned here not because its management of irregular migrants and asylum seekers is extreme, but because of the high numbers involved and the controversial policies of separating families, detaining minors, and conducting expulsions without due process (especially through "Title 42", as detailed below).

2. Prevention of rescue at sea and denial of access to safe harbour

In the **Mediterranean**, the absence of formal functioning search-and-rescue operations at sea continued in 2021. Unlike Operation Sophia before it (2015-2020), the European Union Naval Force- Mediterranean's current Operation Irini has not undertaken any rescue at sea in its first year.[26] This reflects the EU's tougher attitude to

13   Oxfam International (2020) Conditions in 'Moria 2.0' camp are abysmal, say GCR and Oxfam.
14   Smith, H. (2021) Why Greece's expensive new migrant camps are outraging NGOs. The Guardian.
15   Siegfried, K. (2021) The Refugee Brief-4 June 2021. UNHCR.
16   Human Rights Watch (2021) Bangladesh: Rohingya refugees allegedly tortured.
17   Al Jazeera (2021) Rohingya protest against living conditions on Bangladesh island
18   UN Human Rights (2021) Malaysia: UN experts appalled by deportation of migrants to Myanmar despite court order.
19   Human Rights Watch (2021) UN Shared Rohingya Data Without Informed Consent.
20   Ibid.
21   Rachwani, M. (2021) Christmas Island detainees riot and set fire to buildings in protest against conditions. The Guardian.
22   Cuttitta, P. & Skłodowska, M. (2021) Libya's Figures About Detained Migrants and Detention Centres: Reasons for Recent Fluctuations. Border Criminologies. University of Oxford.
23   Amnesty International (2021) Libya: 'No one will look for you': Forcibly returned from sea to abusive detention in Libya.
24   ACAPS (2021) Libya - Latest developments 06/10/2021.
25   Freedom for Immigrants (n.d.) op. cit.
26   Wallis, E. (2021) Irini mission: one year, no migrant rescues. InfoMigrants.

irregular maritime migration and its unsubstantiated reasoning[27] that providing rescue operations may have acted as an incentive to smugglers and migrants.[28] By contrast, Operation Sophia was credited with rescuing some 45,000 people, including many children.[29] The primary missions of the current operation are to enforce a UN arms embargo, train the Libyan coastguard and navy, disrupt human trafficking, and impede the illicit exports of Libyan oil. Not only is there no mention of rescue in Irini's mandate but there are reports and cases in 2021 of national authorities failing to respond promptly to those in distress or preventing NGOs from operating effectively to save lives.[30] International organisations and human rights groups have condemned what they have variously described as a "lethal disregard for desperate people" and Europe's "race to the bottom" to keep migrants and asylum seekers out, directly contributing to the high death toll on the Mediterranean.[31] Rescue missions or responses to distress calls have also been repeatedly delayed or ignored.[32]

Additionally, 2021 saw a significant rise in interceptions in the Central Mediterranean. Some 31,565 people were intercepted by North African coastguards (mainly in waters off **Tunisia** and **Libya**) between January and the end of June.[33] Normally those intercepted were returned to mainland Africa and in the case of Libya these interceptions are often carried out in a violent or reckless manner, resulting at times in deaths, and upon disembarkation people are normally returned to much-condemned detention centres where violence and torture may await them.[34] Some Mediterranean interceptions by national coast patrols have been violent, with migrant boats being rammed and shots being fired, in one case inside **Maltese** waters.[35] In another case, condemned by both UNHCR and IOM (and set out in more detail below), a commercial vessel "rescued" 270 people only to return them to Libya where they were detained.[36]

Furthermore, **EU member states** have actively undermined civilian rescue operations by restricting and even criminalising NGOs and impounding their vessels. According to a leading rights watchdog, "Member states' approaches still appear to focus on limiting NGOs' life-saving work, rather than seeing them as filling a crucial gap left by the member states' own disengagement."[37] For most of the first half of 2021, just one rescue boat was active at any moment as others continued to have their efforts restricted. Private rescue vessels frequently impounded include *Sea-Watch 3*, *Sea-Watch 4*, *Alan Kurdi* and *Open Arms*.[38]

In line with the growing trend of criminalising not only refugees and migrants but also those helping them, in March 2021, **Italian** authorities formally charged dozens of NGO workers for their alleged complicity with human smugglers—with the possibility of prison sentences of up to 20 years if convicted.[39] In September, after a highly politicised trial in Calabria, the much-lauded former mayor of Riace was given a 13-year prison sentence for "irregularities" committed while helping refugees and asylum seekers to integrate in his depopulated town.[40]

Throughout 2021 there have been continued efforts by state authorities to sabotage private and NGO sea-rescue capabilities, through administrative and often spurious accusations of infractions resulting in vessels being impounded and captains or owners fined.[41] Nevertheless, in a slight change from 2020—and earlier years when the anti-immigration Matteo Salvini served as Italy's interior minister—Italian authorities permitted more rescue boats to dock and disembark passengers in 2021, albeit reluctantly, and with repeated calls for other EU countries to share the burden of new arrivals.[42]

In the 10 months up to October 2021, over 17,000 migrants and asylum seekers used boats to cross the English Channel from France and Belgium to **UK** shores, more than double the total number for 2020. [43] In response, the UK government has authorised Border Force officials to turn back boats in "limited circumstances" if personally approved by the home secretary (interior minister) Priti Patel. Draft UK legislation provides for long prison sentences to be handed down to people who help

27 Cusumano, E. & Villa, M. (2019) Sea rescue NGOs: a pull factor of irregular migration? European University Institute.
28 See for example: House of Lords (2016) Operation Sophia, the EU's naval mission in the Mediterranean: an impossible challenge.
29 European Council (2021) Infographic—Lives saved in EU Mediterranean operations (2015-2021).
30 Council of Europe (2021) A distress call for human rights. The widening gap in migrant protection in the Mediterranean.
31 OHCHR (2021) "Lethal Disregard": Search and Rescue and the Protection of Migrants in the Central Mediterranean Sea; and Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe (2021) A distress call for human rights - The widening gap in migrant protection in the Mediterranean.
32 Al Jazeera (2021) Deaths at sea highlight failings in Europe immigration policy; and MacGregor, M. (2021) Migrant rescue ship Sea-Eye 4 impounded by Italian coast guard. Infomigrants.
33 IOM (2021) Migrant Deaths on Maritime Routes to Europe in 2021.
34 UN Human Rights Council (2021) Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya.
35 Tondo, L. (2021) Libyan coastguards "fired on and tried to ram migrant boat"—NGO. The Guardian; and Amnesty International (2021) op. cit.
36 UNHCR (2021) IOM and UNHCR condemn the return of migrants and refugees to Libya.
37 Council of Europe (2021) op. cit.
38 MacGregor, M. (2021) op. cit.
39 Tondo, L. (2021) Refugee rescuers charged in Italy with complicity in people smuggling. The Guardian.
40 Tondo, L. (2021) Pro-refugee Italian mayor sentenced to 13 years for abetting illegal migration. The Guardian.
41 Al Jazeera (2021) MSF calls on Italy to release seized rescue vessel.
42 Nielsen, N. (2021) Italy seeks EU help on migrant boat arrivals. EUobserver.
43 BBC (2021) Channel migrants: Crossing numbers in 2021 double 2020's figure.

migrant boats to land on UK territory.[44] This tougher "pushback" approach was criticised by the UNHCR, rights agencies, and the French government, on the ground that it breaches maritime law.[45] Meanwhile, in a dramatic escalation of the use of force, police in **France** were reported to have fired rubber bullets at people to stop them from crossing the Channel to the UK in September, causing injuries.[46]

UNHCR reported that last year (2020) was the "deadliest" year ever for Rohingyas' journeys across the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, where many face pushbacks and refusals to let their boats land .[47] In 2021, between January and June, an estimated 633 people used boats to leave **Bangladesh** (including the island of Bhasan Char) and **Myanmar**, many of which become stranded at sea, or floated adrift for long periods without rescue, or were recorded as missing. While there is no direct evidence that such vessels were deliberately abandoned or that a no-rescue policy is in place, in the past **Indonesia**, **Thailand**, and **Malaysia** have been implicated in pushbacks and non-assistance of boats in distress at sea.[48] However, it is known that the Covid-19 pandemic prompted many countries in the region to tighten their borders, leaving many migrants and refugees stranded at sea for months, amounting to their effective abandonment in dire conditions without shelter or adequate provisions.[49]

3. Pushbacks and pullbacks

"Pushback" and "pullback" are terms used to describe the practice by authorities of preventing people from seeking protection by forcibly returning them to another country or forcing them to return to the territory they are departing. Both violate international and EU law. The UN's Human Rights Council wrote in May 2021, "The practice of 'pushbacks' is widespread and exists along most migration routes. Pushbacks manifest an entrenched prejudice against migrants and demonstrate a denial of States' international obligations to protect the human rights of migrants at international borders."[50] The prevalence of pushbacks and pullbacks seen throughout the world in 2021 is very high and possibly unprecedented

in terms of the numbers of people affected and the measures' normalisation as a *de facto* official policy—even if this is commonly denied by authorities.

Through 2020 and into 2021, UNHCR said it received a "continuous stream of reports of some European states restricting access to asylum, returning people after they have reached territory or territorial waters, and using violence against them at borders." The UN Refugee Agency said that pushbacks are being carried out in a violent and apparently systematic way: boats carrying refugees are being towed back, people are being rounded up after they land and then pushed back to sea, and "many have reported violence and abuse by state forces."[51] It added that people arriving by land are also being informally detained and forcibly returned to neighbouring countries without any consideration or assessment of their international protection needs.[52]

In December 2020, the Border Violence Monitoring Network published *The Black Book of Pushbacks*, a vast compilation of first-hand accounts from many thousands of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers who had suffered or witnessed violence, rights violations, and degrading treatment at the hands of border officials along the **Balkan** route.[53] The book particularly focused on "chain" pushbacks where, for example, people are forcibly repatriated to **Slovenia**, and then forced back to **Croatia** and from there to **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (BiH).[54] Throughout 2021, reports have emerged of many incidents of asylum seekers and migrants from multiple countries being pushed back into BiH from Croatia, often brutally.[55] The recorded cases included men, women, children with guardians and unaccompanied children from Afghanistan, Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Algeria, Kurdistan, and Lebanon.[56]

In October 2021, a collaboration of journalists from some of Europe's leading media houses published the results of an eight-month investigation which entailed gathering testimony and high-resolution visual evidence of pushbacks on the EU's external borders, tracing chains of command, tracking social media and satellite imagery, and following money trails. This revealed that masked men in uniforms stripped of identifying details were

44 Novak, P. (2021) Why is the new Nationality and Borders Bill being dubbed 'anti-refugees'? SOAS; and Wright, R. (2021) RNLI vows to continue sea rescues despite prison fears for picking up migrants. Financial Times.
45 Bulman, M. (2021) Priti Patel's asylum overhaul plans 'almost neo-colonial', warns UN. The Independent.
46 Huges, T. (2021) French police shoot migrants with rubber bullets in a bid to stop them coming to Britain. Evening Standard.
47 UNHCR (2021) Left Adrift at Sea: Dangerous Journeys of Refugees Across the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea.
48 Ibid; Al Jazeera (2021) Dozens of Rohingya refugees missing as boat sinks off Bangladesh; and BBC (2021) Fears for Rohingya stranded at sea for 10 days, as engines fail and eight die.
49 Al Jazeera (2021) Months at sea: Boat carrying Rohingya washes up in Indonesia.
50 UN Human Rights Council (2021) Report on means to address the human rights impact of pushbacks of migrants on land and at sea.
51 UNHCR (2021) UNHCR warns asylum under attack at Europe's borders, urges end to pushbacks and violence against refugees.
52 Ibid.
53 Border Violence Monitoring Network (2020) The Black Book of Pushbacks. See page 214 of this review to read an interview with BVMN field coordinator Simon Campbell.
54 Danish Refugee Council (2021) Push back of responsibility: Human Rights Violations as a Welcome Treatment at Europe's Borders.
55 ECRE (2021) Balkan Route: Hundreds Pushed Back Across the Region in August – Afghans Victims of Systematic Pushbacks, Evictions, Raids and Hostility in Croatia and BiH.
56 Ibid.

carrying out violent pushbacks from **Croatia, Romania**, and **Greece**, and that the units involved are financed and equipped by national states using **EU** funds.[57]

In September, as temperatures dropped across Europe, reports emerged of pushbacks of asylum-seekers and migrants transiting through **Belarus** to seek asylum in **Lithuania**, **Latvia**, and **Poland**. The three countries had all recently declared states of emergency at their borders with Belarus, effectively denying access to anyone besides border guards and security services. At least five people died in the border area between Poland and Belarus and many stranded families were denied access to assistance.[58] Poland and Lithuania have taken steps to formalise their approaches into law (see below).

Greece also continued to practice systematic pushbacks on land and sea. These have been extensively reported in grey literature and were detailed in last year's Mixed Migration Review; they continued unabated in 2021, with the use of deterrents such as drones, sound cannons, thermal cameras, and lie detector tests to monitor and prevent migration.[59]

A renewal of the 2016 -2020 **EU-Turkey** statement—the controversial agreement that permitted Greece to return refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers to Turkey in exchange for financial assistance to Turkey and resettlement quotas—was all but agreed during 2021. The arrangement's supporters say it substantially reduced the numbers of Syrians entering Europe from 2016. To others, the deal formalises and legitimises systematic push/pullbacks. The EU has signalled its willingness to renew the agreement with another €3.5 billion set to be given to Turkey over the next three years.[60] Additional plans discussed in 2021 between the EU and Turkey would enable Turkey to conduct forced returns and pushbacks of new arrivals to Iran, Iraq, and Syria rather than offer them protection.[61]

Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, EU member states have reportedly "used illegal operations to push back at least 40,000 asylum seekers from Europe's borders (...) methods being linked to the death of more than 2,000 people".[62] During 2021 the EU's Border and Coast Guard Agency (also known as Frontex) faced

various accusations and charges of effecting pushbacks and was forced to suspend its operations in **Hungary** over violations allegedly committed against asylum seekers.[63] But the intentions are clear: the EU has earmarked €34.9 billion for border management between 2021 and 2027 and systematic pushbacks appear to be an increasingly normalised tool to prevent irregular entry to the bloc.[64]

In July, a commercial supply ship, *Vos Triton*, found 270 people adrift with a broken engine in international waters off the coast of **Libya**. Despite having picked up migrants and refugees in a previous incident in February and transporting them to Italy, in this incident *Vos Triton* returned the rescued passengers to Libyan coast guards—effectively amounting to an illegal pushback.[65]

As previously mentioned, thousands of departing migrants and refugees have been intercepted and pulled back to **Libya**, ending up in detention in centres that have been repeatedly condemned as unsafe and dangerous.[66] Between January and September 2021, this happened to 23,583 refugees and migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. Many were sent to detention centres run by the DCIM.[67] In June, Libyan coastguards were filmed using live rounds in an alleged attempt to shipwreck a boat carrying migrants and force it to return to Libya.[68] The EU as an entity and some of its member states assist and support the Libyan coastguard in various ways and despite repeated calls for the EU policy to change in relation to Libyan pullbacks, Brussels turns a blind eye and allows the practice to continue—sometimes, reportedly, with the direct collusion of or coordination by **Italian** and **Maltese** authorities as well as Frontex, effectively practising pushbacks by proxy.[69]

In the Americas, pushbacks are increasingly common at various points in main transit countries on the northward migratory route from South America through Central America and Mexico and into the **United States**. The closer to the US border the more intense and prolific are pushbacks and expulsions. Government data indicate that over 400,000 migrants and asylum seekers were expelled in systematic pushbacks from the US from February through December 2020 under the Migrant Protection Protocols and Title 42 provisions.[70] The latter, first invoked as a pandemic control measure during

57 Lighthouse Reports (2021) Unmasking Europe's Shadow Armies.
58 Wallis, E. (2021) UN requests 'immediate access' to European borders after migrant deaths. Infomigrants.
59 Bathke, B. (2021) In post-pandemic Europe, irregular migrants will face digital deterrents. InfoMigrants.
60 DW (2021) EU eyes billions in extra funds for Turkey migration deal.
61 Rankin, J. (2021) EU plan to fund Turkey border control "risks refugees' forced return. The Guardian.
62 Tondo, L. (2021) Revealed: 2,000 refugee deaths linked to illegal EU pushbacks. The Guardian.
63 Nielsen, N. (2021) Why Frontex won't leave Greece, like it left Hungary. EUobserver.
64 Popoviciu, A. (2021) "They can see us in the dark": migrants grapple with hi-tech fortress EU. The Guardian.
65 Wallis, E. (2021) Accusations of 'illegal pushbacks' leveled at supply ship Vos Triton in Mediterranean. InfoMigrants
66 UNHCR (2021) IOM and UNHCR condemn the return of migrants and refugees to Libya.
67 UNOCHA (2021) Libya: Humanitarian Access Snapshot - Migrants and Refugees (September 2021).
68 Tondo, L. (2021) Italy to investigate Libyan coastguard's 'attempted shipwreck' of migrant boat. The Guardian; and Lighthouse Reports (n.d.) Frontex in the Central Mediterranean.
69 Sanderson, S. (2021) Frontex accused of collusion with Libyan coast guards. Infomigrants; and ECRE (2021) Med: Investigations Reveal Frontex' Complicity in Interceptions and Returns to Horrors in Libya.
70 Kino Border Initiative (2021) Pushback Practices at the US/Mexico Border.

Donald Trump's administration and continued after Joe Biden took office, permit the immediate deportation of undocumented migrants, including those who arrive seeking asylum. Title 42 continued to be used throughout 2021 as a key tool to legalise pushbacks that would otherwise be deemed illegal under international law.[71] In some cases, these pushbacks involved flying non-Mexican irregular migrants and asylum seekers deep into Mexico.[72]

In September, authorities from **Mexico** and the **US** pushed back thousands of Haitians from the border between the two countries where they had been gathering in cities like Ciudad Acuña and Tijuana, while others were prevented from moving north from Tapachula.[73] Some were trapped where they were while others were pushed back to southern parts of Mexico, others into Guatemala, and others deported on flights to Haiti. Many had left Haiti years ago, in some case after the 2010 earthquake, and have since been on the move from country to country responding to changing (often harsher) policy environments in states such as **Brazil**, **Chile**, **Peru**, and **Panama**. As a result of a regional "controlled flow" policy, more than 19,000 mostly Haitian migrants were waiting to travel into Panama (and thence further north) in the northern Colombian town of Necoclí as of the end of September 2021.

In late September, **US** authorities began flying many of the thousands of Haitians who had managed to cross into Texas from Mexico back to Haiti without giving them the opportunity to seek asylum, signalling "the beginning of what could be one of America's swiftest, large-scale expulsions of migrants or refugees in decades".[74] Thousands of the Haitians in Texas subsequently returned to Mexico.[75]

In August, authorities in southern **Mexico** pushed back hundreds of migrants and asylum seekers from various countries including Haiti, Cuba, and countries of the Northern Triangle who were trying to leave an area on the border with Guatemala to head north to the US.[76] The reportedly often brutal interceptions were carried out by personnel from the National Migration Institute and the National Guard, a militarized police force created in 2019 and placed under army control. Throughout the year, Mexican troops on the Guatemala border repeatedly deployed shields and batons to stop multinational groups of asylum seekers and migrants entering Mexico. Many originated from Honduras and other Northern Triangle states, from where people are fleeing a lethal combination of poverty, the impact of climate change, and gang violence.

4. Deportation, expulsion, and refoulement

Overlapping and closely related to pushback and pullbacks, deportations, expulsions, and refoulement continued on a large scale in 2021 around the world. (To avoid repetition, selected cases are mentioned here in brief.) Deportations per se are not necessarily "extreme" insofar as they are a part of states' immigration policies and procedures. Germany, for example, carried out almost 6,000 deportations in the first half of 2021 and the US carries out tens of thousands every year.[77] Below are examples of more extreme cases, often occurring in contravention of national or international norms and with disregard for due process.

In May 2021, more than 10,000 migrants surged through Morocco's border with the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. **Spanish** authorities immediately deported over 6,000 and focused on expelling others in the subsequent months without determining their status and assuming they were irregular economic migrants from Morocco. In August, Spain started to deport some 740 minors from the May mass entry, prompting the public prosecutor to open an investigation and creating fresh divisions within Spain's ruling coalition as human rights groups said the deportations violated Spanish and international law.[78]

Anti-Muslim policies in **India** have been put in place that impact not only on the country's own Muslim minority, but also certain groups of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, including Rohingya. With around 16,000 officially registered in India—the actual numbers may be as high as 40,000—the Rohingya have been specifically targeted for arrest and deportation by authorities despite international condemnation.[79] In March 2021, more than 150 Rohingya lost their appeals to remain in the country, despite the clear protection risks they would face back in Myanmar.[80] By October 2021, it is not clear how many had already been deported.

In February, despite a court order blocking the action, **Malaysia** deported 1,086 Myanmar nationals back to their country by handing them over to three Myanmar navy vessels sent for that purpose. Malaysia claimed no

71 Nebehay, S. (2021) U.S. expulsions of Haitians may violate international law - UN refugee boss. Reuters.
72 AFP (2021) UN refugee agency concerned as US deports migrants to southern Mexico. The Guardian.
73 Yates, C. (2021) Haitian Migration through the Americas: A Decade in the Making. Migration Policy Institute.
74 Lozano, J. et al (2021) US launches mass expulsion of Haitian migrants from Texas. AP News.
75 Moore, M. (2021) Haitian migrants cross back into Mexico as deportation flights begin. New York Post.
76 Isakson, J. (2021) Mexico pushes back asylum seekers attempting to leave its southern border zone. WOLA.
77 MacGregor, M. (2021) German deportations up again after decline due to COVID. Infomigrants
78 Martin, M & Cid, A. (2021) Spain starts deporting migrant minors from Ceuta despite fierce opposition. El Pais.
79 Human Rights Watch (2021) India: Halt All Forced Returns to Myanmar.
80 Siddiqui, Z. (2021) India's top court paves way for Rohingya deportations to Myanmar. Reuters.

refugees were among these deportees, although UNHCR disagreed.[81] Malaysia does not formally recognise refugees and UNHCR has had no access to immigration detention centres to determine if detainees are in need of international protection.

Algeria continued to deport thousands of asylum seekers and migrants to Niger following roundups and detention of those found in their country.[82] A total of 23,175 people were expelled across the border in 2020, with almost 19,000 deported between January and 1 October 2021.[83] Previously, thousands were taken to an area in the middle of the desert known as "Point Zero", then abandoned to make their way 15 kilometres to Assamaka, the nearest settlement.[84] In April 2021 Algerian authorities announced the construction of a new migrant reception centre near its border with Niger.[85]

As widely documented, **Saudi Arabia** has repeatedly deported thousands of Ethiopian migrants from its territory, often using violence and indefinite detention prior to deportation. Having detained thousands during the pandemic, in 2021 Riyadh started deporting them to Ethiopia. Over 30,000 Ethiopian nationals were repatriated in the space of just two weeks between 26 June and 9 July 2021. In total, some 376,640 Ethiopian migrants were deported from Saudi Arabia between March 2017 and June 2021.[86]

As mentioned above, the **US** continues to practice mass expulsions and deportations, using a controversial section of Title 42 health legislation and other policies in cooperation with **Mexico** and other **Central American** states. Mexican authorities have closed the country's southern border and have been forcibly returning refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers intercepted there, including minors.[87] Hundreds of Central Americans flown to southern Mexico were reportedly forced by Mexican authorities into a remote part of Guatemala, leaving them stranded them with no place to stay or any way to return to their home countries. UNHCR warned of the risk of "chain refoulement", whereby vulnerable people could be pushed back by successive countries.[88]

In early 2021, **Guatemala** violently prevented a caravan of migrants from Nicaragua entering its territory.[89] In March, the Guatemalan government issued a "state of prevention" along the border with Honduras to forestall the entry of further migrant caravans.[90]

Flouting a December 2020 ruling by the European Court of Justice that its deportations were illegal, **Hungary** has continued to deport thousands of people, mainly to Serbia. According to its own official statistics, 2,824 were deported in January 2021 alone.[91] According to UNHCR, since 2016, the Hungarian authorities have forcibly removed more than 71,000 people and in March 2021 the refugee agency condemned a "recent decision of the Hungarian government to extend a decree that authorizes the police to automatically and summarily remove anyone intercepted for irregular entry and stay."[92]

5. Inhumane treatment

If inhumane is defined broadly as "lacking in pity or compassion for misery and suffering" the term could be applied to countless incidents and practices all over the world: negligence and the deliberate violation of rights— or simply rough treatment—continued to characterise the experience of hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees in 2021, especially those on the move.

In late 2020 and early 2021, egregious abuses of refugees were reported in the Tigray region of northern **Ethiopia**, where **Eritrean** soldiers and Tigrayan militia forces occupied and attacked four camps that housed tens of thousands of Eritrean refugees, committing "horrific killings, rapes, and looting".[93] Months later, as many as 7,600 registered refugees were still missing and unaccounted for.[94]

The harrowing plight of refugees and migrants in **Libya** have regularly featured in previous Mixed Migration Reviews. 2021 saw little change aside from a sharp rise the number of maritime interceptions coupled with an inability to track what happens to those forced to return to Libya. Widespread abduction, mistreatment, torture, and extortion by militias, traffickers and security personnel continues to be reported in established migrant detention centres and new camps across the country. Human rights groups have reported that as interceptions increase and detention facilities become ever more crowded, violence and sexual abuse of refugees, migrants, and asylum

81 AP (2021) Lawmakers, rights groups ask Malaysia to explain deportation.
82 Human Rights Watch (2020) Algeria: Migrants, asylum seekers forced out.
83 Alarm Phone Sahara (2021) 29th of September and 1st of October 2021: 2169 people deported from Algeria to Niger in two big deportation convoys.
84 African Arguments (2021) "The guards had no compassion": The migrants abandoned in Niger's desert.
85 InfoMigrants (2021) Algérie : bientôt un nouveau centre d'accueil pour les migrants dans le sud-est.
86 MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: East Africa and Yemen—Q2 2021.
87 Amnesty International (2021) USA and Mexico deporting thousands of unaccompanied migrant children into harm's way.
88 Reynolds, M. (2021) UNHCR concerned over U.S. expulsion flights under COVID-19 asylum restrictions. UNHCR.
89 Philips, T. (2021) Migrant caravan trekking north to US border clashes with Guatemalan troops. The Guardian.
90 Al Jazeera (2021) Guatemala issues emergency decree as new migrant caravan reported.
91 Verseck, K. (2021) How Hungary is violating EU law on refugees. DW.
92 UNHCR (2021) UNHCR concerned by Hungary's latest measures affecting access to asylum.
93 Human Rights Watch (2021) Ethiopia: Eritrean Refugees Targeted in Tigray.
94 UNHCR (2021) UNHCR Statement on Human Rights Watch Report on Eritrean Refugees Targeted in Tigray.

seekers have increased.[95] A discrepancy between the numbers of those intercepted at sea and those officially recorded as detainees on land suggests thousands have been forcibly disappeared and held in unknown locations for ransom, trafficking, or other purposes.[96] For instance, more than half of the 6,200 people intercepted at sea by Libyan coastguards and brought back to Libya in the first seven months of 2021 were unaccounted for; instead of being taken to official detention centres, many likely disappeared into unofficial centres operated by militia.[97]

In **Yemen**, Houthi militiamen reportedly kidnapped and forced hundreds of Ethiopian migrants out of Sanaa in early April 2021.[98] The migrants, who had been peacefully protesting outside a UN office, were brutally attacked with live ammunition and made to cross into government-controlled areas. Some claim the Houthi wanted to suppress the migrants' demands for an investigation into a deadly fire at a detention centre some days earlier for which the Houthi were assumed to be responsible. Some 6,000 migrants are thought to be held in detention centres across Yemen, where smugglers reportedly hold hundreds, if not thousands, more.[99]

6. Policies and legislation

As detailed above, normalising the extreme often occurs though actions that are in clear violation of national or international laws, or that are permitted only under supposedly temporary emergency measures. This slope becomes much more slippery when such actions are formally adopted as government policy or incorporated into statute.

This is precisely what happened in **Poland** on 14 October, when parliament passed landmark legislative amendments under which people caught illegally crossing into the country can be ordered to leave, regardless of their aspirations for asylum.[100] Rights groups have pointed out this contravenes Poland's commitments under international law. For its part, Poland, together with Lithuania and Latvia, have reported sharp increases in the number of migrants entering their territories from Belarus, which stands accused of instrumentalising migration to pressure the EU over sanctions it has imposed on Minsk. **Lithuania** has tabled a proposal to amend EU rules so as to permit pushbacks from the bloc.[101] If passed, this would represent not only a normalisation

but a *legalisation* of extreme action against asylum seekers and migrants. While just a few years ago such a proposal would have been met with horror and disbelief, in 2021, it seems less outlandish and even worthy of consideration.[102]

Meanwhile, as the so-called "frontline" southern European states of Greece, Italy, Spain, and Malta feel left alone in dealing with new mixed migration arrivals, some countries in northern Europe have adopted increasingly restrictive asylum policies.

In April, **Denmark** became the first country in Europe to revoke the residency of Syrian refugees, with more than 200 facing the prospect of being returned to Syria on the basis that parts of the country could now be considered safe—despite widespread concerns among refugee organisations and human rights groups that returnees could face imprisonment upon their return.[103] Amendments to the Danish Aliens Act, adopted with a large majority in June, pave the way for the forcible removal of asylum-seekers for processing in third countries.[104] The Danish prime minister has said her vision is to have zero asylum seeker arrivals in her country.

The **United Kingdom**'s Conservative government, through its Nationality and Borders Bill, is also proposing to send asylum seekers to third countries for processing and to criminalise unauthorised entry into the UK, with jail terms of up to four years for those convicted. The law would effectively establish a two-tier system—one for those who arrive regularly, another for those who arrive irregularly—even for those whose protection needs are recognised by granting them a shorter "temporary protection status" lasting up to 30 months. Not surprisingly, UNHCR and others are very opposed to such externalisation arrangements, which they feel "risk a gradual erosion of the international protection system".[105]

In **Sweden**, in a retreat from highly pro-migration and pro-refugee policies, legislation was passed in July 2021 imposing time-limited residency permits in the first instance for refugees in the country: previously, refugees had been granted permanent residency once their status was recognised.[106]

Despite international condemnation of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, many European

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95   Ahmed, K. (2021) Violence towards refugees at Libyan detention centres forces MSF to pull out The Guardian
96   Amnesty International (2021) "No One Will Look for You": Forcibly Returned from Sea to Abusive Detention in Libya.
97   The New Humanitarian (2021). What happens to migrants forcibly returned to Libya.
98   Al Batati, S. (2021) Houthis abduct, deport hundreds of migrants from Sanaa. Arab News.
99   IOM (2021) Yemen: Quarterly Migration Overview Oct-Dec 2020.
100 Reuters (2021) Poland passes legislation allowing migrant pushbacks at border.
101 Gotev, G. et al (2021) 'Legal' pushback: EU walking on a tightrope. Euractiv.
102 Ibid.
103 Murray, A. (2021) Denmark asylum: The Syrian refugees no longer welcome to stay. BBC.
104 Gallagher, E. (2021) The Danish Aliens Act and Denmark's Regressive Attitude Towards Asylum Seekers. Human Rights Pulse.
105 Grierson, J. & Walker, P. (2021) UN official raises concerns over UK offshore asylum plan. The Guardian.
106 EuroNews (2021) New Swedish migration law makes permanent residency harder for refugees and visitors.

countries were swift to discourage any arrivals fleeing the violence and instability there. **Turkey**, for instance, has constructed a concrete barrier on its border with Iran[107] while **Greece** has beefed up its surveillance and extended a wall along its border with Turkey and has said it does not intend to be a "gateway" for fleeing Afghans.[108] Although some countries offered to host special quotas of Afghans in the coming years to accommodate expected new arrivals, others have explicitly ruled out the possibility of any Afghans being resettled in their territory. **Austria**, for instance, contends that it already hosts a disproportionate share of Afghan refugees and would not welcome more.[109] Just days before Kabul fell to the Taliban—but after the group had taken control of many provincial capitals—six European countries (the **Netherlands**, **Germany**, **Austria**, **Denmark**, **Greece**, and **Belgium**) asked the EU Commission not to halt deportations of rejected Afghan asylum seekers to their home country, because "stopping returns sends a wrong signal and is likely to motivate even more Afghan citizens to leave their homes for the EU".[110] Overtaken by events, within days of their letter leaking, most of the six countries reversed their position and decided to suspend returns. Still, even if aborted, the initiative illustrates the extent to which countries, even in the face of a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, remain preoccupied with preventing migration towards the Europe.

Despite international condemnation of its "stop the boats" policy and its highly contentious offshoring of asylum processing, **Australia** continues to fortify its rulebook in dealing with unwanted irregular arrivals and refugees. In May 2021, the Migration Amendment (Clarifying International Obligations for Removal) Bill 2021 rapidly passed into law, further undermining the limited legal protections afforded refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers. The new legislation allows the government to detain refugees indefinitely if their visa has been cancelled but they cannot be returned to their country of origin, and even to revoke recognition of a refugee's status.[111]

Finally, a case that illustrates most clearly a normalisation of extreme measures is that of the **EU**'s collaboration, support and reported collusion with **Libyan** authorities. Since 2017 the EU as a bloc and **Italy** have supported and funded training, equipment, and vessels for the Libyan coastguard to prevent asylum seekers and migrants arriving in Europe and risking a repeat of the high numbers that crossed the Mediterranean in 2014-16. There are reports that between 2017 and 2020 over 40,000 people were intercepted and returned to Libya.[112] This has been well documented and often condemned but now in 2021, with the number of interceptions by Libyan coastguards reaching unprecedented levels, the normalisation appears to be almost complete—despite the well-known near-certainty that those returned to Libya face multiple deprivations and violations, whether they be men, women, or children.

In October 2021, the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya, established by the UN Human Rights Council, concluded that

The absence of accountability for abuses against migrants evidences a State policy encouraging the deterrence of sea crossings, the extortion of migrants in detention, and the subjection to violence and discrimination. (...) This provides reasonable grounds to believe that murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, persecution and other inhumane acts committed against migrants form part of a systematic and widespread attack directed at this population, in furtherance of a State policy. (...)

This finding is made notwithstanding the responsibility that may be borne by third States and further investigations are required to establish the role of all those involved, directly or indirectly, in these crimes".[113]

However, the report did not name these "third states" or call upon the EU directly to cease all support that facilitates the interception and pullbacks of thousands of people to Libya. And for its part, the EU fully intends to continue this cooperation.[114] It is hard to frame this policy as anything other than cynical and as an externalisation of border control with the added shame of turning a blind eye to the mountainous evidence of detention abuses in Libya. Even if human rights bodies continue to condemn the practice, at the policy level the practice which runs against professed EU values, ethics, and laws appears to barely raise an eyebrow.

107 Euronews (2021) Turkey builds a border wall to stop refugees from Afghanistan.
108 Fallon, K. (2021) Greece will not be "gateway" to Europe for Afghans fleeing Taliban, say officials. The Guardian.
109 Human Rights Watch (2021) Europe: Lead efforts to protect at-risk Afghans.
110 Szucs, A. (2021) 6 European countries urge deportation of rejected Afghan asylum seekers. Andalou Agency.
111 Doherty, B. (2021) New law allows Australian government to indefinitely detain refugees. The Guardian.
112 Reidy, E. (2020) The legal battle to hold the EU to account for Libya migrant abuses. The New Humanitarian.
113 UN Human Rights Council (2021) Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya.
114 Nielsen, N. (2021) EU mulls using new 'peace' fund to help Libyan coast guard. EU observer.

Resisting the extreme

By Chris Horwood[1]

This section, included in the Mixed Migration Review for the first time this year, is designed as an uplifting and necessary counterpoint to our bleaker annual "Normalising the extreme" feature. Conceptualising and researching this section was not straightforward because there are various psychological and practical obstacles to framing positive, progressive, rights-based, and even compassionate approaches to mixed migration. There is a tendency to identify and catalogue negative approaches ahead of positive ones both in research and in the news media, which famously thrives on "bad" news. While the "Normalising the extreme" section of the MMR is, sadly, rather easy to compile and is growing every year, assembling this sister feature has proven to be more of a challenge. It is unclear whether this difficulty reflects the preponderance of ever harsher and more restrictive approaches to mixed migration, or rather that more positive examples going against this trend are simply more difficult to find and are less publicised, perhaps because they constitute the *status quo* of migration policy rather than being noteworthy aberrations.

In compiling this section we were unsure as to where to draw the line in terms of what to include and what to leave out; we also struggled to find source material on positive actions that challenged the normalisation of the extreme. Furthermore, some positive actions were immediately followed by negative ones; for example ports allowing disembarkation of migrants and asylum seekers, only for authorities to subsequently detain them indefinitely or in poor conditions and even try to deport them without due process.

To mirror the format of "Normalising the extreme", entries in this section have been grouped into several broad (and occasionally overlapping) themes.

1. Welcome and protection

States continued to accept refugees and asylum seekers around the world in 2021. Thousands of refugees were processed and resettled as part of the continuous UNHCR resettlement programme, while many more had their asylum applications received by states which they had entered irregularly. The UNHCR, other international organisations, and numerous NGOs supported, and international donors continued to fund, assistance to forcibly displaced people (internal and cross-border) in many countries. Although 2020's Covid-driven slump in UNHCR resettlement submissions and actual departures continued into 2021, between January and August 2021, almost 20,000 refugees were resettled from their states of asylum to third countries.[2] In September 2021, **US** President Joe Biden announced plans to double his country's refugee admissions cap for the fiscal year that began in October 2021 (FY2022) to 125,000—a dramatic increase on the record low cap of 15,000 that his predecessor Donald Trump had set for the previous fiscal year.[3]

Meanwhile, many countries experienced a surge in asylum requests in 2021 while still dealing with a massive backlog of pending applications. **European Union** states, for example, received over 420,000 applications between mid-2020 and mid-2021.[4] First-time asylum applicants in the EU were up by 115% in the second quarter of 2021 compared with the same period in 2020, (when numbers were severely reduced by pandemic movement restrictions).[5] UNHCR planned to assist **Mexico**, where a sharp rise in asylum applications was seen in 2021.[6] While a surge in asylum applications in itself is not a positive development, and notwithstanding the hardships many asylum seekers have to go through before they are able to even apply for asylum, these statistics show that despite myriad restrictive measures, many countries to a large extent still keep their borders open to asylum seekers and enable those in need to exercise their right to seek asylum.

South American states continued to accept and receive large numbers of migrants and refugees from the **Venezuelan** complex emergency in 2021. Some 5.6 million people have left Venezuela since 2015.[7] Although the **United States** and various **European** countries have welcomed many thousands of Venezuelan refugees, South American and Caribbean countries such as **Chile, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Panama, Uruguay, Mexico, Costa Rica**, and **Trinidad** and **Tobago** have taken in the bulk of those in the exodus. Despite internal difficulties in receiving countries, Covid-19 fears, and sometimes changing public opinion resulting in some visa restrictions in 2021, millions of Venezuelans continue

1   Chris Horwood is a migration specialist and co-director of Ravenstone Consult.
2   UNHCR (2021) Resettlement Data 2021.
3   Al Jazeera (2021) Biden to raise US refugee cap to 125,000 for next year. It should be noted, however, that in FY2021 the US admitted only 11,445 refugees, a record low.
4   Eurostat (2021) Asylum quarterly report.
5   Ibid.
6   UNHCR (2021) UNHCR ramps up support for Mexico amid mounting asylum applications.
7   Centre for Disaster Philanthropy (2021) Venezuelan Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis.

to find out-of-camp sanctuary, are offered integration, and have been given access to public services and protection.[8]

Throughout 2021, neighbouring countries of **Syria** continued to host, protect, and integrate 5.6 million Syrian refugees both in and outside of camps. **Turkey**, **Lebanon**, **Jordan**, **Iraq**, and **Egypt** are the primary hosting countries with Turkey hosting over 65 percent of the cases. Covid-19 put considerable strain on hosting nations and refugees during 2020 and 2021 and many refugees survive in extremely depressed socio-economic conditions such as those in Lebanon, where they make up almost 20 percent of the population and which is going through its own deepening socioeconomic and political crisis. In all countries, the vast majority of refugees are in out-of-camp situations and to varying degrees benefit from access to public services.

Other countries hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants in 2021 and which offer sanctuary (mainly in-camp in contrast to other parts of the world where pushbacks occur and barriers are in place) are **Pakistan** (hosting 1.4 million Afghans), **Uganda** (1.1 million, mainly South Sudanese and DRC nationals), **Germany** (1 million, mostly Syrian), **Bangladesh** (900,000 Rohingya), **Iran** (970,000 mainly Afghans), **Ethiopia** (800,000 mainly Eritreans, Somali and South Sudanese) and **Sudan** (1.1 million, mainly South Sudanese and Eritrean).[9] All these examples indicate the extent to which countries in the Global South—despite many challenges and notwithstanding occasional resistance against refugee hosting—continue to host large numbers of forcible displaced people, often for decades.

At the end of August, following the takeover of **Afghanistan** by the Taliban, 98 countries said they would assist and take in fleeing Afghans.[10] Meanwhile, the **EU** braced itself against a possible large-scale arrival of refugees by pledging support to Afghanistan's neighbours in what some have described as a cynical effort to renege on international protection commitments.[11] By contrast, various mayors across **Italy** announced they would welcome Afghan refugees as a fiery right/left debate erupted around the issue.[12] Likewise, over 70 mayors around the world announced they would welcome Afghan refugees in their communities and called for an expansion of safe pathways.[13]

Much more could be written about the state of asylum and refugees globally and efforts to protect those on the move seeking refuge, but the cases listed above give testimony to a level of ongoing and important support that challenges the extreme actions taken by some states to deny protection or refuge.

2. Open ports and sea rescue

During 2021, maritime migrants and asylum seekers found ports that accepted their disembarkation—albeit sometimes reluctantly—in adherence to international maritime law and national regulations. By October 2021 over 86,000 maritime migrants had found receiving ports in **Italy**, **Spain**, **Greece**, **Malta**, and **Cyprus**. Despite some efforts to block them, most arrived in national waters and were managed by states' border authorities to safely disembark for processing.[14] Some were delivered by the few rescue ships such as those operated by Sea Eye who rescued hundreds of migrants and asylum seekers in distress.[15] In May, the crew of the commercial vessel, *Maersk Etienne*, were awarded a prize for saving migrants in a complicated and contentious incident involving Malta and Italy.[16]

More than 18,000 migrants and asylum seekers crossed the English Channel between January – September 2021 (inclusive) despite **British** and **French** efforts to deter them.[17] Hundreds of Rohingya maritime migrants arrived in different incidents on shores/ports in **Indonesia** and **Malaysia** and disembarked despite efforts to deter new arrivals.[18] Although they often face an uncertain future after arrival, they were at least able to disembark in safe countries and did not face the same fate as thousands of others who have been pulled back by Libyan coastguards or experienced week-long disembarkation stand-offs in the Mediterranean or Andaman seas.

In October 2021, a court in **Italy** convicted a commercial ship's captain of abandonment of minors and vulnerable people when in 2018 he intercepted and "rescued" 101 migrants in the Mediterranean only to sail them to Tripoli and hand them over to Libyan authorities for detention.[19] Rights groups have long denounced the continued financial support provided to the Libyan coastguard by the EU and some member states and the interceptions and returns to Libya of migrants found in the Mediterranean. This practice

8   MMC (2021) Quarterly Mixed Migration Updates, April to June 2021; and MMC (2019) Waning welcome: the growing challenges facing mixed migration flows from Venezuela.

9   World Population Review (2021) Refugees by Country 2021; see also UNHCR's Operational Data Portals for different countries.

10   Jakes, L. (2021) 98 Countries Pledge to Accept Afghans After U.S. Military Departs. The New York Times.

11   France 24 (2021) EU pledges to help Afghanistan's neighbours to cope with refugees.

12   Carlo, A. (2021) In Italy, the Afghan exodus has sparked a heated and divisive debate. Euronews.

13   Mayors Migration Council (2021) Global Mayors Joint Statement: Welcome Afghan Refugees Now.

14   UNHCR (2021) Operational Data Portal.

15   Sea Eye (2021) Sea-Eye 4 Off to Second Rescue Mission.

16   Lin, M. (2021) Maersk Etienne crew wins Danish Shipping prize for saving Libyan migrants. Trade Winds.

17   BBC (2021) Channel crossings: More than 1,100 migrants cross in two days.

18   Paul, R. (2021) Rohingya refugee boat lands in Indonesia after 113-day voyage. Reuters; and Reuters (2021) Over 30 Rohingya caught arriving in Malaysia by boat in January: police.

19   Santalucia, P. & Winfield, N. (2021) Italy ship captain convicted after sending migrants to Libya. AP News.

is regularly cited as a normalisation of extreme actions in the annual Mixed Migration Reviews, including this edition. The criminal conviction, if upheld on appeal, could have broad political implications for Italy and the EU and possibly lead to the end of these practices and policies if by implication EU support for Libyan pullbacks also comes to be regarded as illegal. Amnesty International welcomed the verdict, saying it could establish a precedent and had already sent a message that "if other civilian or commercial ships do the same, they can be tried and convicted."[20]

3. Regularisation and paths to citizenship

Although it is a contentious policy tool, there was strong evidence of a greater receptiveness to regularising irregular migrants across several jurisdictions in 2021. While mass regularisations have occurred from time to time in various countries in the past, those in 2021 are taking place in the context of Covid-19 and a new recognition of the key role migrant workers (both irregular and regular) play in society and economies, as well as the public health imperative of including as many people as possible in vaccination and tracing efforts.[21]

Processes towards temporary regularisations were initiated in 2020 and continued in 2021 in **Italy** and **Portugal**.[22] In Italy 220,000 people applied under the programme, just under a third of the official estimate of 690,000 undocumented migrants in the country.[23] The possibility of regularisation was raised also in the **UK's** new plans for immigration despite the country's general hostile approach to irregular arrivals and post-Brexit immigration restrictions.[24] The **Irish** government expects to adopt a regularisation scheme that will allow successful applicants to begin the path to citizenship for an estimated 17,000 irregular migrants.[25]

Other countries have focussed on preventing people from becoming undocumented by extending residence permits during the Covid-19 lockdowns, including **Greece**, **Ireland**, **France, Luxembourg**, **Poland**, **Slovakia** and

Finland.[26] Even **Bahrain** and **Kuwait**, which are normally very restrictive, implemented partial measures to allow irregular migrants to work and be hired by employers.[27] Concerns associated with public health fears have driven many positive programmes around the world to include undocumented migrants in national health schemes and to reduce their invisibility to state organs without fear of censure for their irregular status.[28]

In a clear response to fears of Covid-19 spreading in **Thailand**, the government offered a new scheme to give two-year work permits to undocumented workers from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos. An estimated 600,000 to 800,000 migrants could benefit.[29] In **Malaysia**, 200,000 undocumented Bangladeshi workers were given the chance to become regularised in 2021.[30] In late 2021, **Colombia** decided to give temporary (10-year) protective legal status to Venezuelan migrants, allowing most of the 966,000 Venezuelan migrants who live in Colombia without legal status to become regularised and acquire the right to work.[31] In 2020 and 2021, **Peru** classified all migrants awaiting regularisation as regular during the Covid-19 pandemic and automatically renewed all Temporary Stay Permits, actions that together benefitted up to 782,000 people.[32]

Meanwhile, President Biden sent the **US** Citizenship Act of 2021 to Congress on his first day in office. If enacted, it would create a route to citizenship for the country's almost 11 million unlawfully resident migrants but is likely to face obstacles before being accepted. If passed, it would create the largest regularisation program in US history.[33]

4. Changing visibility and appreciation of migrant workers during Covid-19

In contrast to continuing reports of discriminatory, xenophobic, and exclusionary violations against migrant workers (and refugees) due to putative public health fears, the Covid-19 pandemic has also led to a

20 Ibid.
21 PICUM (2021) The Covid-19 Vaccines and Undocumented Migrants: What Are European Countries Doing?
22 Chesnet, P. (2020) Regularization of undocumented migrants: Portugal and Italy are taking the first steps. Italy's initiative came under fire, however, for its limited scope, unclear execution, and focus on economic dividends rather than the welfare of migrants: Human Rights Watch (2020) Italy: Flawed Migrant Regularization Program.
23 European Commission (2020) Italian government adopts targeted regularisation for migrant workers.
24 Desmond, A. (2021) The Possibility for Regularisation in the UK in Light of the New Plan for Immigration. Refugee Law Initiative.
25 Molony, S. (2021) Legal recognition to be granted for nearly 20,000 'undocumented' in Ireland. The Independent.
26 PICUM (2020) Regularising Undocumented People in Response to The Covid-19 Pandemic.
27 Mahmud, J. (2020) Special Amnesty for Undocumented Workers in Kuwait: 4,300 Bangladeshis set to return. The Daily Star; and Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (2020) Bahrain: Covid-19 labour law changes "welcome" but NGO calls on Govt. to provide assistance to workers.
28 PICUM (2021) op. cit. The Covid-related regularisation trend is not ubiquitous, however. For example, in South Africa there are fears that up to 1.5 million irregular migrants may not have access to government vaccination programmes: Chiguvare, B. (2021) South Africa: Undocumented Immigrants Left Out of Vaccination Programme. AllAfrica.
29 Wongsamuth, M. (2020) Thailand offers work permits to undocumented migrants to curb COVID-19.
30 The Business Standard (2021) Malaysia extends deadline for migrants to become legal.
31 Reuters (2021) Colombia to give temporary protective status to Venezuelan migrants. NBC News.
32 ODI (2021) Key workers. Migrants' contribution to the COVID-19 response.
33 Center for Migration Studies (2021) The US Citizenship Act of 2021: What's Inside and Who Could be Eligible for Immigration Relief.

changing visibility and appreciation of migrants in the community. Globally, migrants make up only 4.7 percent of the workforce but the role they play in societies and economies was and is disproportionately important as "essential" and "frontline" workers during the pandemic.[34]

Highly represented in the health, care, and delivery sectors, migrant workers' heightened roles during the pandemic were unignorable. Also, in other sectors such as agriculture, shortages of farm workers hit many countries. In **OECD** countries in particular, the contradiction between migrants being "low-skilled" and "irregular" at the same time as being deemed "essential" became more evident, prompted some states to reflect on the future of their immigration policies, and to consider redefining skills-based categorisations and creating new legal pathways for essential occupations, including those that are low-paid. In the **US**, nearly three quarters of all undocumented migrants are working in sectors deemed essential to the nation's critical infrastructure.[35] However, these workers are simultaneously "essential" while also facing the daily risk of detention and deportation under current immigration policies.[36]

In tandem with the expansion of regularisation programmes mentioned above, 2020 and 2021 saw numerous efforts to fast-track a range of new regulations. These variously included travel ban exemptions that allowed migrants to legitimately work in sectors where they were most needed, included migrants in public health and vaccination programmes, and improved migrants' access to emergency financial support.[37] In **Germany**, irregular migrants were permitted to work in farming for a six-month period.[38] In the **US**, various cities, including New York, ran programmes to assist undocumented migrants, which gave undocumented immigrants unemployment insurance and stimulus payments similar to those offered to other citizens, benefiting an estimated 290,000 people.[39] **Egypt** set up targeted support for irregular workers in sectors severely hit by Covid-19, providing monthly grants over three months to 1.6 million beneficiaries.[40] **South Africa** reportedly provided 30 percent of its financial support targeting small convenience shops to kiosks owned by foreigners, including refugees.[41] In many countries, medically qualified migrants, especially doctors previously barred from working, were given permits to work to support Covid-19 response efforts.[42]

Although many of these actions may be temporary and be limited by the duration of the Covid pandemic, they show a willingness to recognise, value, support, and include—rather than exclude—undocumented foreign nationals, "regular" migrants, and refugees. They also show that alternative approaches can be successfully applied in different sectors and in different ways to create a more cooperative win-win outcome between states and irregular migrants and refugees.

5. Free movement in Africa and the GCM

Despite Covid-19 travel restrictions and other policy responses, January 2021 marked the official launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the largest free trade area in the world measured by the number of participating countries since the creation of the World Trade Organisation.[43] AfCFTA is said to have the potential to lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty. Initially the agreement focuses on trade, but subsequent phases will work towards continent-wide free movement of people. Africa already has several overlapping sub-regional agreements—such as the Economic Community of West African States' Protocol on the Free Movement of People and Goods and the Southern Africa Development Community's Protocol on Facilitation of the Movement of Persons—but rules vary from region to region, while progress on the African Union's continent-wide Protocol on Free Movement of Persons has been bogged down by logistical challenges and concerns over security and sovereignty.[44]

Linkages between African states' engagement with and commitment to the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and the AfCFTA are set to accelerate progress towards continental free movement. The first continental GCM review conference was held in Morocco at the end of August; it called for greater collaboration among African states to implement the compact so as to "reap the benefits of migration for all."[45] Africa was also the first continent to develop a continental GCM implementation plan. Africa-wide free movement of people would offer huge financial and economic benefits to participating countries and massively expand legal channels for migration and, by extension, reduce irregular migration— with all its accompanying dangers and vulnerabilities.

34   Kumar, C. (2021) A year on, migrants' vital contributions to the Covid-19 response must drive lasting reforms. ODI.
35   Ibid.
36   Ibid.
37   OECD (2020) Managing international migration under COVID-19; and ODI (2021) op. cit.
38   Infomigrants (2020) Germany to allow asylum seekers to work in agriculture until October.
39   Kallick, D. (2021) New York included undocumented immigrants in pandemic aid, and 290,000 workers will benefit. Economic Policy Institute.
40   ODI (2021) op. cit.
41   Ibid.
42   Ibid.
43   The World Bank (2020) The African Continental Free Trade Area.
44   Okunade, S. (2021) Africa Moves Towards Intracontinental Free Movement for Its Booming Population. Migration Policy Institute.
45   UNECA (2021) First continental review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration concludes in Africa. Africa Renewal.

6. Halting US externalisation of asylum processing plans

Just as many countries in the world are externalising—or planning to externalise—border controls, asylum processing, and even refugee resettlement, in February 2021 the **US** ended its Asylum Cooperation Agreements (also known as safe third-country agreements) with El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.[46] Set up under the Trump administration in 2019, these arrangements created a regional precedent allowing the US to send asylum-seekers arriving at its border to one of the Central American countries to request asylum. Although they were hardly implemented (except with Guatemala) they were criticised by rights groups and UNHCR, which welcomed the decision to abandon plans they feared would lead to "chain refoulement".[47]

7. Data privacy of refugees

After a lengthy investigation, in early 2021 the Office of the **Australian** Information Commissioner found that the Australian government must compensate almost 1,300 asylum seekers whose details were mistakenly exposed online on the then Department of Immigration and Border Protection's website.[48] Almost 10,000 asylum seekers' personal details were exposed in 2014, contrary to the country's data privacy regulations. The regulatory authority has left it to the government to decide what level of compensation will be paid. It is expected the sums will range from $500 to $20,000 and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. This case highlights the need to respect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers whose data is not infrequently exposed or shared without informed consent and with possible harmful repercussions.[49]

Conclusion

The actions and policies outlined above are not meant to constitute an exhaustive list, but rather serve to illustrate the important fact that not all approaches to mixed migration are "extreme" or even harmful: it is clear that asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants still have many advocates across the world pushing for their protection, inclusion, integration, and well-being. These advocates who resist the extreme are found in various branches of state structures (including the judiciary), as well as within civil society, humanitarian organisations, the private sector, academia, and the news media.

We will continue to highlight actions that resist more negative and exclusionary stories that dominate the mixed migration discourse in future editions of the MMR.

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46   Al Jazeera (2021) US to end deals to send asylum seekers back to Central America.
47   UNHCR (2020) UNHCR welcomes expansion of Guatemala's asylum capacity.
48   Knaus, C. (2021) Australian government ordered to pay 1,300 asylum seekers whose details were exposed. The Guardian.
49   Human Rights Watch (2021) UN Shared Rohingya Data Without Informed Consent.

Pushing back against the norm

Violence, deterrence, militarization, surveillance, and externalization are the grim building blocks of an increasingly dystopian fortress Europe, according to **Simon Campbell**, whose work painstakingly catalogues abuses at the EU's borders, both external and internal. For Campbell, key aspects of the proposed New Pact on Migration and Asylum are both unrealistic and a recipe for further abuse.

Simon Campbell is a field coordinator with the Border Violence Monitoring Network, a collective of watchdog organisations documenting pushbacks in the Balkans. Campbell is also part of the organising team for Border Abolition 2021, a conference involving activists, researchers, and people on the move exploring ways to challenge the racialised, carceral borders and their innate violence.

What is the Border Violence Monitoring Network?

The network is comprised of different organizations based across the Balkan routes and its primary function is to document and denounce border violence, and that takes the shape mostly of interviews with people on the move at borders across south-eastern Europe and tracking different types of police brutality and essentially what is going on in terms of these illegal removals. The purpose of this documentation is to try and give a voice to that situation and to bring that evidence to political stakeholders, different publics, and advocate for an end to that violence. I'd say pushback documentation is the mainstay of our work, we also are looking at things like internal violence, camp conditions, and various different things that are affecting, say, transit through this route. We started four years ago, first with a simple documentation project made up of different grassroots organisations that were taking these interviews and then analysing the data for a database, and it's grown since then to do various different functions and investigating

agencies like Frontex, looking particularly into litigation and options for trying to bring justice for particular individuals subject to pushbacks. In a nutshell, it's a documentation project based on this first-hand evidence of people and that has always been the most important part of the project.

How would you characterize the EU's approach to migration and asylum in recent years?

Both through asylum and the visa regime that's upheld by the EU, as well as physical practices at the border, there's a common thread that is to try and prevent people from moving through the external border, internal borders, and from being able to settle inside the countries. And then coupled with that, you have this really high level of violence and deterrence, surveillance, and externalisation. On the whole, the bloc has been attempting to shut down, in some ways successfully, access to Europe for people on the move, who are moving for various different reasons.

How does the EU balance the need to have a collective approach, but at the same time allow member states to protect their own borders?

I think there's sometimes quite a big distance between what it says in EU directives and how that is applied by the member states. Often this gap between application on the borders or on a national level and how that plays out, and the functions at EU level is utilised, both by the EU and member states, to excuse themselves from responsibility and this creates grey zones. We've seen that with Hungary but also with Croatia and other states. And trying to square this is certainly a tricky one because I think that's something central to the EU, not just in terms of migration, but various other topical issues. What I would propose would be drastically different to what's come up in the proposed pact recently, and that is to try to move away from this strengthening of the EU external border and look at the fact that border policies and asylum are something that need to be addressed across the breadth of the continent.

> " **Some EU states argue 2015 was chaos, but I would argue that they created that chaos with the way they distributed refugees and asylum seekers at the time and then the way they've treated them since then.** "

Do you recognise that states feel that they can't allow a repeat of the 2015-2016 unregulated influx of migrants and asylum seekers into Europe, and the social and political panic that it caused?

I think because of the poor way that it was handled back in 2015, which actually led to a lot of populist movements and then kind of collapsed this welcome culture in Europe, it is no surprise that states are now on the defensive and have spent the last five years building up both political narratives and also structures that allow them to defer responsibility. And that means putting a lot of pressure on the external borders and many states on the external border, but also closing off any options for proper resettlement and the ability of people to be moving into various different EU countries and actually accessing asylum or finding legal means to stay there. So I think on a political level, those states have found a niche where they can argue 2015 was chaos, but I would argue that they created that chaos with the way they distributed refugees and asylum seekers at the time and then the way they've treated them since then.

The EU commissioner for home affairs recently described the New Pact on Migration and Asylum as a "long-term migration policy that can translate

European values into practical management that fundamentally protects the right to seek asylum." What is BVMN's view on that kind of statement?

I would say it was laughable if the content of it wasn't so concerning. My colleagues are also heavily critical of it. I'm not even sure if the pact would be implementable. Right now detention and removal are occurring at the 'green border ' [the technical term for the stretch of border between official border crossings] through nefarious and illegal means and not necessarily at border crossings or official centres. The proposals they're making concerning fast-tracking and screening asylum applications, within sometimes three to five days, without effective remedies for masses of people in very concentrated border areas are quite ridiculous, really. The countries that would be implementing this on the EU border are already guilty of not being able to uphold asylum systems as it is, but asking them to do that in a higher speed manner within centres or concentrated areas just is not functional at all. I think this is just further and further curtailing the rights of people in terms of access to asylum, and the pact is somehow entrenching that even more.

Has the coronavirus pandemic served as a pretext to weaponise health security in order to implement harsher border management?

It certainly has. You have the more obvious stuff in terms of the lockdown, disproportionate lockdowns of camps, and curfews against people on the move within countries, which has happened all across the Balkans and Greece. Then particular types of violence were used as well during the pandemic that we've never seen before. We had small patterns on the Croatian border where officers were tagging people on their heads with cans of spray paint during these initial Covid pushbacks. [We've had] strippings, and beatings and things like this. I think a lot of the changes were related more to spaces and where pushbacks were occurring from. You had countries like Serbia and Greece and other locations taking people directly from camps and detention centres and then removing them across the border just because there was a complete void in monitoring. But many other countries had real trouble tracking what was going on because of the lack of mobility and access to certain spaces.

> " **The proposals the EU is making concerning fast-tracking and screening asylum applications without effective remedies for masses of people in very concentrated border areas are quite ridiculous.** "

> **Types of violence have been used during the Covid-19 pandemic that we've never seen before.**

There was an expansion of these deep interior pushbacks, which are just as illegal as picking someone up off the street or in the forest when they're walking. People from presumably safe spaces, or what would be referred to as those being inside a camp, being pushed back was a novel feature of the pandemic. And you saw that a higher number of security forces and military were involved in these kinds of pushbacks. In Slovenia, they tried to invoke an article to bring the military to the border during the pandemic. Serbia garrisoned quite a few of their camps with the military during the pandemic to lock them down. On a practical level, a lot of these authorities used the opportunity to expand repressive powers.

The biggest example of this was when Italy entered the scene in terms of chain pushbacks, and started an extensive process of domino pushbacks from the Trieste area down to Bosnia, which had not ever been seen before, and really kicked off in May. And they essentially used the Covid quarantine camp they set up on the border as an ad-hoc site for fast tracking people under an old readmissions agreement from the '90s. But they knew full well, when they were doing that, they were violating both the asylum rights, but also condemning those people to a direct chain pushback to Bosnia or Serbia.

Can you explain what you mean by a "chain pushback"?

In a direct pushback, someone is removed from one country back to the country that they've entered from; the chain pushback involves multiple versions of this. We've recorded up to four countries involved, although this could go even further than that. For example, someone caught in Italy who is removed by Italian authorities to Slovenia, then, usually the same day, by Slovenian authorities to Croatia and then likewise from Croatia to Bosnia. And so we refer to this as a chain pushback. These differ from some of the very informal direct pushbacks because they involve a pretence of legality. Italy and Slovenia used the shell of bilateral readmission agreements and often got people to sign paperwork, generally un-translated and with coercion. They're trying to give at least a facade that these are formal readmissions from one country to the next. But implicit within these chain pushbacks is that they know the receiving authority is immediately going to take the person to the southern border and kick them out into the next country. And so you get these cases where both from Italy and Austria, within 24 to 48 hours people are already back into Bosnia or Serbia from where they left maybe two weeks earlier.

We see this also in locations like Serbia, where people

are pushed through North Macedonia to Greece, and also the fact that people are often picked up in Greece and removed to Turkey. So you get this effective game of snakes and ladders going on along this transitory route. It just makes the situation of the transit community so precarious because you have no security when you know that not only might you be pushed back into the previous country that you transited, but you might be 300-400 kilometres further down the route the next day.

Is a tacit deterrence approach at work here to establish a hostile environment? Or is it just the actions of individual officials and guards?

I would say there definitely is unspoken deterrence elements going on, particularly at the EU level, and also on the ground. When we interview people, we're hearing them explaining that they are receiving a lot of racist Islamophobic abuse, and within that, a lot of the threats are, "Do not enter this country again or we will kill you". So it's quite verbally expressed by officers when they're carrying out pushbacks. This is state-led violence, but it also melds far-right narratives around replacement theory and the idea of "protecting borders" against people from outside an ethnically white Europe. At a state and EU level, there's also heavy awareness that while they're denying that the pushbacks and this kind of violence is going on, there is a high level of facilitation. The best example is the Schengen situation in Croatia where there's a carrot and stick scenario: the [European] Commission has been speeding up further and further towards Schengen membership for Croatia in spite of its government-sanctioned high levels of torture and violence against people on the move. The timings of these announcements have all coincided with some quite big scandals related to border violence, and yet [the Commission] seems to be rewarding [Croatia] or not making their Schengen membership contingent on the fundamental rights element of border protection. So I think it's very true to say that there's a high level of deterrence in the back of the mind of officers who are carrying this out, who are really trying to instil that into people on the move.

> **We've had reports of a lot of racist Islamophobic abuse. A lot of the threats are, 'Do not enter this country again or we will kill you'.**

Do you think deterrence approaches like this work at all?

It's not effective. By their metrics, yes: it's not senseless violence in the eyes of perpetrators, as there is an intended level of harm that they are achieving on a daily basis. But deterrence in terms of human mobility simply does not work because the EU can't hope to influence things with the kind of policy they have on the Croatian

border when someone has already travelled for months or even years through Iran or Afghanistan, facing high forms of violence along the way already. And the fact that they think it works just goes to show what they perceive of people who are in transit and their reasons for trying to settle and why they're taking the route. I think it's not functional as a system. All it does is create traumatized people, and that's, again, perhaps an ulterior motive, but it's a pretty dark one.

The Black Book of Pushbacks, which BVMN published late last year, contained vivid testimony from more than 12,000 people. Would you say these accounts show pushbacks are no longer an exception, but the preferred approach of some states?

Pushbacks are the norm for countries at the external frontier of the EU, but countries further into the EU interior also use forced returns by flight as a means of expulsion. Having spent time in Bosnia and countries like it, I've never encountered anybody returned through the readmissions agreement. These are the processes that are going on; there's a very small minority of legally formed removals from those countries through the border crossings and pushbacks just seem to reign as the predominant practice.

Considering the claims and the evidence of serious crimes in The Black Book, it didn't get very wide publicity in the press. Have we become inured to the normalization of these kinds of extreme cases?

Unfortunately, I think there is just a fatigue within the media around reporting on migration, and unless there are very visceral videos or footage that can be used to illustrate something new, in a sense, it's quite difficult to break that, and we found that not just with The Black Book but with multiple other stories. These are massive issues affecting thousands of people, and sometimes I struggle to know what that speaks to. Is it an ambivalence on the part of the public and media? Is it purely that this story has been, in many senses, repeated in the last five years, over and over again, and therefore people aren't responsive to it? We're always trying to find ways of getting that information out there to people, and I am sure that the populism on the European and domestic levels is playing a role in that approach to migration.

Do you think migrants are distorting the response to genuine asylum seekers? Or are all these definitions unhelpful?

We're advocating for people on the move, so we see that as a broad category of anybody who's transiting this route, whether or not they're presenting as an asylum seeker, and asylum law is a key aspect of what we're reporting on. We're advocating for the rights of anybody who shouldn't be treated violently by law enforcement when they're found in a country, but also beyond just their initial treatment when they're found; they should have legal means of accessing these territories and securing work or a permanent residence.

Would you say your network is primarily focused on ending what you call the "merciless, sadistic and degrading violence"? Or do you also advocate for open borders for migrants and asylum seekers? Are you an open-border organization?

We represent a diversity of tactics, I suppose, as BVMN, and you have persons such as myself and other people in the group who are part of abolitionist struggles. But as a network, in terms of the work we're doing, we use pragmatic advocacy channels that are trying to create reform to border policy.

> **"Deterrence is not functional as a system. All it does is create traumatized people, and that's perhaps an ulterior motive, but it's pretty dark one."**

Do you feel the main UN agencies dealing with migrants and refugees such as UNHCR and IOM are addressing the issue of pushback sufficiently?

The short answer I would say is, not sufficiently, no. I think there's an increasing attention to pushbacks from the UN and its various functions. We would like to see them more actively involved. I know members of our advocacy group have been submitting reports to them and joining meetings in Greece and Croatia to push for that change. They are present in a lot of locations where pushbacks are occurring, and we would like them to be perhaps more vocal in calling those out. However, that said, I think in the last years, there have been steps taken and there's more of a cohesive response to pushback going on. But there's also a need for agencies like IOM to look at the bordering practices they are creating, such as with camps and voluntary returns, because these also represent a politics of externalisation.

You've spoken about the use of technology in border management by Frontex and by states. You've made a submission to the UN special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, xenophobia, and related intolerance. Why is the use of technology such big concern for BVMN?

There is a certain orthodoxy at the moment that military grade tech can be used in migration. I would

say that it shouldn't be the normality that drones or thermal imaging cameras and things like this are used to apprehend people in border areas and then to push them back. I think it's highly problematic that this technology is being concentrated purely for the purpose of carrying out illegal removals, and that a lot of this is being funded through instruments like the EU's internal security fund, but also bilaterally funded or sent by states like Germany and countries who are actively involved in this externalization on their own. We're focusing a lot on drones, helicopters, surveillance equipment like this, but I think on the other hand, you have systems like Eurodac and the Centaur system that's been rolled out in Greek camps and Roborder pilot schemes.   The increasing use of surveillance as an accompanying accessory or tool within detention is extremely worrying. It's borders and interiors where you're seeing an expanded use of this and not for the good of people. I'm more pro-technology when it's benefiting people, not for controlling mobility.

> **"Agencies like IOM need to look at the bordering practices they are creating, such as with camps and voluntary returns, because these also represent a politics of externalisation."**

A very vivid example is the Orbiter3, which is used on the Croatian borders. These are drones developed by the Israeli weapons industry who are using this technology in the West Bank for their settler colonial policies. That gives you a sense of what this tech is really for.

Do you, as an organization, have any aspiration to conduct this type of pushback monitoring elsewhere? Or are you already joining with networks that are doing the same elsewhere?

We would like the topic of pushbacks and activism and advocacy around it to have as loud and as effective a voice as possible, whether that means us taking a role in documenting it at the borders and therefore involving different organizations. We're already quite proactive in collaborating with people who are, for instance, covering the central Med, or looking at pushbacks from the Spanish enclaves, in Ceuta and Melilla, but also through more periodic events and actions, where we connected up with our activists on the US-Mexico border. So I think trying to build effective local voices within these transnational movements is the key for us.

What do you personally think of the future of border management, migration, and asylum? Are you pessimistic or optimistic?

I tend to be the pessimist. At a regional level, what's going on now politically, I'm quite pessimistic at the

way things are going. And I believe it is looking fairly dystopian in the application of these externalization policies. Just to give one example, this expansion of Frontex, the standing corps, the fact that they're working in non-EU states and the Western Balkans and also Western Africa, this neo-colonial approach to the externalization of borders is really, really concerning, and I think will characterize the next years.
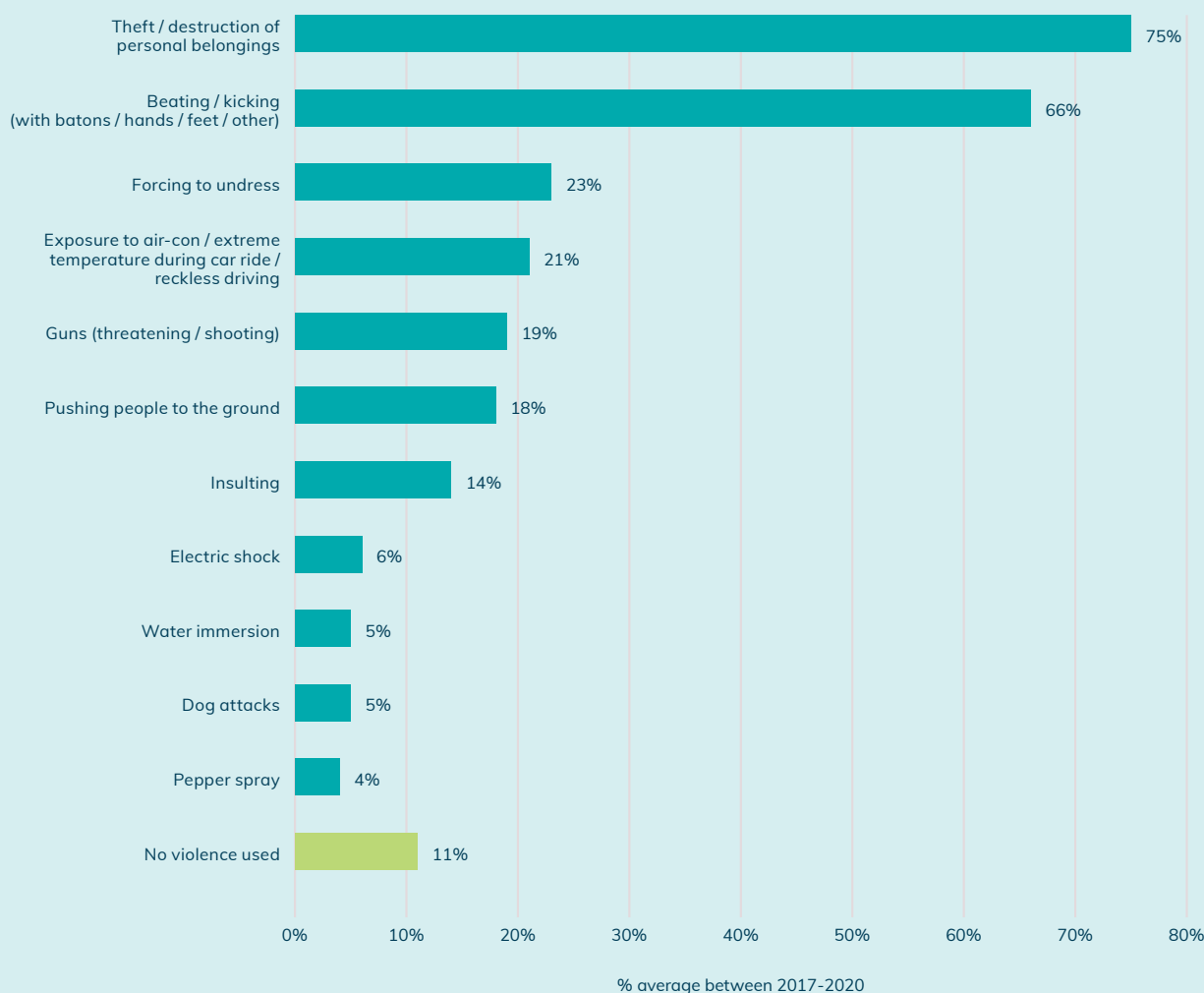
Calling out Pushbacks

In mid-2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Felipe González Morales, delivered a report to the UN's Human Rights Council on means to address the human rights impact of pushbacks on land and sea. Pushbacks are increasingly coming under scrutiny as damning evidence mounts and multiple agencies on the ground in different countries and border regions collect testimony from migrants and asylum seekers. Between January and April 2021, civil society organisations in the Protecting Rights at Borders (PRAB) coalition collected testimonies in six different countries about 2,162 cases of pushbacks, including "chain pushbacks". These are forced expulsions across multiple borders, where migrants or refugees—via informal cooperation between different states—are sent from one state through others to a country where in many cases they have never set foot. The graphics below are adapted from the Border Violence Monitoring Network's (BVMN) 2020 Black Book of Pushbacks, which is based on almost 900 testimonies detailing the experiences of almost 13,000 people between 2017 and 2020. An in-depth interview with BVMN field coordinator Simon Campbell can be found on page 214. Further documentation of more extreme actions against those in mixed migration is presented in Normalising the Extreme on page 200.

Most common types of violence used in pushbacks
How often does which type of violence occur in testimonies collected by BVMN
(Note: More than one type of violence occurs in the testimonies collected by the Network).

Type of violence	%
Theft / destruction of personal belongings	75%
Beating / kicking (with batons / hands / feet / other)	66%
Forcing to undress	23%
Exposure to air-con / extreme temperature during car ride / reckless driving	21%
Guns (threatening / shooting)	19%
Pushing people to the ground	18%
Insulting	14%
Electric shock	6%
Water immersion	5%
Dog attacks	5%
Pepper spray	4%
No violence used	11%

% average between 2017-2020

Pushbacks involving minors

Percentage of testimonies in which at least one affected person was under 18 years old.

2017
45% | 26% | 29%

2018
47% | 40% | 13%

2019
36% | 58% | 6%

2020
42% | 46% | 12%

- ■ Yes
- ■ No
- ■ Unknown
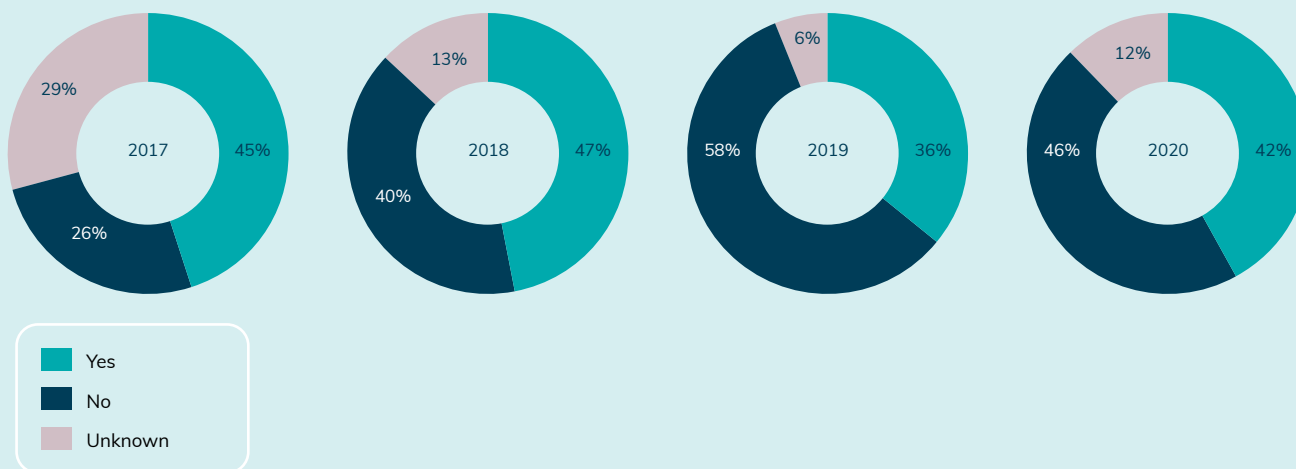
Intention to ask for asylum

Percentage of testimonies in which the affected people were pushed back, even though they expressed an intention to seek international protection

2017
60% | 11% | 30%

2018
68% | 23% | 9%

2019
54% | 42% | 4%

2020
35% | 49% | 16%

- ■ Yes
- ■ No
- ■ Unknown
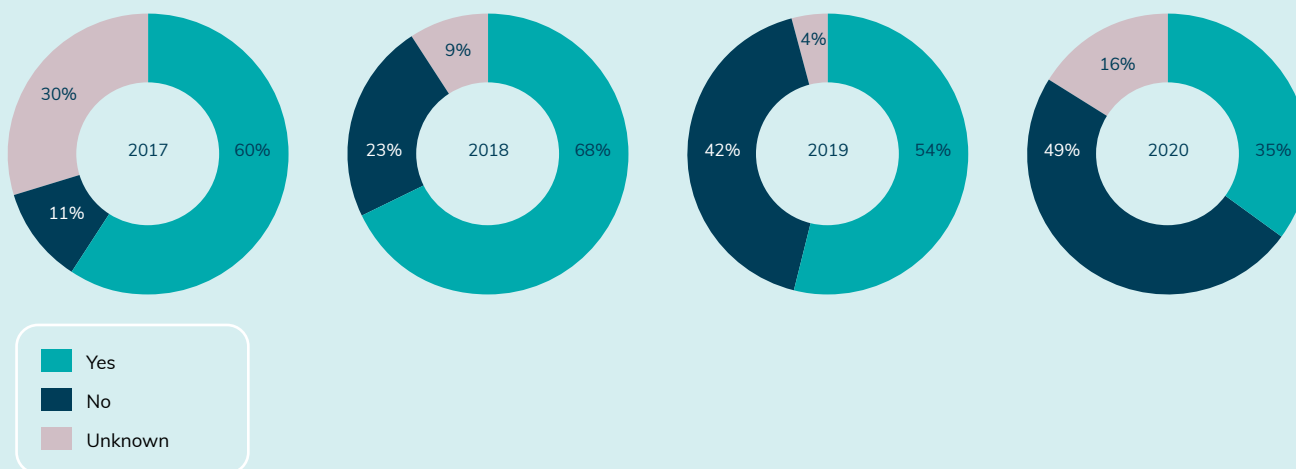
Lucrative barriers, deadly consequences

The ballooning business of securitising migration and militarising borders is worth billions of dollars. As a self-interested private sector strives to steer public policy towards seeing those on the move as a threat requiring costly mitigation, mixed migration itself is becoming increasingly perilous.

By Mark Akkerman[1]

On 1 October 2020 EU's border and coastguard agency, Frontex, concluded contracts worth up to €50 million with arms companies Airbus, Israel Aerospace Industries, and Elbit, for drone border surveillance services in the Mediterranean.[2] That same month, at least 612 people died trying to cross this sea.[3] These figures are not just a snapshot, they are exemplary of the two sides of the EU's militarised border policies: while military and security companies have raked in billions of euros providing equipment and services for a continuous increase in border security and control, thousands and thousands of migrants have died trying to reach Europe, or have ended up being detained, deported or forced to live in inhumane circumstances in refugee camps or as "illegals". Borders mean death for some, profits for others.

The border security and control market

The international market for border security and control is growing rapidly. Recent market research reports predict large growth in specific fields. The border security market is set to see annual growth of between 7.2% and 8.6%, reaching a total of $65-68 billion by 2025.[4] Europe stands out with an anticipated annual growth rate of 15%.[5] Large expansion is also expected in the global biometrics and artificial intelligence (AI) markets, which have a considerable border- and migration-control component.[6]

Yet, compared to the global military market, which rose to $1,981 billion in 2020[7], the border security market is still quite small. There are other aspects that make it important for the military and security industry though, such as diversifying portfolios so as not to be dependent on one specific thematic market. Only recently has the EU begun to fund military research and the development of new arms, while funding for security research has been a part of EU Framework Programmes for research for many years. Border security exports can help open up markets in a broader sense by introducing a company to the relevant authorities. And borders are also an ideal testing ground for new technologies, because their use there seldom stirs up much controversy and debate. Refugees and migrants "often become guinea pigs on which to test new surveillance tools before bringing them to the wider population".[8]

Industrial lobby

The importance of the border security and control market for the military and security industry has spurred a lobby which has significant influence in shaping Europe's border and migration policies. The two leading lobby organisations of the European military and security industry are the Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD) and the European Organisation for Security (EOS). EOS has been most active on the topic of border security. In the field of biometrics, an important growth market, the European Association for Biometrics (EAB) is the primary industry organisation. Its close relations to EU authorities are visible in that Frontex and eu-LISA (European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice) officials participate in EAB's advisory council.[9] Moreover, large arms companies also have their own lobby offices in Brussels, the centre of European power.

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1 Mark Akkerman is a researcher at Stop Wapenhandel (Dutch Campaign Against Arms Trade) and works with the Transnational Institute on the topic of border militarisation. He has also written and campaigned on issues such as arms exports to the Middle East, the private military and security sector, greenwashing the arms trade, and the militarisation of climate change responses.
2 European Union (2020) Poland-Warsaw: Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) for Medium Altitude Long Endurance Maritime Aerial Surveillance, 2020/S 196-473315, Contract award notice. Tenders Electronic Daily.
3 IOM (n.d.) Missing Migrants – Mediterranean.
4 Global Reports Store (2019) Global Border Security System Industry is Estimated to Grow at a CAGR of 8.6 and Reach Up To 67.81 Billion by 2025; Market Research Future (2019) Border Security Market Research Report - Global Forecast till 2025.
5 Homeland Security Research (2017) Smart Borders, Immigration Enforcement & Border Security Markets in Europe—2017-2022.
6 Akkerman, M. (2021) Financing Border Wars. Stop Wapenhandel/TNI.
7 SIPRI (2021) World military spending rises to almost $2 trillion in 2020.
8 Molnar, P. & Naranjo, D. (2020) Surveillance Won't Stop the Coronavirus. New York Times.
9 European Association for Biometrics (n.d.) EAB Advisory Council.

Graphic 1. Lobbying in Brussels (2019)

Name	Lobby budget (€m) (2019)	Number of FTE* lobbyists in Brussels	Number of meetings with European Commission since December 2014
Airbus	1.75-2.0	4.75	215
Leonardo	0.3-0.4	3.00	43
Thales	0.3-0.4	2.75	26
ASD	0.2-0.3	3.00	49
EOS	0.1-0.2	2.00	18

Source: EU Transparency Register[10] / *Full-time equivalent

Company lobbyists and representatives of these lobby organisations regularly meet with EU institutions, including the European Commission and Frontex; are part of official advisory committees; publish influential proposals; organise meetings between industry, policy-makers and executives; and meet at many military and security fairs; conferences, and seminars around the world.[11]

Industrial lobbying also plays a role in shaping US and Australian border and migration policies, where company donations to political candidates and representatives is an aspect of lobbying efforts that is less seen in Europe. In the US, candidates from both major parties received tens of millions of dollars in donations during the 2020 election campaign.[12] Canstruct, a company that earned over A$120 million ($90 million) managing the Australian detention centre in Papua New Guinea, is linked to at least 11 donations to Australia's ruling coalition government between 2017 and 2020.[13]

Policies of securitisation and militarisation

While the military and security industry is not alone in trying to shape Europe's border and migration policies, it has been and remains influential in setting the underlying narrative, pushing for concrete proposals, and subsequently implementing them.

Regarding the narrative, the industry has framed mixed migration as a security problem, portraying refugees and migrants as a threat to Europe. Once an issue has been defined in terms of a security problem, a militarised response to solve it becomes the next logical step. The EU and its member states have been firmly on this course for many years already, deploying military personnel and equipment to the borders to stop migration, launching military Operation Sophia around the Libyan coast, building a standing border guard corps for Frontex, and so on. Here the industry stands ready with a constant flow of new equipment and technologies, presenting them as necessary to deal with (irregular) migration. In parallel, it promotes new policies, which offer opportunities for sales, and budget increases for spending on border security and control.

The ongoing expansion of Frontex from an agency coordinating EU member states' border security efforts into a more independent border guard agency, with its own standing border guards corps and equipment for border security operations, with a budget that has been rising rapidly since 2015, had for example been proposed by the industry for several years before. In September 2010, EOS already proposed the creation of "an EU level Border Guards capability able of supporting MS [member states] interventions, providing resources in case of crisis with a capability for basin-wide monitoring, directly operated by Frontex and using, where appropriate, aerial visualization".[14]

10 European Commission (n.d) Transparency Register. Accessed 8 June 2021 (some data as compiled by LobbyFacts.eu.)
11 Akkerman, M. (2019) The Business of Building Walls. TNI/Stop Wapenhandel
12 Miller, T. & Buxton, N. (2021) Biden's Border: The industry, the Democrats and the 2020 elections. TNI/Mijente/AFSC
13 McKenzie, N. & Baker, R. (2021) Big profits in asylum-seeker contracts as workers say thy felt 'cheated, exploited'. Sidney Morning Herald.
14 EOS/EU ISS Task Force (2010) Concrete actions contributing to the foundation of the EU Internal Security Strategy as proposed by EOS. (Currently unavailable online, available from Ravenstone Consult by request.)

Graphic 2. Annual budget of the border control agency Frontex in Euro 2005 to 2021 (forecast)

Source: https://fragdenstaat.de/en/action/frontex/
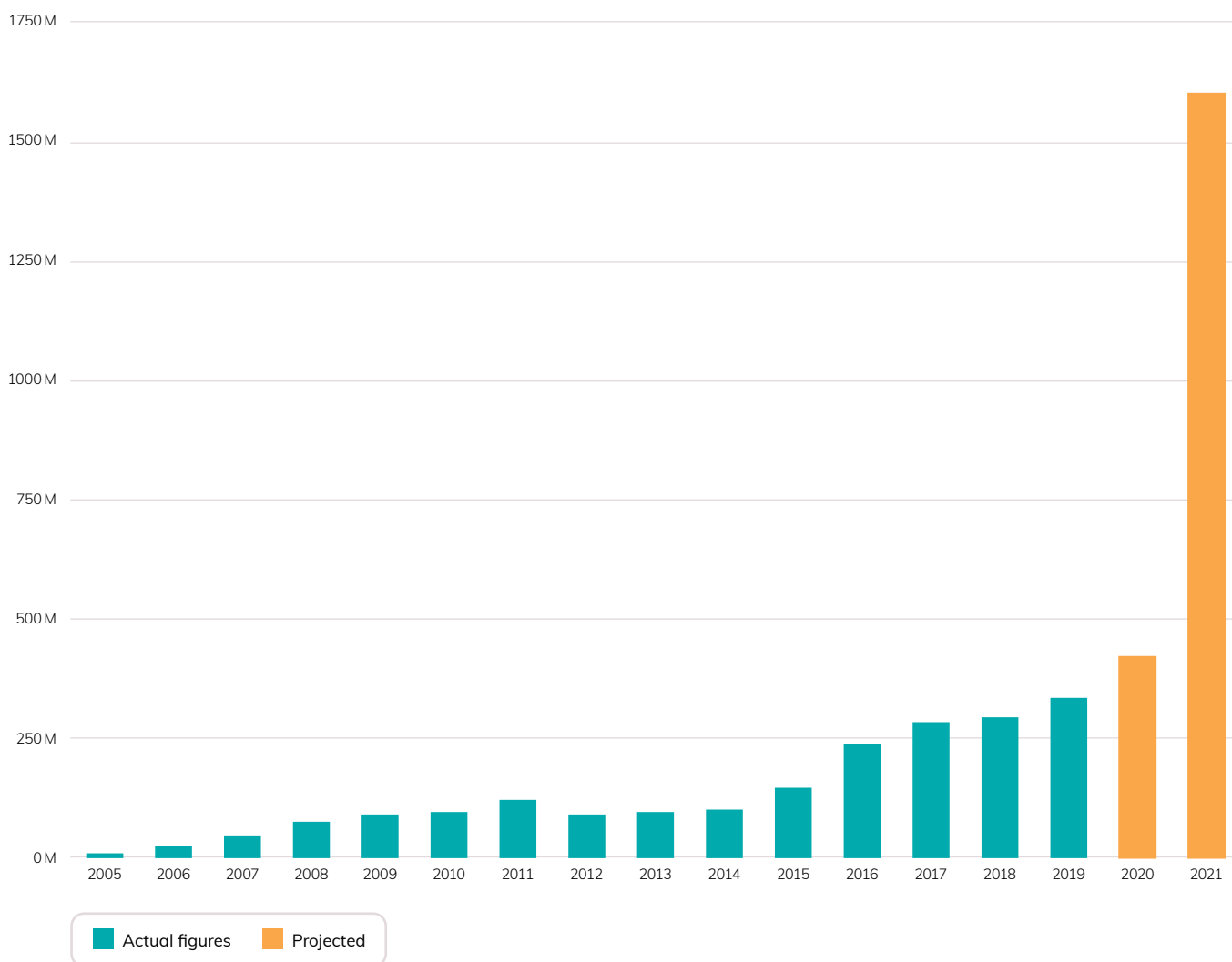
Another example, where a proposal from the industry was mirrored almost exactly by a subsequent European Commission proposal, is the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), which was established as a fund to support peace-building and crisis response in non-EU countries. Lobby organisation ASD in 2016 proposed broadening the criteria of the fund, allowing for the supply of non-lethal security equipment and services for "border control" and "counter-terrorism".[15] This was precisely what happened: the EU opened up the IcSP to cover military and security "training, mentoring and advice, the provision of non-lethal equipment, infrastructure improvements and other services" and increased the budget.[16] Meanwhile, even before adopting

these changes, the IcSP had already been used to finance the €20-million purchase of six vessels from Dutch shipbuilder Damen for the Turkish coast guard, to expand its border patrol capacities.[17]

More recently, the industry has jumped on the Covid-19 pandemic to argue for more border security and control efforts. In April 2020, EOS stated that "Europe needs to increase its resilience against present and future threats, both of natural and malicious origin" and that "the EU will need to manage its external borders to prevent the uncontrolled entry of people infected by transmissible pathogens".[18] Somewhat understandably, many countries set up more rigid border controls during

15   ASD (2016) Considerations on 'Capacity building in support of security and development (CBSD) in third countries'.
16   European Commission (2016) Questions and Answers: Commission proposes measures in support of security and development in partner countries.
17   IOM (2017) €20 Million EU project in support of Turkish Coast Guard seeks to save more migrant lives.
18   EOS (2020) EOS Statement on the priorities of the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

the pandemic to contain the spread of the virus, but it is highly likely that at least part of the new measures will stay in place after the immediate threat of the pandemic has subsided, to the detriment of the lives and rights of refugees and migrants. Similarly, biometrics companies were quick to jump on the bandwagon of requests for identification technologies without the need for human contact, in particular developing and promoting new facial recognition technologies.[19]

Outsourcing

Instead of buying equipment or services from corporations, states increasingly outsource complete lines of work (or parts thereof) to private companies. This takes place in different areas of the border security and control field. Examples of such outsourced areas include the management of detention centres (sometimes including guards from private companies), deportations, and Frontex border surveillance. Last year, Malta hired three privately owned fishing trawlers to intercept migrant boats in the Mediterranean and force them back to Libya.[20]

Outsourcing often results in large long-running contracts for private companies, but it comes with an extra price in terms of reducing the transparency, democratic oversight, and accountability of border work as the state relinquishes its role. Private companies operate from a logic of cutting costs and maximising profits, leading to sub-standard work practices, understaffing and excessive workloads, use of defective equipment and inadequate facilities, especially in working with vulnerable people, such as detained refugees and migrants.[21]

Rise of new technologies and autonomous systems

The use of drones and other unmanned and autonomous systems for border security has become ever more important in recent years. Like Frontex with its €50 million contract for drone surveillance services, many European countries, as well as Australia and the US, have increased the use of drones for border security.[22] Turkey and the US also introduced smart towers, provided by Aselsan (Turkey) and Andrul Industries (US), on their borders, using cameras, virtual reality systems, and radars to detect border crossings.[23] To deter refugees and migrants, Greece started to use sound cannons on its land border with Turkey.[24]

The use of armed autonomous weapon systems at borders against mixed migration crossing attempts has been proposed by industry, for example to Frontex, but so far has not become a reality.[25] However, the use of unarmed autonomous systems can also have serious consequences. Drone Wars UK points to "the risk that the use of drones, as a primarily military technology, in border control will contribute to the dehumanisation of those attempting to cross borders and increase the potential for human rights abuses."[26] The growing use of drones for surveillance in the Mediterranean, instead of crewed aircraft and vessels, has resulted in an evasion of humanitarian responsibilities to rescue migrant boats in distress.[27] Drones have also been used to facilitate illegal pushbacks in the Balkans.[28] And a study in the US concluded that the use of new surveillance technologies, including drones, at the US–Mexico border led to an increase in deaths, mainly by pushing refugees and migrants to take more dangerous routes.[29]

The use of artificial intelligence, especially in the context of decision-making, for border security and control is still in its infancy, but already very controversial. The iBorderCtrl (Intelligent Portable Border Control System) project, funded by the EU with €4.5 million under the Horizon 2020 research programme, developed and tested an AI-based avatar interviewing system with a lie detector for border control.[30] Even the consortium that ran the project had to admit that "some technologies are not covered by the existing legal framework, meaning that they could not be implemented without a democratic political decision establishing a legal basis."[31]

Border externalisation

The EU increasingly enlists third countries as outpost border guards, to stop migrants and refugees before they even reach its external borders. This practice involves dozens of non-EU countries, which are pressured in to acting according to the EU's wishes using a carrot-and-stick approach, with promises of better trade deals, visa liberalisation, and financial support, training and equipment as carrots, and threats of withholding development aid money as sticks. This has far-reaching consequences, not only for refugees and migrants— who encounter more obstacles and violence, have their human rights violated, and are forced to embark

19 Akkerman, M. (2020) Covid-19 and Border Politics. TNI and Stop Wapenhandel.
20 Kingsley, P. & Willis, H. (2020) Latest Tactic to Push Migrants From Europe? A Private, Clandestine Fleet. New York Times.
21 Akkerman, M. (2021) op. cit.
22 Burt, P. & Frew, J. (2020) Crossing a Line: the use of drones to control borders Drone Wars UK.
23 Levy, S. (2018) Inside Palmer Luckey's bid to build a border wall. Wired; Hürriyet Daily News (2019) Turkey improves border security with smart system.
24 AP News (2021) EU concerned about Greek use of anti-migrant sound cannon.
25 Email exchanges between Frontex and industry representatives, as released under a Freedom of Information request to Frontex.
26 Burt, P. & Frew, J. (2020) op. cit.
27 Ahmed, K. (2020) EU accused of abandoning migrants to the sea with shift to drone surveillance. The Guardian.
28 Border Violence Monitoring Network (2020) The role of technology in illegal push-backs from Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.
29 Boyce, G., Chambers, S. & Launius, S. (2019) Democrats' "smart border" technology is not a "humane" alternative to Trump's wall. The Hill.
30 iBordeerCtrl? No! (n.d.) What is iBorderCtrl?
31 iBorderCtrl (n.d.) Frequently Asked Questions.

on more dangerous migration routes in the charge of often-abusive smugglers—but also for the population of many of these countries themselves. Development aid is diverted to border security and control. Internal stability and development are undermined, for example by disrupting local migration patterns which negatively impacts local economies based on facilitating migration. Authoritarian regimes, and in particular their military and security forces, are legitimised and strengthened.[32]

This is not something that is unique to the EU. The US disburses billions of dollars and donates a wide array of equipment to increase border security capacities all over the world. This includes its 'Frontera Sur' programme to strengthen Mexico's southern border with Guatemala.[33] Australia also cooperates with and funds neighbouring countries' border security measures. An important part of this is its offshore processing system under which refugees and migrants arriving by boat are detained on Nauru and Papua New Guinea.[34] In 2022, Australia will spend A$812 million ($607 million) on this system, almost A$3.4 million ($2.5 million) per person held.[35]

All of these border externalisation policies and practices open up new business opportunities for military and security companies. This isn't just a case of an industry that adapts to EU policies and takes the money. EU border externalisation is also used to stimulate and encourage more states and corporations to invest in border security and thereby foster "a hugely profitable export market for the European arms industry". [36]

EU instruments and budgets

EU spending on border security and control has been steadily increasing, most notably since the so-called "migration crisis" in 2015 when the expenditure curve steepened dramatically. Billions of euros have been channelled to strengthen border security and control at the EU level, in member states, and in third countries. Alongside existing instruments, the EU spent €6 billion on its 2016 migration deal with Turkey alone. At the end of June 2021, the European Commission proposed to spend another €3 billion to "support refugees in Turkey until 2024" and to "support Turkey to manage migration at its Eastern border".[37]

The EU increased the budget of Frontex to €5.6 billion under the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2021-2027),[38] of which an unknown part is earmarked for purchasing or leasing equipment. The Integrated Border Management Fund, with a budget of €7.39 billion, consists of the Border Management and Visa Instrument and the Customs Control Equipment Instrument.[39] It is meant to strengthen capacities of member states and to fund training, consultancy, equipment purchases, and so on. Compared to its predecessors (the External Borders Fund (2007-2013) and the Internal Security Fund - Borders (2014-2020)) this again marks a huge budget increase.[40] There are several other EU sources of funding for border security efforts in non-member states, including the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), the new European Neighbourhood Instrument, the above-mentioned IcSP, and the off-budget European Peace Facility.

Big winners: the military and security industry

As pointed out above, the military and security industry is the main beneficiary of the EU's militarised border policies. Large European arms companies such as Airbus (pan-European), Leonardo (Italy) and Thales (France) are among the most important companies in the European border security market. The same companies are major exporters of arms to the Middle East and North Africa, where they are deployed in wars and other types of armed conflict, as well as in civilian repression and human rights violations. All of these are push factors for mass forced displacement and migration, putting these companies in the unique position of doubly profiting from the same group of people: first by contributing to the drivers of their migration, then by providing the equipment and services to impede their journeys.[41]

Other companies are big players in specific aspects of border security and control. The Spanish firm European Security Fencing was for a long time the sole provider of concertina razor wire that can be found on border walls and fences across Europe. Dutch shipbuilder Damen has provided border patrol vessels to many Mediterranean countries, including Turkey and Libya, as well as the UK. The French IT consultancy firm Sopra Steria is the prime contractor for the development and maintenance of EU's

32 Akkerman, M. (2018) Expanding the Fortress: The policies, the profiteers and the people shaped by EU's border externalisation programme. TNI and Stop Wapenhandel.

33 Miller, T. (2019) Empire of Borders: The Expansion of the US Border around the World. London/New York: Verso.

34 Refugee Council of Australia (n.d.) Offshore processing.

35 Doherty, B. (2021) Budget immigration costs: Australia will spend almost $3.4m for each person in offshore detention. The Guardian.

36 Lemberg-Pedersen, M. (2018) Security, industry and migration in European border control. In Weinar, A. et. al. (eds) The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of Migration in Europe.

37 European Commission (2021) Opening remarks by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Michel and Prime Minister Costa following the meeting of the European Council of 25 June 2021.

38 European Commission (2021) 2021-2027 long-term EU budget & NextGenerationEU.

39 European Commission (2021) Integrated Border Management Fund.

40 Akkerman, M. (2016) Border Wars: The arms dealers profiting from Europe's refugee tragedy. TNI/Stop Wapenhandel.

41 Ibid.

biometric databases (EURODAC, SIS II, VIS), securing over half a billion euros worth of contracts since 2000, often as part of consortia.[42]

In other countries, large sums of money are also at stake. In the US, the Customs and Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agencies issued over 100,000 contracts to private corporations between 2008 and 2020, with a total value of over $55 billion.[43] Australia plans to spend billions on its Future Maritime Surveillance Capability, including an investment of up to A$1.3 billion ($970 million) in a new drone development programme.[44] Saudi Arabia awarded a still-running contract, worth over $2 billion, to Airbus (then called EADS) in 2009 to provide a surveillance system for its borders.[45] While billions flow to the arms industry as part of growing global military spending, aid organisations calculated in 2021 that the $5.5 billion needed to aid people facing or at risk of acute hunger is equivalent to less than 26 hours of the $1.9 trillion that countries spend each year on the military, also noting that "conflict is the biggest driver of global hunger".[46]

Mixed migration consequences

The consequences of Europe's militarised border policies are devastating for refugees and migrants. According to a 2015 World Bank blog piece by Hein de Haas, border militarisation and increasing border controls "have mainly (1) diverted migration to other crossing points, (2) made migrants more dependent on smuggling, and (3) increased the costs and risks of crossing borders."[47] Regarding the first and third point, research shows that closing down a migration route doesn't stop people from fleeing; most of the time it merely leads to a shifting of refugees and migrants to other, more dangerous routes.[48] This often leads to a relatively higher number of deaths. The ratio of migrant deaths to arrivals to Europe via the Mediterranean grew to almost 2% in 2018, five times as high as in 2015. In 2019 and 2020 it remained high at 1.7%, and during the first half of 2021 rose sharply to 2.3% from 1 January to 1 July, but by the end of October the ratio was 1.38%.

Graphic 3. Arrivals to Europe 2015-2021

Year	Arrivals to Europe via Mediterranean	Recorded deaths (Mediterranean)	Ratio deaths: arrivals
2015	1,007,492	3,785	0.38%
2016	355,395	5,143	1.45%
2017	172,363	3,139	1.82%
2018	116,876	2,299	1.97%
2019	111,854	1,885	1.69%
2020	85,967	1,417	1.65%
2021 (1 Jan-24 Oct)	94,206	1,299	1.38%

Source: IOM, Missing Migrants[49]

42 Akkerman, M. (2019) op. cit.; European Union (2020) Estonia-Tallinn: Framework Contract for Implementation and Maintenance in Working Order of the Biometrics Part of the Entry Exit System and Future Shared Biometrics Matching System, 2020/S 085-200083, Contract award notice. Tenders Electronic Daily; European Union (2020) Estonia-Tallinn: EURODAC MWO, 2020/S 254-639139, Modification notice; European Union (2020) Estonia-Tallinn: LISA-2021-NP-07 (FWC LISA/2017/RP/01 Maintenance in Working Order of the Schengen Information System), 2021/S 106-278072, Contract award notice. Tenders Electronic Daily.
43 Miller, T. & Buxton, N. (2021) Biden's Border: The industry, the Democrats and the 2020 elections. TNI/Mijente/AFSC
44 Tillet, A. (2020) Clouds gather over Dutton's plan for eyes in the sky. Financial Review.
45 Defense Industry Daily (2009) Fencing the Kingdom: EADS Lands Huge Saudi Border Deal.
46 Danish Refugee Council (2021) Aid organisations call on governments to give a single day's military spending to fight hunger.
47 De Haas, H. (2015) Don't blame the smugglers: the real migration industry. World Bank Blogs.
48 Crawley, H. et al (2016) Destination Europe?: Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015. Unravelling the Mediterranean Migration Crisis (MEDMIG); McMahon, S. and Sigona, N. (2016) Boat migration across the Central Mediterranean: drivers, experiences and responses. Unravelling the Mediterranean Migration Crisis (MEDMIG).
49 IOM (n.d.) Missing migrants – Mediterranean. Retrieved at 6 July 2021

The long and dangerous routes from the African mainland to Spain's Canary Islands have seen a tenfold increase in the number of refugees and migrants trying to cross between 2019 and 2020, after years of very few such crossings taking place.[50] This shift has partly been driven by increased border security between Morocco and Spain, and recent clampdowns against refugees and migrants by Morocco, spurred by deals with the EU.[51] This underscores the point that shutting down routes does not stop migration, though it might result in lower numbers of arrivals and/or attempted crossings at certain points.[52] Often, however, it diverts migration to more treacherous routes and in other instances leaves people on the move stuck, stranded or involuntarily immobile.

De Haas' second point, that refugees and migrants become more dependent on smugglers, is an outcome that is apparently completely contrary to one of the stated goals of EU border policies: combating migrant smuggling. However, analysis points to the almost obvious: the actual goal is not so much combatting migrant smuggling as combatting irregular migration, where the so-called "war on migrant smuggling inherently pits authorities and states against people on the move—many of which are desperate to flee conflict or persecution and who are therefore protected under international law".[53]

If the EU stays on its course of increasing border security, of militarising and externalising its borders, its border and migration policies are bound to implode. Meanwhile, the EU's "root causes approach" is characterised by flawed and incoherent policies. For example, it shifts development money to projects with the primary objective of reducing numbers of migrants instead of supporting development. And it ignores Europe's own contribution to these causes by, for example, exporting arms to countries experiencing unrest and armed conflict and authoritarian regimes.[54] As long as such issues aren't tackled, the numbers of migrants and refugees trying to come to Europe won't decrease, it will just mean that they are forced to take even deadlier routes to try to get to safety and will likely be contained somewhere along the way.

Even more so, the EU's border externalisation policies are sowing the seeds for large numbers of refugees and migrants in the future. A UK parliamentary commission concluded that "the EU's migration work in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa risks exacerbating existing security problems, fuelling human rights abuses, and endorsing authoritarian regimes. Preventing local populations from crossing borders may help cut the numbers arriving in Europe in the short term, but in the long term it risks damaging economies and creating instability—which in itself can trigger displacement".[55] Or, as one unnamed EU official said: we are only "creating chaos in our own backyard" and that will eventually turn against us.[56]

The EU's militarised border policies have severe negative consequences for refugees and migrants—as well as for the populations of neighbouring countries outside Europe—and lay the foundation for even greater numbers of people to flee their homes in the future. In other words: they are not only inhumane, they are also untenable and counterproductive. In the end they serve no one's interests, with the exception of the smugglers benefitting from an ever-increasing demand for their services and ability to charge higher prices to circumvent border controls, as well as the military and security industry that has been relentlessly pushing for these policies. The same industry that also earns money by fuelling the reasons people are forced to flee in the first place by providing arms and security equipment for wars, repression and human rights violations.

Another approach is both urgently needed and possible. This requires a rejection of an approach that treats migration primarily as a security threat and understanding it as a question of political will. Until Europe recognises its own role in provoking mass forced displacement and migration, shifts course, channels the massive investments in border security and refugees and migrant's massive expenditure on smugglers into the creation of more productive and sustainable migration channels, countless more lives will be lost while the military and security industry and smugglers continue to reap the profits.

50   MacGregor, M. (2021) Spain: New migrant camps in the Canary Islands. InfoMigrants.

51   Ohikere, O. (2020) European migrant routes shift. WORLD; Garver-Affeldt, J. & Seaman, M. (2021) A Gateway Re-opens: the growing popularity of the Atlantic route, as told by those who risk it. Mixed Migration Centre.

52   See for example: Brenner, Y., Forin, R. and Frouws, B. (2018) The "Shift" to the Western Mediterranean Migration Route: Myth or Reality? Mixed Migration Centre.

53   Horwood, C. (2019) The new 'public enemy number one': Comparing and contrasting the war on drugs and the emerging war on migrant smugglers. Mixed Migration Centre.

54   Frouws, B. (2020) Op-Ed: Mistaken metaphor: the 'root causes' approach to migration is both dishonest and ineffective. Mixed Migration Centre.

55   Foreign Affairs Committee (2019) Responding to irregular migration: A diplomatic route. House of Commons.

56   Rice-Oxley, M. & Rankin, J. (2017) How Europe exported its refugee crisis to north Africa. The Guardian.

Interview

Border bonanza

The ballooning business of US border management has been subsumed into the military-industrial complex, at skyrocketing costs which governments work hard to keep hidden from their citizens, as myriad private sector companies, from defence titans to tiny IT firms, clean up, and as countless migrants are deliberately left to die in the desert as a deterrent to others, explains **Todd Miller**. Republican and Democratic administrations have both driven this exponential growth, and under Biden "it looks like more of the same".
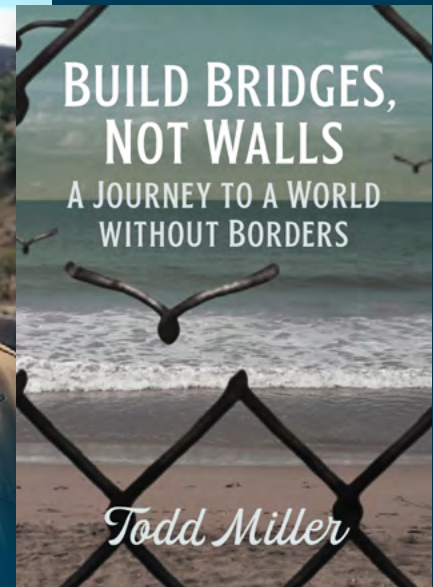
Todd Miller is an author and journalist who lives in Tucson, Arizona. He has written four books: Build Bridges, Not Walls: A Journey to a World Without Borders (City Lights, 2021); Empire of Borders: The Expansion of the U.S. Border Around the World (Verso, 2019); Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security (City Lights, 2017); and Border Patrol Nation (City Lights, 2014). For the Transnational Institute, he has written two reports on the border industrial complex: "Biden's Border" and "More Than a Wall".

You often mention the militarization of the US borders. Haven't nation states always used their security apparatus to defend territory and control access? What's new?

The answer is actually no, the nation states have not always done that. The sort of militarization that we see in the US is very recent. Now, that's not to say that in the early 20th century there wasn't the Texas Rangers and the Arizona Rangers, who were tasked at times with so-called defending the border. But a small group cannot defend a 2,000-mile border. If you look at the history of the US Border Patrol beginning in 1924, and followed it to 1994, you see an agency that grew from a couple of hundred agents to about 4,000. Then from 1994 to 2012, you go to from 4,000 to 21,000. If you include up

until the present, this is the most dramatic fortification of the US border that we've seen in its history.

From a money standpoint, in 1994, the Immigration and Naturalization Service's, the INS, annual budget was $1.5 billion, and that's for border and immigration enforcement, but now in 2021, it's $25 billion. The INS was disbanded, so that figure represents the combined budgets of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). And there's now close to 700 miles of walls and barriers on the US-Mexico border. The Border Patrol covers a 100-mile jurisdiction from the Mexico border inland, the Canadian border inland, the coasts, and also what is considered the "third border", which is the Caribbean, and that's coming from a CBP station in Puerto Rico.

And so you have all this. This idea of a militarized border and this kind of fortification is relatively recent.

Through the Prevention Through Deterrence strategy that has been in effect since 1994, it is implied that the Border Patrol is not going to absolutely stop all people—it's really about re-routing people. And in that sense, it's been very "successful" in re-routing people so that they can only use deserts or places that are desolate to cross into the United States. So the anticipation is that forced re-routing would act as a deterrent. But it was also deadly. In the late 1990s and early 2000s was when people started to find human remains in the desert.

> ❝ **The US Border Patrol grew from a couple of hundred agents in 1924 to about 4,000 in 1994. From 1994 to 2012 you go to from 4,000 to 21,000. This is the most dramatic fortification of the US border that we've seen in its history.** ❞

Remember the United States doesn't want to stop people from coming in totally. There's a huge demand for the undocumented labour.

Is this process of anti-migrant border militarization taking place elsewhere in the world to the same kind of degree?

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, there were 15 border walls globally. Now there are nearly 70—two-thirds of them erected after 9/11, so this dynamic is happening in accelerated fashion. And then you also have the externalization. In the US, externalization is a big pillar of its strategy. You see a lot of US resources going into the Mexico-Guatemalan border, the Guatemalan-Honduran border, the Panamanian-Colombian border and the Dominican-Haitian border, and many more. In *Empire of Borders* I looked at this phenomenon with a lot of detail. Of course, the European Union is doing the same thing. Australia is involved in this as well, and when you look at the industry aspects of it, Israel too becomes an important player.

The budgets used to keep people out are very high. One report showed that it cost the Australian government more than half a million dollars per year per person to detain maritime asylum seekers offshore.

Yes, the figures are staggering. One of the key things to defending border control policy is to make sure that the public doesn't know the true costs, or that they are hard to work out. All the figures related to the US border externalization, nobody really knows them. The public don't know about this expansion, or even the extent of how much has been fortified on the border, or how

many people languish in detention while fighting a deportation. So it's easy to defend when the knowledge isn't out there, but when the knowledge is out there its defence begins to fall apart.

Sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote *The Power Elite* in 1956, where he highlights the interwoven interests of leaders of the military, the corporate world, and the political elements in society, and suggests that the ordinary citizen is relatively powerless and ignorant of all this manipulation that's going on.

I think that's exactly what the border management industry is. It's definitely a branch of the military industrial complex now. More and more so as the budgets go up endlessly. The skyrocketing budgets mean more contracts going to private industry. Between 2008 and 2020, there were 105,000 contracts totalling about $55 billion from CBP and ICE alone.

And, the more contracts the industry gets, the more contracts the industry wants. We are talking about big military companies like Lockheed Martin, or Northrop Grumman, or General Dynamics. I've interviewed representatives of this industry for many years. For many of these corporations there's been an active conversation about moving into the border market. There are smaller companies too, there are IT companies, security companies, there's all kinds of different companies; everyone wants a part of this growing apparatus. On top of this, companies generally have special access, they can get behind closed doors during the appropriation process, which is of course when budgets are determined for the US Federal Government, or that is to say the Department of Homeland Security budgets. These companies lobby and have lots of money to throw around during election campaigns. In 2020, lots of money was given to both Biden and Trump in the US election. And, perhaps surprisingly, more money went to Biden than to Trump.

> ❝ **The United States doesn't want to stop people from coming in totally. There's a huge demand for the undocumented labour.** ❞

How do you explain the strong political consensus, by both Republicans and Democrats, to support the militarization of the US borders? Don't the two sides have very different politics around immigration?

There are differences in their approaches of course. But in many ways these differences are cosmetic, superficial, and just rhetorical, because the development of the border enforcement system that we have in the United States, the constant increasing of budgets, the walls, the technologies, the more agents, the detention centres... all of that comes from a bipartisan support over many, many years. If you go back to 1994, you start

with the Democratic Bill Clinton administration. That's when the big accelerations started.

> **When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, there were 15 border walls globally, now there are nearly 70—two-thirds of them erected after 9/11.**

Then we see Clinton handing the baton to Bush, and budgets went from $5 billion to $15 billion. And then Obama takes that and goes from $15 billion annual budgets to $20 billion and hands that on to Trump in 2017. So by the time Trump gets into office, he's got the most dramatic historic build-up at his disposal, he has an arsenal of 21,000 agents, he has more than 200 detention centres, he has a wall. When he was campaigning to build the wall there was already 650 miles of walls and barriers along the border.

Did less people die under the Obama administration? No. And under Obama the deportations were at an all-time high. All this underscores the bipartisan nature of border fortification and immigration control.

One of your main arguments is that, because the official border points and border towns are so well guarded, people take more risks through remote areas. You claim this crisis of death and disappearance in the border lines is intentional. Do you see any parallels with the deaths in the Mediterranean where they've withdrawn rescue ships, and they're trying to restrict NGO intervention to rescue people?

In the case of the United States, the idea that people could die crossing the desert was very much at the top of policymakers' minds as a part of the deterrence strategy. The Border Patrol even used the term "mortal danger" in a policy memorandum in 1994 to describe the strategy. And death is precisely what's happened, with increasing numbers through the years. And we know right now that, unless the strategy changes, it's going to happen again next year. The remains of over 8,000 people have already been recorded. And when I look at Europe, I see something similar, except it's just a different landscape: it's a sea, it's a waterscape instead of a desert.

> **One of the key things to defending border control policy is to make sure that the public doesn't know the true costs.**

Going through danger in attempts to cross, one of the results is that boats have capsized, and many people have died. That word gets back to others. This is "prevention through deterrence."

Beyond Trump's polarizing rhetoric on immigration and his support for militarizing borders, what's happening now with President Biden? Are we seeing big changes?

It's only been 100 days since he's been in office, but it actually looks more like the same continuum as before. Biden came out of the gates swinging, but only swinging at Trump. His executive orders dealt with reuniting families that were separated during the Trump administration and with stopping any wall-building, but there were other things he promised, like a deportation moratorium, that didn't happen. He raised the refugee numbers but not by as much as he said he would. He's now going very slowly, and the wall issue turned into a policy switch to invest in technology instead, which basically comes to the same thing because the wall and the supporting technology are part of what the Border Patrol calls a "border wall system" and are mutually reinforcing. The idea of a "smart border" just re-frames things in this more humane rhetoric, but the results are the same. I was expecting him to reverse the Trump stuff, but he's actually been more wishy-washy on that than I previously thought. I hate to say it, and there's much to be seen, we are only 100 days in, but it looks like just more of the same. And don't forget Biden got three times more campaign contributions from the border industry than Trump in the 2020 elections.

> **Between 2008 and 2020, there were 105,000 contracts totalling about $55 billion from CBP and ICE alone.**

Looking more globally at these trends and at migration in an age of climate change, global inequality, etc., how do you think the border discussion is going to develop? What's it going to look like in the future?

I think the trajectory right now indicates that in terms of factual evidence, it's all increasing. The border walls around the world and the budgets for borders are rising fast. If you look at the global border industry, the projections are always more, but at the same time there are some countervailing forces. When we had Trump implementing his policies there was also this wave of people that were not in agreement with it, a lot of backlash, and I saw more activism around border politics than I have ever seen covering these issues. It's actually quite amazing to watch. So, perhaps a tension that is developing will eventually challenge the current doctrines of increased border management and increased fortifications. Right now, the trends are definitely going in a certain way, but they could give way to something completely different in the future.

> **When Trump was campaigning to build the wall there was already 650 miles of walls and barriers along the border.**

Post-pandemic paradigms: Covid-19 and the future of human migration

The extent to which the coronavirus pandemic influences mixed migration dynamics in the years to come will vary according to a range of factors, including the skills of those who might move, the growth of automation, and shifts in the dependency ratios and other development geometries in countries of departure and destination.

By Alan Gamlen[1] and Bram Frouws[2]

Introduction: the end of an age?

The past 70 years of world history have often been called an Age of Migration because of the growing geographical extent and complexity of population movements.[3] In the past 30 years alone, migrant stocks have grown by 150 percent in absolute terms and by 40 percent in terms of their share of the total world population, to reach around 3.5 percent.[4] International tourism grew 56-fold, from 25 million arrivals in 1950 to 1.4 billion arrivals in 2018.[5] Apart from growing regular migration and mobility, mixed and irregular migration involving millions of refugees and migrants has also gained salience—its political and media prominence far exceeding its actual size in terms of numbers involved as a proportion of overall mobility.

Could the coronavirus pandemic bring this age of migration to an end? By October 2021 almost 237 million people globally had been diagnosed with Covid-19, and almost five million had reportedly died from it.[6] To slow the spread of the disease, almost all governments have periodically frozen almost all forms of both internal and international human mobility—from flying to visit another city, to commuting by car for work, to walking around the local shops. Since the World Health Organization declared the pandemic in March 2020, most human beings have lived with public transport closures, restrictions on internal movement, international travel controls, stay-at-home orders, and quarantines.[7]

Never before in history have so many humans stopped moving all at once or been caught up in unplanned reverse migration—returning to their places of origin. The nadir of the crisis came in the second quarter of 2020, when lockdowns began to bite. From India to the United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Brazil—the world's five largest countries for which Google collects mobility data—visits to places of retail and recreation, transit stations, and workplaces more than halved on average, and as of October 2021 such visits still remain 7-15 percent lower than 2019 levels (except in Pakistan).[8] Two-thirds of the world's commercial air transport fleet was grounded, and the airline industry closed half of all flight routes, halved flights on the remaining routes, shed over a million jobs, and booked over $126 billion in losses.[9] International migration flows to OECD countries fell by 46 percent in the first half of 2020,[10] and by the middle of the year, the number of international migrants globally was 27 percent lower than the United Nations had expected.[11] Global refugee resettlements fell by almost 70 percent.[12]

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1   Alan Gamlen is Associate Professor of Geography, Monash University in Melbourne, Australia and a longstanding Research Associate at Oxford University's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society. Alan's most recent book, "Human Geopolitics: States, Emigrants and the Rise of Diaspora Institutions" (OUP 2019), won the Distinguished Book Award for Best Book on Ethnicity, Nationalism and Migration from the International Studies Association.
2   Bram Frouws is director of the Mixed Migration Centre.
3   Castles, S. & Miller, M. (1998) The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world. Macmillan International Higher Education.
4   UNDESA (2019) International Migration 2019.
5   Roser, M. (2020) Our World in Data - Tourism. Our World in Data.
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7   Blavatnik School of Government (n.d.) Covid-19 Government Response Tracker. University of Oxford.
8   Ritchie, H. et al (n.d.) COVID-19: Google Mobility Trends. Our World in Data.
9   IATA (2021) WATS World Air Transport Statistics 2021.
10 Migration Data Portal (2021) Migration data relevant for the COVID-19 pandemic. (7 September update).
11 UNDESA (2020) International Migration 2020 – Highlights.
12 UNHCR (2021) Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2020.

New forces and frictions in migrant decision-making

Where data on post-pandemic migration and mobility patterns is not yet available, previous research can guide expectations about future trends. Generally, high-skilled professionals have more migration options, and migration policies are often developed to attract them. However, the pandemic has made it harder for these people to move, but simultaneously also easier for them to work remotely from anywhere. It seems likely that high-skilled migrants, who have the option to delay or abandon their migration plans, will do so until the pandemic falls behind the rear-view mirror. The pandemic has also accelerated the trend of an increasing disconnect between work and physical location, but this is only true for high-skilled jobs that can be done remotely. It is highly likely the pandemic will have a long-lasting impact, reducing the international mobility of highly skilled people and impacting their settlement patterns, with more people settling further away from urban centres where offices are located.

At the same time, the pandemic showed the extent to which many economic sectors in traditional destination countries rely on migrant labour as essential workers. Many of these jobs are classified as low-skilled, and these are jobs in which remote work is not an option. It is, however, too soon to speculate how the pandemic will impact on low-skilled labour migration. On the one hand, it may speed up automation, reducing the need for labour migrants. On the other, destination countries may want to avoid any serious shortages in their labour force that might arise in the absence of migrant labour—a fear that prompted many states to regularise existing irregular migrant populations—and actually invest in the creation and expansion of regular labour migration channels. For example, one innovative way of expanding regular migration would be to create temporary labour migration schemes for health workers that enable a surge in hospital capacity during the traditional winter flu seasons in Europe and the US, when the number of Covid infections may seasonally rise.

The pandemic is also amplifying the economic and political drivers of migration. The public health crisis itself has hit worst in countries without developed health systems. The economic fallout also affects them most: developed countries have sophisticated insurance and credit markets to cushion shocks, but many developing countries do not. In short, with economies in many countries hard-hit by Covid-19, prospective migrants' aspirations or needs to migrate may increase. However, their capability to do so might be severely curtailed, due both to restrictions on mobility imposed to contain the spread of the pandemic and to a lack of requisite resources resulting from income losses incurred by pandemic-related recession. This combination of how the pandemic affects aspirations and capability plays out differently in different contexts and regions and is already leading to changes in migration trends and dynamics,[13] with increased movements along certain mixed migration corridors and decreased movements along others. For example, the movements between Tunisia and Italy across the Mediterranean Sea increased substantially, while those of Ethiopians (and to a lesser extent Somalis) between the Horn of Africa and Yemen—once the world's busiest maritime mixed migration route—decreased massively.

New patterns of supply and demand for migrant labour

Migration is driven not just by migrant aspirations but also by employer demand in destination countries, which itself reflects local unemployment levels. The pandemic has major implications for employer demand because it has led to historic rises in unemployment. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), in 2020 the pandemic drove a nine percent decline in global working hours compared to the last quarter of 2019, equal to the loss of 255 million jobs—four times more than occurred during the global financial crisis.[14] Worker income fell by more than eight percent, or US$3.7 trillion, equal to 4.4 percent of global GDP. Even after a rebound during 2021, there are now 144 million fewer full-time jobs than there would have been without the pandemic. The pain is not over: in early 2021, 93 percent of workers worldwide were living in countries with workplace closures, which affected 77 percent of workers, down from a peak of 85 percent in mid-2020. As ILO notes, the International Monetary Fund has projected an ongoing loss of between 36 million and 130 million jobs in 2021, compared to the end of 2019. As the ILO further points out, job losses are concentrated in sectors such as hospitality, tourism, arts and culture, construction, and retail, while employment has actually grown in sectors such as information technology and finance. Developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Southern Europe, and Southern Asia have been particularly hard hit. The broad trend is clear: the economic fallout of the pandemic dwarfs that of the global financial crisis, which had already dented global demand for immigrant labour.

Automation and AI
High unemployment is known to decrease employer demand for migrant labour while increasing political pressures on employers to give preference to native workers over immigrant counterparts. High unemployment creates a larger local recruitment pool, increasing firms' hiring power, prompting unions to

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13   Mixed Migration Centre (2020) COVID-19 Global Thematic Update #4 – 10 December 2020. Impact of COVID-19 on the decision to migrate.
14   ILO (2021) ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Seventh edition. Updated estimates and analysis. All data in this paragraph is sourced from this report.

demand that employers hire locally, and leading to labour-market testing regulations that make it hard to recruit immigrant workers. As mentioned above, the inability to recruit international migrants during the pandemic has also led to an acceleration of automation that was already happening in many areas of employment. This too might reduce overall demand for immigrant labour. Many of the unskilled jobs being automated—such as those in healthcare, with the introduction of precision diagnostics—have long been performed by migrants. Automation has expanded into skilled labour, for example through the introduction of artificial intelligence in areas like accountancy and paralegal work. During the pandemic, firms faced with higher labour costs have had to innovate and invest in technologies that will permanently replace some pre-pandemic jobs. Short-term demand for immigrant labour may, however, surge as lockdowns ease—especially with the realisation in many countries of the extent to which they depend on migrant labour in crucial sectors struggling to fill vacancies now that economies are recovering. But for many countries, the mid- to long-term net result of a shrinking pool of more highly automated employers will be an economy less dependent on importing foreign labour. However, this does not necessarily need to work out badly for prospective migrants. More automation could also mean that, increasingly, work travels to the people instead of the other way around, with the result that opportunities for income-generating activities reach prospective migrants without them needing to physically migrate.

New geometries of global development

It is important to recognise that the mobility and migration changes connected with the Covid-19 pandemic are taking place against a backdrop of a major long-term shift in global power from West to East, involving a wide range of disruptive social transformations. In line with August Comte's *dictum* that "demography is destiny", a fundamental element of this shift is the contrast between a wealthy and ageing Western world and a young and emerging Eastern one. While most Western countries face a growing share of dependent elderly people relative to their working populations, many developing countries are entering the phase of a "demographic dividend", where lower birth rates shrink the ratio of the dependent elderly population to the youth population, allowing an outsized actively working population to make rapid economic gains.

Such a demographic dynamic helps explain China's phenomenal economic rise, sustained by average annual GDP growth of almost 10 percent between 1979 and 2018. The early stages of this growth involved

a phenomenal rise of internal labour migration from lower-income rural areas in China's western and interior provinces towards its higher-income and more urbanised provinces along the country's eastern coast—a shift that, in terms of numbers, dwarfs the 19th century transformation of Europe through what the geographer Wilbur Zelinsky once called a "great shaking loose of population" from the rural countryside.[15] The next phase of China's rise—beginning around the turn of the 21st century—involved a massive surge of emigration around the world. Moreover, China is not the only power on the rise. India is just now entering its demographic dividend and will soon overtake China to become the world's most populous country by the end of the current decade. Africa's population is still expanding fast, so its turn will come later—but it too will experience a spurt of economic growth after fertility rates fall.

Such long-term shifts in global development geometry have substantial implications for post-pandemic human migration. For example, high-income countries, used to reliably large inflows of immigrants from what has until now been thought of as the "developing" world—often to fill labour shortages and skill gaps—might no longer be able to rely on these movements. Once the pandemic recedes, many of the "sending" countries may no longer be at the same point in their own migration transitions. For example, China is likely almost over its migration hump—the period in which its rapid socio-economic development drives high rates of emigration—as people acquire the means to escape their predicament domestically. As China's economic and political rise continues, the incentives to emigrate will lessen for many people, and it will likely next become—like other major global economic centres—a major *destination* for inward international migrants.

Most wealthy immigrant destination countries went into the Covid-19 pandemic with immigration systems geared towards receiving large net inflows from Asia. By the time Covid-19 is behind us, they may find these net inflows have dried up, forcing them to look elsewhere to fill their skill and labour shortages, most likely to the African continent where economic and job growth is in the short term unlikely to keep up with the increasing numbers of young people entering the labour force.

The evolution of migration governance

In the face of the significant changes to global migration patterns that have prevailed for more than half a century, questions about the future of migration governance loom large. It has long been the case that decisions regarding exit and entry are made by nation states while those about settlement and service-provision are made by

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15   Zelinsky, W. (1971) The hypothesis of the mobility transition. Geographical Review.

cities. However, in the past 20 years a global regime of migration governance has begun to take shape, propelled by events such as the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994, the UN Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants in 2016, and the landmark adoption in 2018 of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).[16]

As populists increasingly take the helm of national governments and assert stricter migration controls, what will happen to this emerging global migration regime? Will the shock of the Covid-19 crisis be met with more international cooperation over migration, or less? In the past, shocks and crises have been a major driver for the creation of new global migration governance structures. The most recent example is the 2015/16 so-called migration and refugee crisis, which saw large mixed migration flows of refugees and migrants arriving irregularly in Europe, often assisted by smugglers. This fuelled the organisation of the 2016 New York summit, the starting point for the development of the two global compacts.

New shock, new context
Will the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic be different? So far, Covid is not like previous shocks. Past shocks have occurred against a background of growing globalisation and the softening of national sovereignties, expressed for example in a proliferation of regional integration schemes modelled on the European Union. Covid-19 has spread in a very different global climate, in the wake of a global financial crisis which had already shattered the neoliberal consensus and led to growing go-it-alone national strategies, epitomised in the slogans of the UK's Brexiteers and the followers of Donald Trump in the US: "Take Back Control", and "Build the Wall".

The pandemic and related health, economic, and protection crises have underscored the need for and relevance of the GCM. While not always directly referencing the compact, many states have undertaken actions that are included in the GCM, such as regularisation, releasing migrants from detention, and providing access to services and healthcare for migrants, proving the GCM's relevance in times of crisis.[17]

Restrictions, smugglers, and risks
However, at the same time, a global health crisis with a virus travelling across borders understandably leads to far more restrictive approaches. Governments are seizing back control of migration through lockdown measures and opening up largely through bilateral and regional negotiations outside of UN-led multilateral forums. The way global mobility came to a sudden standstill at the height of the pandemic may have shown some that in fact mobility can be halted and that borders can be closed. This may have created an appetite among those in favour of less migration and more restrictive approaches to keep at least some of the measures in place, so as to keep suppressing unwanted global mobility in the longer term. This could potentially lead to more irregular migration, because demand for migrant labour and aspirations to migrate will not disappear; they will only become more difficult to satisfy, forcing more people to take irregular routes.

This in turn is likely to have an impact on human smuggling. For example, data collected directly from thousands of refugees and migrants during 2020 by MMC's 4Mi programme showed that, generally speaking, there was more demand for, yet less access to, people smugglers, whose fees tended to rise accordingly. This increased dependency subsequently increases risks and vulnerability to protection incidents.[18] Similarly, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime also concluded that the Covid-19 crisis will make refugees and migrants more dependent on smugglers and that smugglers will opt for more dangerous routes and modes of transport, which will make journeys more risky and more expensive.[19]

Public opinion
The pandemic is also likely to affect public attitudes towards refugees and migrants, and foreigners in general, which in turn might affect future migration policies, although the impact is not yet clear. On the one hand, a global pandemic could exacerbate people's fear of outsiders or the fear that migration contributes to the spread of the disease. On the other, as mentioned above, the pandemic has also highlighted the disproportional importance of migrant workers, which could lead to more favourable attitudes. Research findings so far indicate that there has been little systematic change in the longer trend of relatively stable immigration preferences in Europe and the United States, and no country-level correlation between observed

16 Other key milestones include: the 1990 International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families of (which only came in force in 2003); the 2003–2005 Global Commission on International Migration; the 2005 ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration; the first High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2006; the creation in 2006 of the Global Migration Group (consisting of UN agencies dealing with migration issues); the 2007 establishment of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (explicitly outside of the UN system); the 2nd High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2013; the explicit inclusion of migration in the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015; and the rise of "mini-lateral" initiatives such as the Nansen Initiative and the Migrants in Countries in Crisis initiative from 2012. See Betts, A. & Kainz, L. (2017) The history of global migration governance. University of Oxford Refugees Study Centre.

17 Bingham, J. (2020) COVID-19 and the Global Compact for Migration. Is a Compact born in a crisis born again in the whirlwinds of three global crises? Mixed Migration Centre.

18 Mixed Migration Centre (2020) COVID-19 Global Thematic Update #1 – Impact of COVID-19 on migrant smuggling.

19 Sarrica, F. et al (2020) How COVID-19 restrictions and the economic consequences are likely to impact migrant smuggling and cross-border trafficking in persons to Europe and North America. UNODC.

changes and the severity of the outbreak. Instead, the perceived importance of immigration among the general public has consistently and significantly decreased since the start of the pandemic.[20] It has been argued that this can lead to a period of quieter immigration politics, creating space for innovations.[21]

However, there have been many reports about widespread racist and xenophobic incidents against foreigners linked to the pandemic, such as verbal and physical assaults, social exclusion, denial of access to goods and services, boycotting of businesses, discriminatory movement restrictions and quarantine policies, as well as xenophobic rhetoric from politicians, other public figures, and the media. The UN Secretary General even referred to a "tsunami of hate and xenophobia."[22] Moreover, whether as a reflection of the general public's attitudes or not, politicians may use a fear of foreigners linked to the pandemic for political gain and to argue for more restrictive approaches to migration. It is too soon to say how the pandemic will affect acceptance of foreigners, their integration processes and, by extension, migration policies, but it is clear that such a world-changing event as a global pandemic will have a longer lasting impact, but it is likely to differ from one country, community, or context to another.

Vaccine inequality

Another way in which the pandemic may have a lasting impact on mobility, at least for the next few years, is through vaccine access. Access to international migration options was already unequally divided among the world's population, where people from the developed world can more or less legally access any country in the world, while those in the rest of the world cannot. The starkly unequal access to Covid-19 vaccination—as of October 2021, 62 percent of the population in high income countries has been vaccinated, against under 4 percent in low-income countries[23]—and the need to have proof of vaccination in order to travel, might become a measure of de facto immigration control, used by destination countries to keep populations from lower income countries out. This again could increase the need to migrate through irregular means.

Vaccine inequality will not only limit people's ability to travel and migrate; it will also act as a driver of migration. Vaccine inequality will, according to the UN, also have a lasting impact on socio-economic recovery in low- and low-to-middle-income countries and set back progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.[24] It will deepen the socio-economic divide between countries and slow the economic recovery of many countries with less access to vaccines. Inequality is a major driver of migration, with millions of workers and their families moving each year across borders and continents seeking to reduce what they see as the gap between their own position and that of people in other, wealthier, places.[25]

The pandemic will continue to affect the situation of forcibly displaced people around the world. While the number of Covid infections among refugees has been lower than initially feared—with many living in cramped conditions—as already mentioned above, access to resettlement pathways has been severely reduced.

Drivers and funding

The impact of the crisis is exacerbating the drivers of mass displacement and eroding the capacity of refugee-hosting countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. First, in countries of origin, a global recession will lead to increases in conflict, authoritarianism, and state fragility, all key drivers of forced displacement. Second, a recession stretches the capacity of states hosting the majority of the refugees in the world. Third, the pandemic undermines the survival strategies that refugees rely on in camps and cities around the world, undercutting aid, remittances, and informal sector jobs.[26] Many who relied on informal labour for their incomes lost their jobs. The Norwegian Refugee Council estimated that three quarters of displaced and conflict-affected people lost income since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.[27] As such, increasing numbers of refugees might be stuck in refugee camps and urban centres, without access to any solutions, which may increase the likelihood of onward movements.

Furthermore, in the longer term, humanitarian funding and foreign aid, including for refugee situations, might decrease—although in 2020 foreign aid from official donors actually reached an all-time high, up 3.5 percent compared to 2019, boosted by additional spending to help developing counties respond to the Covid-19 crisis. However, to put things in perspective, the world's total overseas development assistance amounted to around just one percent of the 16 trillion dollars spent by governments on domestic Covid stimulus measures.[28] These massive recovery investments will have to be recouped at some point, and it is likely that an increasing number of major donor countries will cut foreign aid in the near future. Some have already done so: in 2021, it

20 Dennison, J., Kustuv, A. & Geddes, A. (2021) Public Attitudes to Immigration in the Aftermath of COVID-19. SSRN.
21 Dennison, J., & Geddes, A. (2021). Why Covid-19 does not necessarily mean that attitudes towards immigration will become more negative. SSRN.
22 IOM (2020) Combatting xenophobia is key to an effective Covid-19 recovery.
23 UNDP (n.d.) Global Dashboard for Vaccine Equity.
24 UN News (2021) COVID vaccines: Widening inequality and millions vulnerable.
25 Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation & Poverty (2006) Migration and Inequality: policy implications.
26 Betts, A. (2021) The coming refugee crisis: how COVID-19 exacerbates forced displacement. Oxford University Press Blog.
27 Gorevan, D. (2020) Downward Spiral: the economic impact of Covid-19 on refugees and displaced people. Norwegian Refugee Council.
28 OECD (2020) COVID-19 spending helped to lift foreign aid to an all-time high in 2020, but more effort needed.

was reported that bilateral donors already made cuts to humanitarian sectors.[29] Further cuts in humanitarian funding could worsen the situation of refugees in urban centres and in camps, leading to either an increase in onward movement (for those who can afford it) or more involuntary immobility.

Conclusion: will Covid-19 be a game-changer?

Much may change after the current pandemic, but not everything: there is an inertia in infrastructure and in institutions which mitigates against major long-term changes spurred by temporary shocks. A major question going forward is whether Covid-19 will result in lasting changes to prevailing patterns of human migration and of the institutions governing them.

Migration itself may shift significantly, in the many ways discussed above. It seems very likely that higher levels of unemployment will reduce overall demand for migrant labour, and that the risky international environment will depress migration aspirations. It is also all but certain that the travel industry will emerge from this crisis with less passenger capacity, higher regulatory standards surrounding emissions, and lower demand for business travel as a result of accelerated remote working trends. Meanwhile, the pandemic has fuelled a resurgence of anti-immigrant sentiment in mainstream political life around the world and strengthened the hands of autocrats, enabling them to crack down harshly on migration. The pandemic may thus lead to a sustained period of more stringent restrictions on human mobility, even after travel restrictions and quarantines subside.

Different and rapidly changing dynamics make it difficult to predict the longer lasting impact of the pandemic on mixed migration. With some of the drivers of migration—especially economic ones—set to intensify over the coming months or possibly even years, but with more people likely to lack the resources to afford often expensive irregular migration journeys, prospective migrants may look closer to home. This could lead to even larger migration movements within regions and towards cities, not least as anthropogenic climate change and other environmental stressors deepen their impact and make certain locations unliveable. Or people may become stuck, either at home or in transit—with their migration aspirations unfulfilled—or in destination states, unable or unwilling to return home. Others may undertake riskier journeys as alternatives are blocked, which is likely to have an impact on smuggling dynamics and on the numbers that join mixed migratory flows in response to the rapid- and slow-onset crises that prompt them to move.[30] A continuing absence of sufficient regular channels and the

potential impact of Covid and other factors mentioned above on future access to regular channels will continue to drive irregular migration along many well-known and lesser known mixed migration routes.

The future of migration governance at the global level is a more open question. A global migration regime has been evolving over the past few decades, but rather than being a smooth, linear process, this has lurched forward amid a series of shocks, each of which has forced policymakers to institutionalise liberal approaches to migration. However, as major cracks appear in the liberal world order of the post-World War II period, the future of cooperation over migration—along with that in other areas of globalisation such as trade and finance—seems less certain.

29   Ithibu, A. & Whiteside, A. (2021). Covid-19 pandemic sparks increase in foreign aid, but for how long? Aidspan.
30   Mixed Migration Centre (2020) COVID-19 Global Thematic Update #4 – 10 December 2020. Impact of COVID-19 on the decision to migrate.

Interview

Solidarity shortfalls

Despite facing a range of human rights abuses, migrants' protection needs are often overlooked or go unmet, while "tough" policy responses serve mainly to heighten prejudice and xenophobia, laments **Michelle Bachelet**. Rather than, say, criminalising search and rescue operations, what's required is more inclusivity, a greater focus on what compels people to migrate, and recognition of the contributions many migrants make to their countries of destination.

Verónica Michelle Bachelet Jeria has served as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights since 2018. From 2006–2010 and 2014–2018, she served as president of Chile, the first woman to hold that post and the first elected female leader in South America. After leaving the Chilean presidency in 2010 she was appointed the first executive director of the newly created United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

How does the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights contribute to the issue of mixed migration within the UN system and how do you work with others to further the promotion and the protection of rights in this context?

Because many migrants are compelled to leave their homes for a combination of factors, sometimes they are not recognised as people who need protection, for example because of persecution or armed conflict. But many people are nevertheless vulnerable because of poverty, food insecurity, the adverse effects of climate change, or because they are searching for healthcare, for decent work, or for family reunification, or many things. Unfortunately, and especially in mixed movements, they are often denied of any meaningful access to protection.

So, what do we do to address this? First of all, we monitor the situation of migrants around the world

while helping to build the capacity of member states or other actors to address human rights issues. We work with states to raise awareness of the human rights of migrants, and we promote national dialogues with the authorities, with civil society organisations, with communities and migrants. We try to help implement laws that close the protection gaps for migrants. Second, we also work to build more human narratives on migrants and migration. So we try to reframe the toxic and divisive narratives that you often see of "us vs. them", of "regular vs. irregular", or "those who are deserving vs. undeserving of protection".

We also give a particular importance to migrants in vulnerable situations. That doesn't mean that we believe that migrants are inherently vulnerable. But migrants can become vulnerable to human rights violations because of a range of situational and personal factors. For example, as a result of what compelled them to leave the country of origin or the circumstances in

which they leave, or the situation at the countries of destination, how well they were welcomed and so on, or of course, the conditions that they face on arrival. But also due to personal characteristics such as their age, race, gender identity, disabilities, or other factors. Many may not qualify as refugees, yet they're vulnerable and they need protection, and unfortunately in many countries, they don't have it.

So, we try to work on all of this. Within the UN system, we are part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for humanitarian coordination, and we are also part of the Executive Committee of the UN Network on Migration. So, we work there also to strengthen how the human rights approach is implemented in the task of the Global Compact for Migration.

Earlier this year OHCHR released a report on migrants in the Mediterranean, where you described the current approaches to rescuing at sea as a "lethal disregard for desperate people". Could you elaborate?

As you can imagine, we have documented serious human rights violations and abuses against migrants. What we see is criminalisation, torture, arbitrary detention, and sexual violence in many places, and no access to justice, and of course, really precarious access to other rights and social services. Not just in Libya, you see it in other places as well unfortunately. And we have seen it in relation to all kinds of migration, whether linked to climate change, internal conflict, or other human rights violations. So, we think there is a need for greater solidarity so that people, first of all, are not compelled to leave their homes, and that when they do choose to migrate, they have more opportunities to do so in safety and dignity.

> **At the OHCHR, we try to reframe the toxic and divisive narratives that you often see of "us vs. them", of "regular vs. irregular", or "those who are deserving vs. undeserving of protection."**

And what this requires, and these are some of the recommendations that we are making, is first of all, to decriminalise irregular migration. The other thing that is very important is to support humanitarian NGOs and human rights defenders who are providing life-saving assistance to migrants. Unfortunately, in many countries even they have been criminalised. So we need to decriminalise migration but we also need to support those who really want to support migrants at risk.

Second, we believe there need to be adequate search and rescue operations along precarious migration routes because we have seen, unfortunately, that the criminalisation of these activities does not stop

migration; it will not stop people from moving. It will only compel them into more risky situations and more dangerous routes.

We also think it's important to expand the availability of safe and regular pathways. And that's one of the things that we are calling for not only in Libya but also in Afghanistan and many other countries around the world, to ensure there are sufficient pathways for safe and regular migration so that refugees and other migrants are not compelled to undertake desperate journeys or to put themselves and their families at risk.

> **We see criminalisation, torture, arbitrary detention, and sexual violence against migrants in many places, and no access to justice, and precarious access to other rights and social services.**

Finally, we recommend that states take steps to review, and revise if necessary, their current international cooperation on border management to ensure they do not undermine human rights.

Do you think we are we gradually becoming more accepting of what would previously be regarded as extreme immigration policies?

It is true that too many responses to migration today are based on policies, I would say, of exclusion, rather than inclusion. They are premised on the idea that being tough on migration will either stop people from moving in the first place or make their lives so difficult that they would like to return to their countries of origin. But let me be clear, there's no empirical evidence that such approaches meet their desired goals. But we do know that they increase the suffering of the people and lead to the marginalisation of migrants, particularly the undocumented. So, we see that "tough on migration" policies are not working at all. All they do is increase discrimination and deep-seated attitudes of prejudice and of xenophobia. Not only what the authorities do in terms of trying to stop migrants, or criminalise migrants, or arbitrarily detain migrants, but also many times they are used as, I would say, populist scapegoats for policy failures that have nothing to do with migration.

And so I do believe that migration is a normal phenomenon in the whole of history. My name is Bachelet, I'm a Chilean, my great-grandparents came from Chassagne-Montrachet [in eastern France] when they had this epidemic of phylloxera that attacked the wines that they were producing, so they looked for a country in the south of South America where they could go to. And in my country, only the indigenous peoples are the real native people, and the rest of us are migrants or descendants of migrants. So, it is a natural system.

But what we see today is that much of migration is linked also to lack of opportunities, to poverty, to conflicts, to things where humanity can do something about it. I think that migration is a normal process, but many people are compelled to migrate because of the failure of governments and international community to be able to solve the most essential problems of life.

> **Criminalisation of search and rescue operations does not stop migration. It will only compel them into more risky situations and more dangerous routes.**

I'm not saying that we need to stop migration. What I do believe is that we need to solve and address the reasons that compel people to migrate out of necessity rather than free choice, because I don't think that the majority of people really want to leave their homes, where they have had their livelihoods for some time, where their ancestors are buried. At the same time, I think that efforts to control migration are doomed to fail, because it's not about putting tougher and tougher measures in place, but about building more open and inclusive societies where we recognise and embrace the contributions of all people.

What kind of impact has the Covid-19 pandemic had on migrants and refugees around the world, from your office's perspective?

We have seen that the current pandemic has disproportionally affected people and communities who are already vulnerable and in marginalised situations. These include women, older people, people with disabilities, indigenous people, LGBTI communities, poor people, and of course people on the move, and that means refugees, migrants, and IDPs who have been particularly affected. But where there are intersections the impact is even worse. For example, you have a woman who is disabled, who is poor and has to migrate, she will be disproportionately impacted. What we do believe, and this is true with migrants as well, is not that they're inherently vulnerable, but that the conditions they face can leave them without access to a lot of things. They can have obstacles in accessing healthcare for example, including access to Covid-19 vaccinations, or be unable to physically distance due to their labour or housing conditions.

I think that migrants can also be particularly vulnerable to stigma and discrimination and can be excluded in law or in policy or in practice from access to rights, and particularly in the context of public health and recovery response. The other situation that migrants can face is when they are in an irregular situation, they may fear to go to a healthcare facility because they can be arbitrarily detained because of their immigration status. We know that many people in the poorest conditions

have less access to healthcare, and if they also don't have access to a regular migration status there will be even worse access.

And they have all the other obstacles, including language obstacles and cultural barriers, the cost obstacles, the lack of information about where to go, what to do as well as the wide-reaching consequences of xenophobic attitudes and behaviours.

The other thing that we saw is border closures, and I would say all over the world, even in my country Chile, at some point they closed the borders, so we had lots of people who were stranded at the borders without any possibility of going anywhere and along with many tough measures undermining the right to seek asylum and other human rights protections.

So we at OHCHR call for regularisation of the undocumented, we call for expanding residence permits for people who are migrating, and of course, to stop all forced returns during the pandemic.

How does climate change relate to the work of the OHCHR, especially with regard to people compelled to move because of climate change?

I think that it's clear that anthropogenic climate change has enormous human right effects, and I have to tell you something that surprises me: when I speak in many places people don't see the relationship between climate change and human rights, and also on health. So, I think that those effects are compounded by the inter-related environmental crisis of biodiversity loss and pollution. So, it's important to deal with climate change, but also biodiversity and pollution as well.

We have two opportunities as an international community. In November, COP26 in Glasgow will speak about climate change, but then next year we have the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15, where states will craft the post-2020 biodiversity framework 2020 and should work on how we ensure that biodiversity can be respected. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has predicted that increasing risk of floods, droughts, storms, other slow-onset events will undermine livelihoods, increase human suffering and risk to people living in those impacted areas, and as a result, there will be increased human migration, both within and across borders.

We know that every year at least 20 million people currently move within the borders of their own country because of climate and weather-related disasters. There are also a large number of people moving across international borders who may fall outside the legal protections provided by the refugee regime, so it's particularly important that they have access to protection under human rights law.

States need to take effective measures to, first of all, reduce vulnerabilities and, of course, make good on what they committed to at the Paris Agreements in terms of all the measures for mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and to limit the need for climate-related migration. They need to plan and prepare for natural disasters, extreme weather events, and also so-called slow-onset processes. And this requires taking steps to reduce existing vulnerabilities and build resilience inside the countries.

> **The pandemic has disproportionally affected people and communities who are already vulnerable and marginalised. These include women, older people, people with disabilities, indigenous people, LGBTI communities, poor people, and of course people on the move.**

But on the other hand, migration away from areas affected by climate change is a fundamental right and may provide individuals and communities the opportunity to avoid climate impacts and improve resilience. But again, it can generate new risk and result in exploitation or discrimination or exacerbate the existing inequalities.

I think we need to continue working much more on trying to avoid getting into the situation in relation to climate change that can produce terrible effects on humankind. But on the other hand, try at the same time to prepare better for all the impacts, including climate-induced migration.

Concerning the Global Compact for Migration, do you feel it is being implemented, and does it offer the right pathway to securing better rights for migrants and refugees?

I was honoured to have the occasion to be in Marrakesh, and to participate in many meetings there for the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration in December 2018. It was one of my first trips as high commissioner because I just started the first of September that year. And of course, it was very important because it also took place on the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. So, we could link very importantly both things. It was also the International Day of Human Rights on the 10th of December.

What my office said in that moment, and I think is still true, is that in adopting the Global Compact for Migration, the United Nations steered a course away from a failed paradigm of migration policy of previous years that have left migrants to drown at sea or die in the desert. The Global Compact reaffirmed key human rights

obligations already codified in international law and was proof that even though there were some discussions, and although some countries were not so supportive of it, at the end, the majority of countries supported it. So, it showed that multilateralism still works, especially for the most sensitive issues that we have to confront. And it was a clear response to global challenges.

In our view, the Global Compact is a balanced and principled human rights document that provides significant opportunity. However, it's important to know that the Global Compact was not an end in itself. It was rather an important starting point for improved global migration governance. So, while it was a landmark achievement, and built on years of multilateral cooperation and norm-setting in the field of migration, this multilateral cooperation continues today as member states begin to implement the compact's commitments, and will be reporting back to the General Assembly on the progress achieved during the International Migration Review Forum in 2022.

Covid-19 has produced a lot of obstacles and has made things even more difficult. But I believe that we're still in the early stages of implementation, and of follow-up and review.

It's not an easy issue. But we have certain reasons for optimism, because it has enjoyed the overwhelming support of UN member states. And we have a lot of member states that are GCM champions across the world, that are showing other countries that human rights-based migration policies can help, can work. And if they can do it, other countries can do it. To share good practices with others and to show how much they have implemented it. In my work I usually remember, what Desmond Tutu said: that you have to be a prisoner of hope, because when you work in difficult areas, you cannot give up, so I have to be a prisoner of hope.

> **In my work I usually remember, what Desmond Tutu said: that you have to be a prisoner of hope, because when you work in difficult areas, you cannot give up.**

I'm really committed to migration because of many different reasons. Principally, because I believe in human rights of the people, but also because I have great experiences with migrants and being a migrant myself. And one of the things that I believe we need to show more are the human stories. I mean, to not always speak solely about the negative things happening, but also how migrants have contributed to their countries. They have been scientists, artists, presidents, footballers, et cetera. We need to show much more the contribution of people who have been discriminated against, but at the same time contributed so much and have enriched our societies.

Future uncertain: The black swans and grey rhinos of mixed migration

Claiming to speak for the future, to predict future events, is always a highly charged and politicised enterprise and has been instrumentalised by different interest groups to raise or allay fears, to justify policies, and to nudge new funding allocations. No less so with mixed migration and displacement today.

And yet in our increasingly scientific, data-driven, secular world with our previously unimaginable technical power to analyse and model, how well do we predict migration and displacement? Think of the mass exodus of Venezuelans since 2015, the huge secondary movement of Syrian refugees into Europe in 2015/16, the flight of Rohingya out of Myanmar in 2017, or even the sudden departure of people from Burkina Faso in 2019. None of these were predicted—let alone properly prepared for—despite the high number of policymakers and practitioners focused on the issues at the time. In other situations, such as the conflict in Tigray since late 2020, new outbreaks of violence in South Sudan in 2021, or the ongoing conflict in Yemen, migration experts initially have no clear idea what the migration outcomes may be—whether they will be limited and proximate or large-scale and far-reaching. And even now, the range of predictions related to climate-induced movement is extremely broad and imprecise despite the detailed scientific basis underpinning the associated environmental measurements. And what of the impact of the resurgence of Taliban rule in Afghanistan? The range of predictions about resulting mobility is again large, and accurate prognosis confounds experts.

Two analysts recently applied the metaphorical analysis of "black swans and grey rhinos" to show why we find predictions so hard.[1] Black swans are random, low-probability and high-impact events; grey rhinos are high impact events that are more predictable but which hide in plain sight, leading to neglect and inaction. "Migration processes are uncertain and volatile, eluding precise conceptualization, definition and measurement. Their reliance on complex driver environments, coupled with high-level human agency owing to the different actors involved in migration decisions—prospective migrants, intermediaries or policymakers—hampers both prediction and efficient policy responses."[2] While black swans are linked to the intrinsic failure to predict them, grey rhinos are related to the failure to act upon predictions.

Searching for what drives migration to predict future movements hasn't worked to date because the drivers environment is broad and diverse and replete with multiple interacting factors and forces. It's not that we cannot identify the independent variables or influencing factors; rather it's that we don't know what happens when they are all thrown together. In terms of migration outcomes, sudden or gradual shocks may cause "uncontrolled feedback, cascading effects, extreme events and unanticipated side effects".[3]

The need to understand migration dynamics to better anticipate the results of events and policies so as to, in turn, promote stronger foresight, crisis preparedness, and response mechanisms is clearly pressing. This was acknowledged by the convening of a major online conference last year whose sole theme was forecasting the future of global migration.[4] Researchers—including the authors of the aforementioned black swans/grey rhinos analysis—joined policymakers and practitioners to review existing predictive technologies, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, and explore how they can be best applied to effective policy formulation.

There is considerable excitement about the role big data can play in improving forecasting and, by extension, in developing more effective migration programming. But as several IOM analysts recently pointed out, despite a range of encouraging initiatives by individual states, the EU, the UN, and research, only "patience, realism and persistence [...] will allow the migration community to get the most value out of innovative data sources for migration forecasting.[5] In other words, for the time being this is still "a tale of high expectations, promising results and a long road ahead."[6]

1   Bijak, J. & Czaika, M. (2021) Black swans and grey rhinos: Migration policy under uncertainty. In IOM (2021) Migration Policy Practice Vol x, Number 4,
2   Ibid.
3   Ibid.
4   EMN (2020) National EMN Conference 2020 "Forecasting the Future of Global Migration".
5   Tjaden, J. et al (2021) Using "Big Data" to forecast migration. IOM/Medium.
6   Ibid.

Just paper tigers? The rise and fall of nationalist, populist anti-migrant politics and the mainstreaming of restrictionist policies

What happened to the anti-migrant and anti-refugee activists and accompanying populist political entities that seemed to be so prevalent between 2015 and 2019 in Europe and beyond? Were they just paper tigers in the end, with no sustainability or teeth? Was it just political opportunism, using nationalist and nativist rhetoric to scapegoat migrants and asylum seekers, or is this still a political force to be reckoned with?

Written by Chris Horwood[1]

This essay argues that overall and irrespective of the fate of the parties most associated with anti-migrant policies and rhetoric—some of which have since become stronger, others weaker—attitudes towards migrants and asylum seekers have demonstrably hardened. More significantly perhaps, anti-migrant positions and policies have been mainstreamed and adopted by centrist, moderate and even leftist parties.[2]

Power-shifts in Europe

One way to measure the changing power dynamics in Europe is to look at the domestic strength of national political parties with prominent anti-immigration agendas in addition to their presence in the European Parliament.[3] We find some indicative trends if we study parties that achieved eight percent or more of the popular vote in the last five years or so and make a comparison with their position today. Table 1 below shows that trends are uneven and heterogeneous across Europe, with some anti-immigration parties increasing their share of the popular vote, some seeing it shrink, and others remaining very similar to where they were, which could be at a high (e.g. Poland and Hungary) or a relatively low level of popularity (Czech Republic).

The significance of these vote shares is different for every country and depends on national contexts and how other parties are faring. Local politics and political systems are critical to the relevance of election gains. For example, in Belgium the two parties with nationalist (and separatist) platforms have an impressive 28-percent share of the national vote, but other parties have combined strategically to isolate and neutralise them, excluding them from their ruling coalition.[4] Meanwhile, the Sweden Democrats, who won just under 18 percent of the national vote in 2018, have an increasing influence in politics today as potential kingmakers should the opposition, of which they are part, win the next elections.[5] In Italy, the avidly anti-immigration Lega Nord rose rapidly from just four percent in 2013 to around 17 percent in 2018 and is now in a phase of decline. But in Italy's mercurial politics, opposition to migration remains a strong force with the sudden rise of a new anti-migrant party (Brothers of Italy), which may support Lega's leader Matteo Salvini in his presidential bid in 2023, or alternatively, eclipse him and go for power alone.[6]

Proportional representation (PR) is the electoral system prevalent in Europe: 40 out of 43 European countries use some form of PR.[7] The UK, with its first-past-the-post system, offers a clear example of where a non-PR model disfavours the far right, which occupies none of the 650 seats in the House of Commons. However, as discussed below, elements of the manifestos of the far-right are increasingly found in the policies of mainstream parties, not least because UK voters chose to leave the EU in 2016, with immigration reportedly an issue of "surging public concern" in the years before the Brexit referendum.[8]

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1   Chris Horwood is a migration specialist and co-director of Ravenstone Consult.
2   This essay is framed as a follow-up to "The Politics of Mixed Migration", an essay published in the 2019 edition of the Mixed Migration Review.
3   Broadly, anti-migration agendas are commonly explicit in nationalistic, often far-right parties which may be 'populist' and, if European, often also Eurosceptic.
4   Cerelus, L. (2020) Flemish nationalists seek revenge for Belgian shut-out. Politico.
5   Duxbury, C. (2021) Sweden's far right takes a step closer to power. Politico.
6   Ferraresi, M. (2021) Italy's Far-Right Is on the Rise. Foreign Policy.
7   Palese, M. (2018) Which European countries use proportional representation? Electoral Reform Society.
8   Clery, E., Curtice, J. & Harding, R. (eds) (2017) British Social Attitudes 34 - Immigration. National Centre for Social Research.

Although it would be rash to draw too many swift conclusions from Table 1, it is clear that right-wing nationalist parties enjoy a high degree of support and power across Europe. Some, like Fidesz in Hungary, and Law & Justice in Poland (as leaders of the United Right alliance), appear unassailable in their dominance of their home political scene. In Switzerland, the Swiss People's Party co-governs the country and is the largest party in the Federal Assembly having won around 25 percent of the vote in 2018, although some of its support has recently shifted to the Greens. Meanwhile in Estonia, Slovenia, Spain, and to some extent Sweden, rapid gains have been made in recent years by nationalist parties. In Spain, for example, Vox has risen from virtually no votes in 2015 to 15 percent in 2019, and is now the third-strongest party in Spanish politics. Some polls suggest its popularity continues to grow along with the rapidly rising centre-right (populist) Popular Party in the current pro-right-wing, nativist swing away from socialism in Spain.[9]

Conversely, some nationalist anti-immigration parties, many of which used the "refugee/migrant crisis" of 2015 to mobilise support from anxious constituents, have seen their popularity shrink in recent years. Table 1 shows clear declines of some of the more bullish and charismatic nationalist parties which had strong aspirations to lead some few years ago. Examples include Austria's Freedom Party, the Netherlands' Party for Freedom, France's National Rally (known as the Front until a 2018 "de-demonising" re-brand) and the Danish People's Party. Some of the decline is relatively limited and could reverse, and few are as dramatic as Austria's Freedom Party, which lost half its support between 2015 and 2019. The case of Denmark is more hybrid and remarkable: the Danish People's Party's (DPP) popular anti-migration policies were adopted by the winning leftist Social Democrats while its support fell from 21 percent in 2015 to around nine percent in 2019. As discussed below, the Social Democrats have eclipsed the DPP in their new anti-immigrant, anti-refugee policies and proposals.

Table 1: The rise and fall of Europe's leading nationalist parties, 2015-2021[10]

🟥 Declining   🟩 Rising   🟦 Unchanged or no significant change

Country	Party (right-wing, nationalists with clear anti-migration agenda)	Share of national popular vote in recent elections (local and legislative)	Status in 2021	Comment
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria	16.2% (2019)	Reduced popularity and power	Down from 2015 where it gained over 30% of the popular vote
Belgium	New Flemish Alliance	16.03% (2019)	Reduced popularity and isolated from power in gov't	Down from 20.3% in the 2014 election. Gained more popular votes than any other party but kept out of gov't by anti-right coalition deal
Belgium	Flemish Interest	11.95% (2019)	Increased popularity but isolated from power in gov't	Up from 3.7% in 2014 election. Second highest in terms of popular votes but kept out of gov't by anti-right coalition deal
Czech Republic	Freedom and Direct Democracy	10.64% (2017)	-	Still has around 10% of seats in Czech Chamber of Deputies and Czech seats in the European Parliament
Denmark	Danish People's Party	21.1% (2015)	8.7% (2019)	Major decline in popularity, possibly linked to Social Democrats' (winner of 2019 election) adoption of anti-migrant policies
Estonia	EKRE	17.8% (2019)	Big rise from 8.1% in the 2015 elections	
Finland	Finns Party	17.48% (2019)	Situation unchanged with 17.65% of the popular vote in 2015 election. In governing coalition 2015-2019 but not since.	The Finns Party gained almost exactly the same share of the popular vote as the (winning) Social Democratic Party (17.73%) and the National Coalition Party (17%) in the 2019 elections
France	National Rally	13.02% (2017)	Failed to win a region in 2021 regional elections.	Slip in popularity from 13.07% in 2012 election[11]
Germany	Alternative for Germany (AdF)	12.6% (2017)	Popular polls suggest support for AdF is around 9% after around 15% in 2019	Having risen from nothing to 4.7% of the vote in 2013, 2017 showed rising popularity. Since 2017 AdF has been gaining seats in almost all of the 16 state parliaments, some significantly, as well as the European Parliament

9   Hedgecoe, G. (2021) Spain's far-right Vox eye share of power in Madrid. BBC.
10 This table lists parties with a voter share of eight percent or greater.
11 In 2014, the FN won almost a quarter (24.86%) of French votes cast in the European Parliament election, more than any other French party and winning it more than 25 of France's 74 seats. While this was a significant (and surprising) victory one should be wary of comparing the result to domestic election vote shares.

Country	Party (right-wing, nationalists with clear anti-migration agenda)	Share of national popular vote in recent elections (local and legislative)	Status in 2021	Comment
Hungary	Fidesz	49.21% (2018)	-	Increased from 2013 election when Fidesz combined with the Christian Democratic People's Party to achieve 44.87% of the vote
Italy	Lega Nord	17.37% (2018)	Anti-immigration populism remains strong in Italy, not least with rise of new Brothers of Italy	Only won 4% of the vote in 2013 election. Massive rise in 2018. Still strong, possible win in 2023 elections
Latvia	National Alliance	11.01% (2018)	Falling popularity from 16.72% in 2014 election	
Luxemburg	Alternative Democratic Reform Party	8.28% (2018)	A rise from 6.64% in the 2013 election but very limited political power	
Netherlands	Party for Freedom	13.6% (2017)	From being 2nd most popular party in 2017, now 3rd with falling popularity at 10.87% (2021)	The rise of a new right-wing party, Forum for Democracy (which won 5 % of the vote in the 2021 general election) could explain part of the small decline of the Party for Freedom. A larger share of the Dutch electorate voted for anti-migration parties in 2021 than in 2017
Northern Macedonia	VMRO-DPMNE (Renewal)	38.1% (2016) 44.4% (2014)	In the 2020 elections won 34.57% of the vote and came a close second to the winners.	Remains popular
Norway	Progress Party	15.2% (2017)		The Progress Party with Centre Party were 3rd and 4th in popularity in the 2017 election securing 25.5% of the vote between them. Polls in June 2021 suggest in the September 2021 election these parties will continue their combined average of 25% of votes
Norway	Centre Party	10.3% (2017)		
Poland	Law and Justice (PiS) (United Right)	43.6% (2019)	Remains very strong	PiS is the leading party in the United Right Coalition. It won the 2005 election as well as the 2015 election
Romania	Alliance for the Union of Romanians	8.99% (2020)	Up from 6.64% in 2013	
Slovenia	Slovenian Democratic Party	24.9% (2019)	Rising popularity from 20.71% of the vote in 2014	
Spain	Vox	15.1% (2019)	Rapid rise in popularity from 2015 election when it gained only 0.23% of the votes to now, 3rd party in the country	Some polls in 2020 suggested its popularity is steadily rising
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	17.53% (2018)	Rising popularity since 2014 election where they achieved 12.86 % of the national vote, coming 3rd	Increasing in influence in politics as potential kingmaker for other parties in opposition to the current leaders, the Social Democrats
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party	25.6% (2019)	Falling support since the 2015 election where it achieved 29.4% of votes	Currently one of four parties in the Federal Council, but suggestions of decline evident with increased popularity of the Greens?

Source (adapted) and credit: Compiled by the author for the MMC using multiple sources

The European Parliament consists of 705 elected members (MEPs) drawn from the 27 member states of the EU and organised—uniquely for supranational legislatures—into eight ideological groups.[12] The newest of these, formed in June 2019 by nationalist, right-wing populist and Eurosceptic parties from ten EU states, is the Identity and Democracy Group (ID), which currently holds 71 seats, 10% of the assembly. The centre-right European People's Party Group (EPP), comprising Christian democrats and conservatives, currently has the highest number (178, just over 25%) of MEPs, while, in second place, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) have 146 (20.7%) seats. The most recent elections for the European Parliament, held in 2019, ostensibly delivered only modest gains to the far right,[13] but, as discussed below, ID's anti-immigration policies are also espoused by other political tendencies within the assembly.

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12 Groupings within the handful of the world's other multi-country assemblies are based on nationality rather than political ideology.
13 Wills, T. (2019) No new dawn for far-right in European election. DW; and Al Yafai F. (2019) The far-right's influence in Europe is much greater than its new EU Parliamentary group suggests. Euractiv.

Beyond Europe

Evidence of nationalistic agendas in combination with anti-immigration attitudes characterising the global political landscape is not hard to find. The trend towards increased authoritarian leadership in global politics has been widely discussed, often accompanied by illiberal, anti-migration nationalistic positions.[14] In recent years, powerful nations like the US, Russia, and China, and emerging states such as India, Brazil, and South Africa have all taken hard-line positions in relation to migrants and refugees to differing degrees. For much of the 20th century, Australia had a "White Australia" agenda. Although this has given way to a more open and inclusive society, with some of the highest global numbers of regular migrants and refugees, Australia's "stop the boats" policy (more formally known as Operation Sovereign Borders, launched in 2013), a key component of its intolerance of irregular migration, continues to be severe and inflexible. It is arguably in breach of international agreements, but remains popular and supported by parties across the political spectrum.[15] Israel too, appears to have an ever-hardening hostile approach to irregular migrants and asylum seekers.[16]

An exhaustive overview of individual national cases is beyond the scope of this essay, but some highlights illustrate the point:

- Under the Donald Trump administration, the **United States** became highly exclusionary. It aggressively securitised borders, used trade muscle to force neighbours to comply with its aim of halting irregular migration, issued executive orders to halt movement into the US from selected countries, massively reduced refugee resettlement,[17] and deported millions of undocumented migrants while increasingly practicing apprehension and detention including family separation. Since coming to power in early 2021, President Joe Biden has vowed to end or reverse many of Trump's policies, but civil rights and refugee rights groups are disappointed at the limited level of reform. Biden's government has continued to turn away migrants at the border with questionable justification, expelling undocumented migrants and asylum seekers and continues to tell migrants and refugees, "Don't come", illustrating how bi-partisan and mainstreamed harsher immigration rules have become.[18]

- **Russia**'s authoritarian and nationalistic leadership does not welcome refugees or undocumented migrants although the latter have been a central part of the labour supply for years. For the first 15 years of this century Russia hosted very small numbers of refugees. These rose dramatically in 2015 and 2016 during the Syrian refugee crisis and then declined again every year to previous levels.[19] In April 2021, more than a million undocumented migrants from former Soviet states were ordered to leave Russia by June 15 or face expulsion.[20] Racism and xenophobia are commonly reported and anti-Semitism has been a longstanding social reality.[21] President Vladimir Putin's position on regular migrants has been ambivalent, due to the need to attract millions of workers to support the economy while also supporting a "Russians first" approach.

- In January 2020, **India**, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), brought into force the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), providing a pathway to Indian citizenship for Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian immigrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh who had arrived in India before 2015, but the measure excluded Muslims.[22] Critics expressed concerns that the law would be used, along with the National Register of Citizens (NRC), to render a significant number of India's 182 million Muslim citizens stateless.[23] Widely dubbed as an anti-Muslim law and a "weapon of mass polarisation" it sparked huge demonstrations inside India and condemnation outside.[24] Reportedly anti-immigrant fervour has been fuelled by the political fallout of the act.[25]

14 Repuci, S. & Slipowtz, A. (2021) Freedom in the World 2021 Democracy under Siege. Freedom House.
15 Human Rights Council (2021) Report on means to address the human rights impact of pushbacks of migrants on land and at sea. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe González Morales; and European Stability Initiative (2021) The popularity of pushbacks – lessons from Australia.
16 Minority Rights Group International (2018) Israel: An uncertain future for thousands of African asylum seekers caught between detention and deportation (in Minority and Indigenous Trends 2018 – Focus on Migration and Displacement).
17 National Immigration Forum (2020) Fact Sheet: U.S. Refugee Resettlement.
18 Narea, N. (2021) Biden's immigration policy isn't Trump's—but it's still a disappointment. Vox.
19 Macrotrends (2021) Russia Refugee Statistics 1996-2021.
20 Moscow Times (2021) Russia Tells Illegal Migrants from Post-Soviet Countries to Leave By June 15th. This date marked the end of a moratorium on expulsions introduced because of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, there have been no subsequent media reports of large-scale departures or deportations.
21 Zatari, A. (2020) Racism in Russia: Stories of prejudice. BBC; Sevortian, A. (2009) Xenophobia in Post-Soviet Russia. Equal Rights Review; and Ryabikova, V. (2021) Is there racism in Russia? Russia Beyond.
22 Vaid, D. (2020) One year of India's Citizenship Amendment Act. DW. The bill was adopted by parliament in December 2020 and came into force the following month.
23 Tamkin, E. (2020) The accelerating rise of a dangerous new nationalism in India. New Statesman.
24 DW (2019) India: Massive protests against citizenship law.
25 Allchin, A. (2020) India citizenship law fuels fear and anti-immigrant fervor in Assam. Nikkei Asia.

- Anti-Muslim nationalism is also seen in **China**'s widely condemned mass persecution and detention of minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.[26] China's immigration approach is characterised by strict enforcement of rules against irregular overstays, (including by offering financial rewards to those who inform on migrants), non-hosting of refugees, and deportation of asylum seekers fleeing North Korea, whom the authorities classify as irregular migrants.[27]

- **Brazil** and **South Africa**, both famously inclusive and open to migrants and especially refugees, have changed policies in recent years with tougher immigration laws and restricted space for new asylum seekers. Anti-immigration rhetoric and public intolerance of foreigners have revealed themselves in lethal street violence in South Africa[28] and political support for right-wing anti-immigrant leadership in Brazil.[29]

These examples offer glimpses of a wider trend involving many more countries around the world. Are they a reflection of the rise of populism and nationalism or of quasi-authoritarian strongmen undermining democracy and liberal principles? "Almost 70% of countries covered by The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index recorded a decline in their overall score in 2020."[30] The global average score fell to its lowest level since the index began in 2006.

Immigration has always been a contentious, politicised, and polemical issue. Living in the "age of migration" implies that migration will continue to be prominent in political agendas. To what extent are the politics an expression of the cyclical re-emphasis on migration in response to migration cycles operating through time, displaying periods of contraction and expansion? As suggested by one migration expert interviewed for this Review the world may be witnessing the end of a long period of openness to migration and refugees that started after WW2.[31]

Mainstreaming anti-migration policies

The countries with at least eight percent of voter support for far-right and nationalist parties in Europe listed in Table 1 make up half of all the countries in the region of Europe (including Russia). Other states do not necessarily have popular far-right parties but many well have mainstream parties with significant exclusionary agendas built into their objectives and manifestos.

Considering the prevalence of populism and anti-migrant rhetoric in Europe in 2017, one commentator suggested the real test for Europe was how mainstream parties would respond.[32] So how did they? Recognising the changing tide of public opinion in Europe in the face of the "migrant/refugee crisis" of 2015 and capitalising on the political opportunity of meeting constituents' demands for more migration management while urgently wanting to head off renewed support for far-right parties, many mainstream parties have adopted more robust and exclusionary migration agendas in the last few years.[33] The rationale for centre-right, centre or even social democrat parties adopting such positions is one of political survival. The effect has been, in some cases, to steal the thunder of the far right and augment support for previously flagging centrist parties.

In Germany, for example, the strength of Alternative for Germany's fast rise between 2013 and 2019 may be tempered by the fact that most mainstream parties frame their migration policies in a more restrictive and less inclusive manner than they did before 2015. The same is happening in France, the Netherlands, the UK, Denmark, and elsewhere. In 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron was clear that adopting a stricter stance on immigration was designed to lure voters away from the far-right National Rally.[34] His bet paid off and continues to pay off in 2021, when the National Rally fared dismally in regional elections.[35] The level to which centrist parties in the Netherlands have used nativist and anti-immigrant anti-Muslim agenda borrowed from the far-right Party for Freedom is remarkable.[36] Meanwhile, in Denmark, the leftist Social Democrats (SD) swept to victory in 2019 with an immigration agenda adopted

26 Amnesty International (2021) 'Like we were enemies in a war,' China's Mass Internment, Torture and Persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang.
27 In the 1970s China took in Vietnamese 'Indo-Chinese' refugees who currently number around 300,000 and who have still not been regularised. Beyond these there are fewer than 400 refugees from other countries; China took in none from Syria in 2015 and 2016. Song, L. (2021) Anywhere but here? China's response to refugee protection during COVID-19. Open Democracy; and Habicht, J. (2020). The Role of Campaigns in Law Enforcement: The Example of Sanfei Campaigns in Chinese Immigration Law. Studies on the Law and Legal Culture of China.
28 Oatway, J & Skuy, A. (2021) Documenting violence against migrants in South Africa – a photo essay. The Guardian.
29 Paris, F. (2019) Brazilian President Bolsonaro Withdraws From U.N. Compact On Migration. NPR; and Garcia, R. (2017) Is Brazil no longer safe for refugees and immigrants? Al Jazeera.
30 The Economist Intelligence Unit (2021) Democracy Index 2020: In sickness and in health?
31 See page 232 for interview with Alan Gamlen.
32 Ward,B. (2017) The Real Populist Test for Europe is How Mainstream Parties Respond. Human Rights Watch.
33 Raj,K. (2020) How Nativist Populism Is Going Mainstream in Europe. Human Rights Watch.
34 McPartland, B. (2019) France's 20 measures to 'take back control' on immigration. The Local.
35 Quinn, C. (2021) France Rejects Le Pen's Far-Right Party. Foreign Policy. The French presidential election in 2022 is likely to present a more accurate gauge of the National Rally's strength, given the extremely low turnout in the 2021 regional polls.
36 Nielsen, N. (2017) Dutch PM tells people to 'act normal, or go away'. Euobserver.

wholesale from the Danish People's Party, an explicitly anti-immigration party with high popularity in 2015 but whose support is fast diminishing. With new laws, the SD are taking the nativist and nationalist agenda to new heights with planned refugee returns, an externalisation of asylum processing, and preventing any further resettlement of refugees and "non-westerners".[37] It has been argued that the Social Democrats in Denmark are surpassing far-right aspirations.[38]

The mainstreaming of nativist and anti-immigration agendas into more centrist parties' political manifestos is not the only manifestation of this changing political landscape. Increasingly, traditionally mainstream parties are embracing far-right parties as strategic partners in national and regional elections. In Austria's 2017 general election, for example, the centre-right Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) ran on a new robustly anti-immigrant platform. This helped ÖVP increase its electoral success and, after the polls, it formed a coalition government with the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ).[39] In state elections, the right-wing nationalist and populist Alternative for Germany has worked closely with centre-right Christian Democratic Union politicians—the first time in Germany's post-war history that a mainstream party has relied on the support of the far right to form a regional government.[40] In Sweden, the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats are busy making deals with opposition parties that may give them the role of kingmaker in the coming election; naturally their support will come with a price tag.[41]

Hidden in plain sight

Beyond the precarious twists and turns of state, national, and regional politics that receive significant media attention, there is a sense of something steadier quietly taking shape. Hidden in plain sight, longer-term systemic instruments and policies backed by multi-annual budgets are evolving and enlarging irrespective of the rise and fall of right-wing parties. Examples in Europe include the externalisation of the EU's borders, the baked-in conditionality of EU development assistance— such as the €79.5 billion Global Europe fund— and the exponential rise in funding for Frontex and other border security entities.[42]

These developments in Europe are echoed in the United States, which is also externalising its borders, not only into Central America but all over the world. The US has a sizable machine that runs large-scale border apprehension, detention, and deportation and is also militarising its border security.[43] The advancement and establishment of these systems occur in relative isolation from national-level politics and are therefore less subject to democratic (voter) scrutiny or accountability. In the US they function irrespective of who is in the White House or which party dominates Congress, and in Europe have occurred at a time when the far right only occupies 10 percent of the European Parliament's seats and governs none of the 27 EU countries.

Anxiety over irregular migration is not confined to Europe and the US. In 2019, a UN survey found that in all regions of the world except Northern Africa and Western Asia most governments regarded the number of irregular migrants on their soil to be a matter of "major concern" (see Figure 1).[44] It is hard to determine whether policy or government-level positions are reflected in public attitudes. Gallup, Ipsos, WorldValuesSurvey, and the Pew Research Centre all measure public opinion on migration issues, but their methodologies and specific survey questions vary widely, as do their conclusions, with some showing swings towards more welcoming attitudes towards migrants and others the opposite. In this author's opinion, drawing conclusions about the hardening or softening of attitudes towards migration globally from such polls is hazardous and open to bias.

Whether the general public (the voters) are increasingly negative towards migration and politicians merely responding to those sentiments by adopting anti-migration narratives and policies therefore remains something of an open question. It could be, as some polls indicate, that the general public on average is not so negative, but that the dynamics between the media— and social media in particular—a very vocal minority, and populist politicians distort reality and create a misleading picture of increasingly negative public attitudes towards migration, possibly creating self-fulfilling conditions. Moreover, it should not be ruled out that some populist politicians actively drum up negative public attitudes towards migration for political gain.

37 Le Bourdon, A. & Cragg, G. (2021) Denmark's tightening of immigration policy causes concern for Syrian refugees. France 24.
38 Burnett, S. (2021) Why Denmark is clamping down on 'non-Western' residents. DW.
39 Downes, J. et al.(2021) Why centre-right parties adopt hardline positions on immigration at their peril. The Loop.
40 Raj, K. (2020) op. cit.
41 Duxbury, C. (2021) op. cit.
42 See the essay on Lucrative Borders by Mark Akkerman, page 222
43 See the interview with Todd Miller on page 229
44 United Nations (2019) World Population Policies 2019: International Migration Policies and Programmes. Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Population Division.

Figure 1. Percentage of governments that view the number of migrants in an irregular situation as a matter of concern by region, 2019
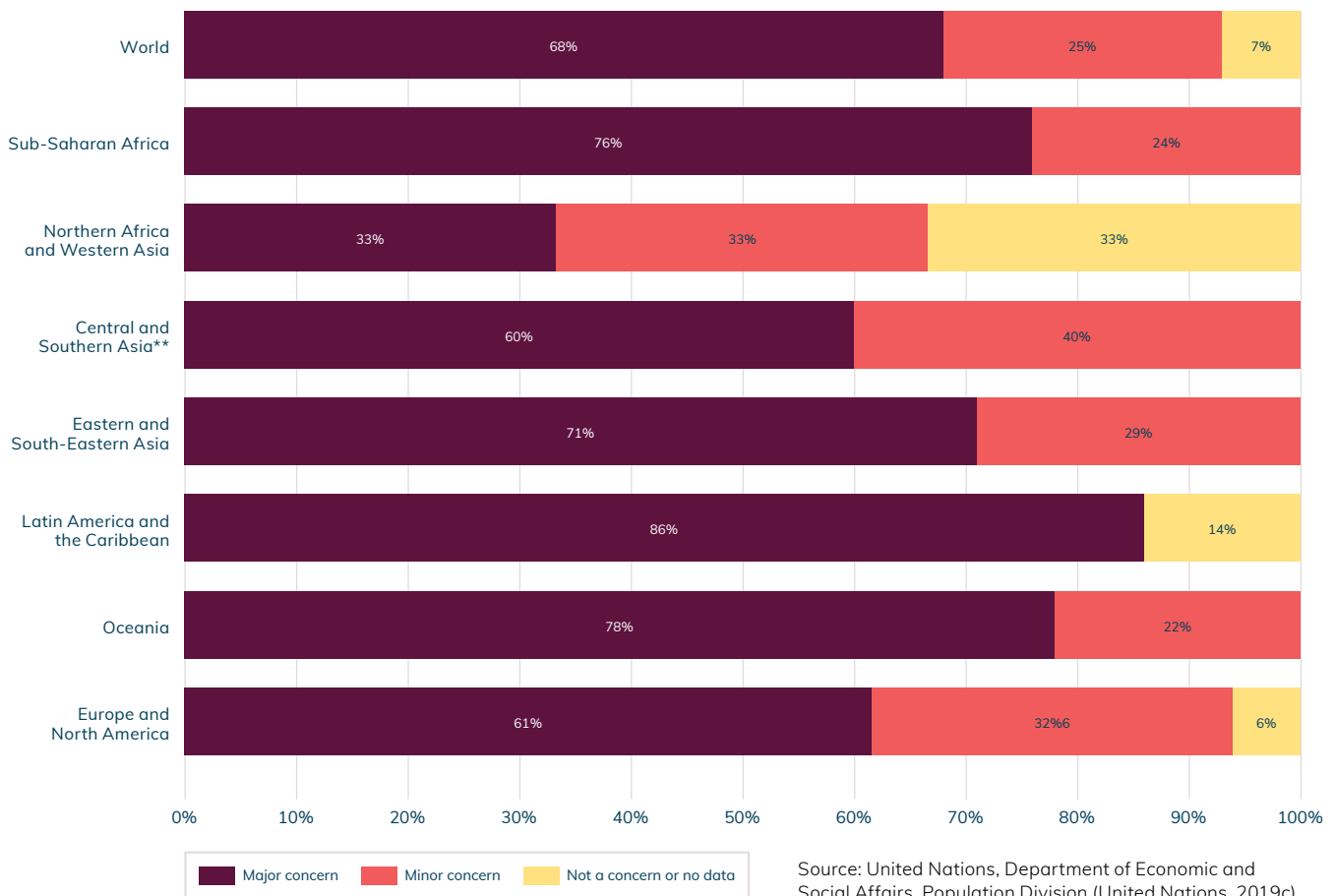
Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (United Nations, 2019c). Note: Based on 111 countries with available data (as of 1 September 2019).

Normalising the extreme

There has also been a clear ratcheting up of what this and previous editions of the Mixed Migration Review calls the "normalising the extreme". Across the world, and especially in Europe and the US, many actions, some illegal, are taken against migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers that until recently would have been considered beyond the pale, inhumane, or unethical (and still are by many), but which are now common yet face minimal scrutiny or impactful condemnation.[45]

Appetites for refugee burden sharing

The global appetite to receive and host refugees registered by UNHCR in resettlement programmes has always fallen far short of demand, with figures in 2020 being the lowest ever (see graphic below).[46] But while a paltry 35,000 of the world's 20.7 million refugees were resettled in 2020, a far greater number of people made successful claims for asylum. EU states for example, issued 521,000 first instance decisions on asylum applications that year, leading 211,800 people being granted some type of protected status, including refugee status.[47] Almost 70,000 others won asylum in appeal or review rulings. For asylum-seekers who arrive in the EU irregularly therefore, there is a good chance of being granted refugee status or other kind of permission to stay, providing an incentive for irregular movement, something the EU and its member states are determined to curtail. The UK's moves to change asylum laws to penalise asylum seekers who arrive at its shores irregularly in boats across the English Channel—strongly criticized by UNHCR—also illustrate this resolve.[48]

45 See Normalising the Extreme, Page 200
46 Walliss, E. (2021) Refugee resettlement at 'record low' in 2020, says UNHCR. Infomigrants.
47 Eurostat (2021) Asylum statistics. As the chart above shows, only a handful of the world's states resettle refugees in significant numbers, with the US usually taking an outlying lead and, under Biden, set to raise its cap to an annual 125,000.
48 Connolly, A. What's behind the UK's harsh post-Brexit asylum overhaul? The New Humanitarian; and UNHCR (2021) After UK asylum bill debate, UNHCR urges MPs to avoid punishing asylum-seekers.

Figure 2. Where people are resettled, over time

Top countries of resettlement, departures from 2008 - 2021
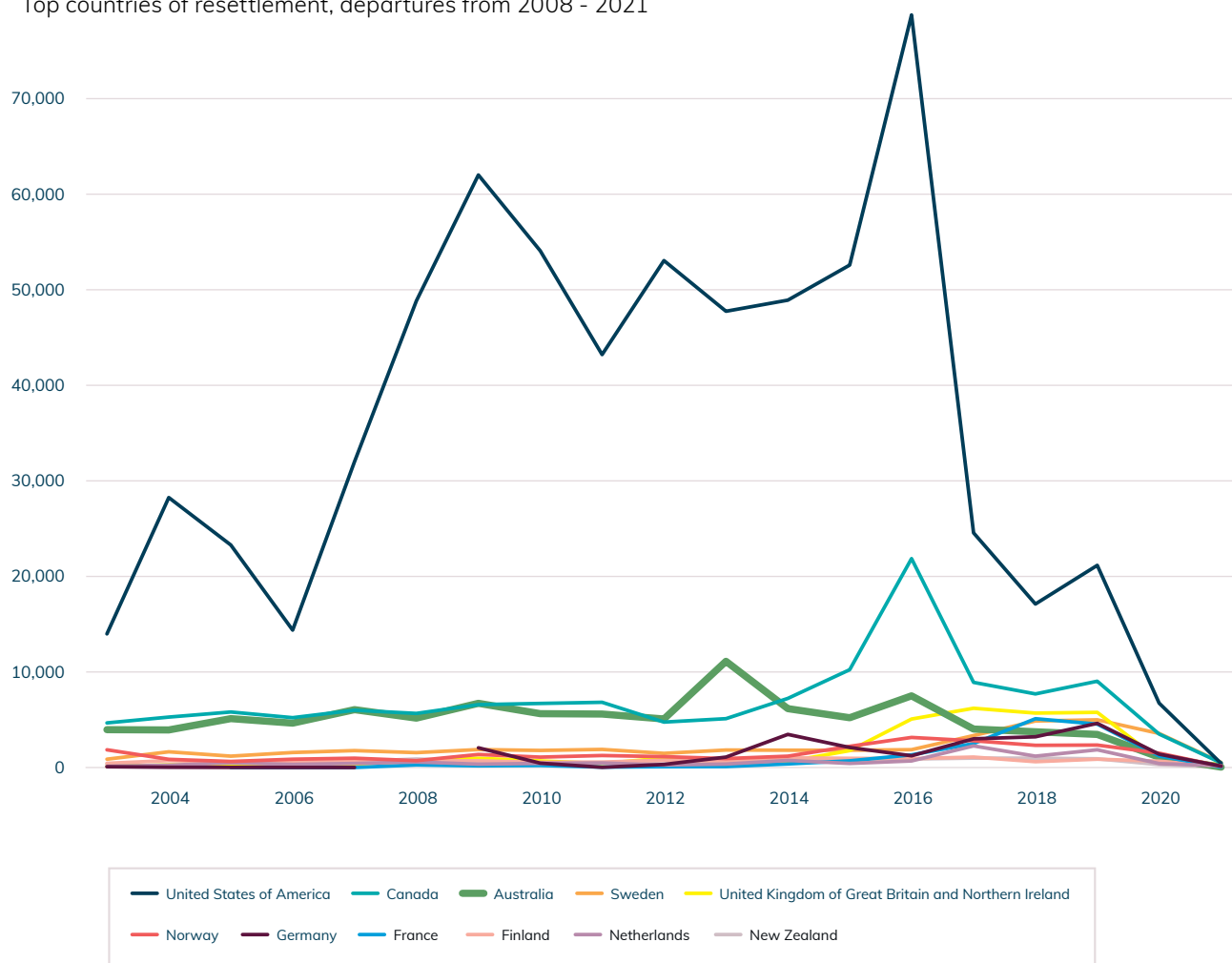
As at 28 February 2021. Only the top 11 countries of resettlement are included. Resettlement includes here only those resettled with the involvement of UNHCR.
Source: Refugee Council of Australia 2021 (page 5)

More generally, willingness to "share the refugee burden" globally is unimpressive and countries are prepared to expend considerable resources to deter irregular migration and thereby reduce the number of unignorable asylum seekers in their own countries, many of whom will eventually find a way to be accepted according to domestic law.

Migrants and asylum seekers are routinely pushed back and pulled back on land and sea, shot at, sound-blasted, deported, roughly handled, and aggressively denied access or the chance to apply for asylum by countries that have ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention. Some commentators are asking how relevant the convention is now, in a context where respect for the norms on which

the refugee regime is based appear to be in "serious decline".[49] In a recent interview, UNHCR's assistant high commissioner for protection said that protection standards have "deteriorated significantly in the three years since the Global Compact on Refugees was established", but that part of the reason was the impact of Covid-19.[50]

'Covidisation' caveats

2020 and 2021 have been extraordinary years due to the many impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. Its effect on migration movement, migration governance, and migration politics continues to be documented.[51]

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49 Crisp, J. & Maple, N. (2021) Refugee issues: Relevant or redundant? The future of the international refugee protection regime. Refugee Law Initiative.
50 Ibid.
51 World Bank Group & KNOMAD (2020) COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens.

The sense of wartime solidarity in many countries has led to increased support for incumbent leaders and their parties, particularly when vaccine rollouts started to give constituents hope. Meanwhile, support for anti-migrant parties seemed unreasonable when so many of the "front-line" workers in OECD countries were either regular or irregular migrants.[52] Has Covid-19 slowed the advance of anti-migrant parties as people realise the importance of migrant workers, or conversely, has it made people more fearful of outsiders? Many governments used the pandemic as a pretext to implement harsher immigration controls and surveillance measures.[53] The extent to which current attitudes and events will continue after the pandemic is subdued—and how this will in the longer run influence the support for hard-line anti-immigration parties—is still uncertain.[54]

Conclusion

With or without those parties that rose to prominence and secured votes on anti-migrant platforms in the recent past, their policies and values remain prevalent in migration politics in Europe and elsewhere, such as in the US, Australia, ASEAN countries, Russia, and India. Should we be shocked when left-leaning social democratic parties adopt harsher immigration policies, or is this the acceptable cost of keeping the far right out of mainstream national politics? Should political leaders be so responsive to popular perceptions, or instead dare to take unpopular decisions that they feel are morally correct—as Angela Merkel did in Germany in 2015 when she opened the doors to Syrian refugees—despite the antagonism and political backlash she unleashed?

Shocks like the coronavirus may serve to exacerbate a more conservative and protectionist approach to immigration and increase hostility or reduce openness to foreigners. Despite some positive developments in various countries—such as releasing people from immigration detention, increasing access to citizenship, providing Covid vaccines and other health services to undocumented migrants, and the large-scale regularisation of undocumented migrants[55]—the environment is currently looking bleak for international mixed migration, and anti-migrant approaches are increasingly normalised in mainstream parties and institutionalised in border and development policy.

Is this just a cycle, or a taste of things to come, as various interviewees in this Review predict? By associating the rise and fall of populism and nationalism with attitudes to immigration and asylum, some miss the point that while populism may have passed a high-water mark (for the moment), the evidence for new trends and the

mainstreaming of a widespread anti-migrant policy environment is strong. Indeed, far from being just paper tigers that are in decline, there is salient evidence of their abiding influence.

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52 Blaise, A. et al. (2020) COVID-19 lockdowns have increased support for incumbent parties and trust in government. LSE.
53 Inside Story (2020) Are EU countries using COVID-19 to clamp down on refugees? Al Jazeera.
54 See the essay by Alan Gamlen and Bram Frouws - Post-pandemic paradigms: Covid-19 and the future of human migration on page 232.
55 Explored further in 'Normalising the Extreme' on page 200.

Interview

Regulation benefits

Characterising people as either pro- or anti-migrant is an unhelpful dichotomy, one that masks individuals' capacity for a range of reactions to strangers and that risks hampering progressive immigration policies, explains **Gregory Maniatis**. Understanding these complexities and accepting anxiety as a legitimate reaction to newcomers are key to developing smarter strategies of regulated migration.

Gregory Maniatis is the programme director of the International Migration Initiative at Open Society Foundations. His previous posts include co-director the Migration Project of Columbia University's Global Policy Initiative and senior advisor to the UN special representative for migration. For the past 20 years Maniatis has also worked as a freelance contributor to leading media outlets.

What do you find special about working for the Open Society Foundations?

I've worked in the world of politics at the national, regional, and multilateral levels, I've worked in journalism—that's where I started—I've worked in think tanks, and I've been in the private sector. When I came to the Open Society Foundations four years ago, I found it to be the freest space in the world to do creative political and policy work, and to bring people together across sectors in order to co-design social change strategies. We're in a unique position to de-risk ideas by piloting them, by building alliances and coalitions around strategies to implement them, and, if they work, urging their adoption by others who can scale them, especially governments.

Can you give examples of how your program approaches migration?

We are very focused on the need to prove concepts by creating multi-stakeholder partnerships across sectors—

civil society, government, the private sector, academia, faith groups, the multilateral system—harnessing the strengths of each to drive system change.

The most innovative and unfettered actors tend to be in civil society and the private sector, but bold civil servants are the ones who are in the best position to scale change through their mastery of policy and government. No single sector can make progress alone, especially at a time when extremely powerful corporate and other forces resist change or are moving society in a more divided direction.

Our role as a program is to not only be generative in terms of the ideas that should be considered by the public and by political leaders, but also to work on the implementation of those ideas by building powerful coalitions—and often bringing together unusual partners. I'll give you an example: Five years ago, we launched the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), and we did so out of a very powerful sense that refugee resettlement should be community-led, that this

was important in order to improve integration outcomes, to reanimate communities by bringing them together around a common cause, and to generate a powerful, broad constituency in support of refugee protection. So we created a partnership with the government of Canada, UNHCR, and the University of Ottawa in order to try—together—to take this Canadian idea of refugee sponsorship to the rest of the world.

In five years, GRSI has helped create refugee sponsorship pilots or programs in over a dozen countries, most recently now in the United States. We could not have done that without the differentiated know-how and strengths of each partner—the flexibility and civil society networks of philanthropy, the deep knowledge that resides in UNHCR and academia, and the implementing power of governments. It's one thing for a think-tanker or a philanthropist to advocate for a good idea. It's quite another for government officials—diplomats and civil servants who run foreign and immigration policy and who know all of the challenges in doing anything related to immigration—to engage their counterparts in other countries to help design sponsorship programs that are adapted to different contexts.

We believe very strongly that we have to take responsibility for policy and political outcomes, not just for launching good ideas. Our staff have to be nimble strategists, creative team builders, and exceptional risk managers. In this example, the policy outcome is for governments to adopt refugee sponsorship, but ultimately the larger outcome is that we want is to see community groups deeply involved in welcoming and integrating refugees and newcomers of all kinds, and in doing so to also engage in world affairs in a way that gives them a deeper understanding of all these issues.

What's your position on irregular migration at the OSF?

I'll give you an example of some work that we've done and that will illustrate our position. And I should preface this by saying that one of the hallmarks of OSF is that there is no single open society position on any issue—so this is my own view. When it comes to undocumented migrants, we try fiercely to ensure that they have equal access to the same public services and rights as all others. We also respect that states have the right to regulate entry into their countries, as long as they respect their international and other legal obligations to allow in asylum seekers.

A recent example of our work on behalf of undocumented migrants is in the United States, where last year, at the very beginning of the pandemic, we decided to grant $20 million to the city of New York to provide direct cash assistance to the undocumented,

who were excluded from federal pandemic relief efforts. It was a moment when everyone was starting to hail the heroism of essential workers and coming to the realization that while they were stuck in their homes, it was the essential workers who were risking their lives to pick their crops, deliver their food, and attend to them in the hospitals. And that a disproportionate number of these essential workers were not only immigrants but undocumented ones.

After NYC, we quickly decided to do the same elsewhere in the US. By summer, we had helped to create funds in 30 cities, states, and counties to provide direct cash assistance to the undocumented. Now, because we know that philanthropy is just a drop in the ocean when it comes to funding in a situation like this, we twinned it with advocacy and outreach—outreach to other foundations and advocacy with governments at the local, state, and federal levels to urge them to use this moment of recognition of the role of the undocumented. Last year, New York State, for example, set up a $2.1 billion fund for undocumented workers to access direct cash assistance.

You were closely involved in the formation of the Global Forum on Migration & Development (GFMD). Can you speak a bit about that?

Fundamentally, the idea came about in 2006 when I started to work as senior advisor to Peter Sutherland, the newly appointed UN Special Representative on International Migration; he ultimately served in that role until 2017 when he fell ill. We wanted to focus governments on the positive aspects of migration, to create a space where we weren't just talking about border controls, but where we could really focus the minds of policymakers and politicians on how migration was beneficial. And then to show them how some governments were doing things better than other governments. How do you take advantage of the diaspora? How do you reduce the cost of remittances? How do you regularize undocumented migrants? We didn't want this effort to be in the United Nations. We designed the GFMD to be state-led, because we wanted the states to own the institution and to feel as if they had the right to develop the agenda. The GFMD launched in 2007 and ultimately helped inform what became known as The Sutherland Report.[1] The ideas in the Sutherland Report are very fundamental to the contents of the New York Declaration adopted in 2016 at the UN summit on migrants and refugees, and then subsequently, in the Global Compact for Migration.

Do I think the GFMD has been successful? Yes, I think we're in a place—in part because of the pandemic and the work done by civil society and others during the pandemic—where there is greater recognition of

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1   UN General Assembly (2017) Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration.

the role migrants and refugees play in their societies. This is a bulwark against anti-immigrant politicians who demonise migrants as a means of re-nationalising power and politics.

> ❝ **The balance of history shows that strength in community comes from diversity, and that those societies that have organized well around diversity have thrived, going back to Ancient Greece.** ❞

You've spoken over the years about identity and fear in relation to migration and refugee integration. It's not just in the Global North, but it's also evident in the South. Are we making any progress, or is there an inherent fundamental human resistance to multiculturalism?

You can tell any story that you want about whether people resist or embrace diversity and multiculturalism. There is so much evidence from history of any narrative across that entire spectrum. And I think this points to the conclusion that there is not a fundamental human instinct for or against it. I think that is where our politics and our leaders come in. You can create thriving diverse societies, or you can create ones that struggle.

I think the balance of history shows that strength in community comes from diversity, and that those societies that have organized well around diversity have thrived, going back to Ancient Greece. If you set the stage for acceptance, then you are a stronger society as a result. If you decide, however, to use diversity to divide, to pit one group against the other—whether that's an ethnic group, a cultural group, an economic or religious group, whether it's around class or identity—then, yes, I think people are prone and vulnerable to fear of the "other." So you can destructively use diversity to divide societies. It's not hard to do.

One of the ways that I try to just orient folks who are considering how migration impacts society is that reflexively thinking, oh, you're pro-migrant or anti-migrant, is unhelpful. It's simply not so clear cut with most people, in my experience. Almost all people have the capacity to have feelings across the spectrum of reaction to strangers—even people we think of as being progressive and pro-immigration. We have to acknowledge and work with these complex feelings, and to build political strategies that account for them.

On the progressive side, we often take away the space for reasoned conversation about migration because it's a kind of litmus test: "Are you for or against migration?" And that is destructive for those who want more progressive immigration policies, because well-intentioned people who are concerned about

immigration will go quiet and they will not become vocal advocates for immigration policy. This is especially true at this point in history, when, after hundreds of years of rising as nations, the West is in decline relative to the rest of the world. I think this backdrop generates a generalised fear, which is easy to exploit—and even easier to do so now than say in the 1990s or the early 2000s, when the West was soaring with confidence after the Cold War.

If we look at Denmark, for example, today we see a country that has experimented with multiculturalism, it's attempted an assimilationist approach, and now seems to be retreating from that. How do you read that?

I think Denmark is extremely troubling. It is a small, homogenous country in terms of its self-identity, and it is experiencing some of the broader fears that we were just discussing—the fear of decline, the fear of the "other" in economically declining communities that resist immigration. The sort of easy interpretation of that is that they fear that immigrants will take their jobs. But it's more than that: especially at a time of economic uncertainty, you cling to what you know, to your sense of tradition, ritual, and identity. I think stagnant societies tend to be ones where it's easier to come in as a nativist and as a nationalist. This is nothing new. I think Hannah Arendt said it best in her work on loneliness: authoritarians prey on lonely communities, offering them a leader to identify with, and a sense of tradition and culture to cling to. That's what you've seen in Poland and Hungary. The nativists are the ones who are able to exploit the sense of decline, as well as the memory of the 2015 refugee crisis. Viktor Orbán in Hungary scaremongers by saying that Africa's rise is unstoppable, that it's not a matter of a million people crossing the Mediterranean, but instead of tens of millions or more, which is why he says we have to build fortress Europe. There's no evidence for what he says, but that doesn't seem to matter.

In 2016, you talked about seven pillars for a comprehensive roadmap for Europe in terms of migration. One of the pillars was the EU should take back control of the borders. It seems that was the only pillar of those recommendations that is being implemented.

Fair enough! I don't think there's anything controversial in saying that you should regulate who moves over your border. That pillar was pretty straightforward. So the question for me is how much work has been done on the other pillars. My sense—even before 2015, but *especially* in 2015—was that the progressive movement was making a mistake by assuming that governments wouldn't be able to stop large-scale migration, that it was somehow inevitable.

This is not a winning political argument. People understandably fear the kind of chaos we saw at

Europe's borders in 2015, especially in an age of terrorism. What you need to argue is that you can regulate migration, that governments can design policies that get the most out of it and minimize its risks. This will build public confidence. The binary between "You can't stop them" and "You can stop them"—that's a losing one for progressives in a system of nation states. The people who say, "You can't stop them" will lose. And what has happened in a big way in the past five years is that those who want to have really strict control of the borders have won. Added to that, the pandemic has made it really easy to shut down borders.

> ❝ **Viktor Orbán scaremongers by saying that Africa's rise is unstoppable, that it's not a matter of a million people crossing the Mediterranean, but instead of tens of millions or more, which is why he says we have to build fortress Europe. There's no evidence for what he says, but that doesn't seem to matter.** ❞

My view is that countries are willing to accept relatively large numbers of newcomers. But they have to migrate in ways that are regulated. There couldn't be a better example of this than Canada, which allows in one percent of its population or more every year and welcomed 40,000 Syrians in three months in 2015-16. And yet in 2017, when a few thousand people crossed the border into Canada from the United States early in the Trump era, it chilled the politics around immigration in Canada. You're letting in what, 400,000 people a year, and yet 10,000 people crossing irregularly upset a country that is deeply progressive on this issue. And so I think it's a really good example of why it is not a great idea to advocate for chaotic unregulated movement.

What happened to Greece? After being very open to taking people in, it's now adopted an ever harder line towards migrants and asylum seekers. They're getting increasing complaints for their actions. Where did it all go wrong?

By the way, I am Greek—I hold Greek citizenship. Until I was 40, I could legitimately say I'd spent about half of my life in Greece. In Greek tradition, we have a deep sense of friendliness towards foreigners—there's a frequently used word for it, *philoxenia*. It's all true, it's a profound part of our identity. But the stranger still raises suspicion when she or he walks into a café, in any society. That's totally natural. We shouldn't stigmatise the sense of concern people have when somebody comes into their community, especially in smaller ones, whether it's someone who shares your nationality or not. It's going to raise suspicion. The experience of 2015-2016 in Greece remains fresh—all those chaotic

scenes on the islands and at the border—and it's the backdrop against which today's events unfold.

I think something else is happening in Greece, which is that the state doesn't function very well. It's not more complicated than this, on one level. Because the state doesn't function well, we cannot organise around building an asylum system that functions at the level it needs to function. We cannot mobilise around building integration programs that successfully integrate newcomers into Greece. Even when there were governments in Greece that were more supportive of migrants, you just could not get the state to function as well as it needed to, and to build the systems that you needed. I understand the thinking of those who oppose bringing in large numbers of people when you have asylum systems that cannot vet people, right? This is the age of terrorism, the US government can bring in 125,000 refugees in the next fiscal year, but you can be assured that the US government will vet all of those people, right? That's a reasonable thing to do. When systems function well it works much better.

> ❝ **I don't think there's anything controversial in saying that you should regulate who moves over your borders.** ❞

Some recent polls from Gallup and YouGov suggest public attitudes to migration are changing in a negative way. We also see support for the refugee/ asylum settlement system at an all-time low. What are your observations?

I don't take much stock in most polling that's done on immigration. It's not that it's inaccurate, it's just that you can elicit whatever sentiment you want from polling, more or less, when it comes to difficult issues like immigration. So it does come back to that point I made about how political and other leaders develop narratives and systems. We try to do the kind of polling that gives us real insights into how people think, into how to frame issues, and how to design policies. I have a huge gripe around the imagery and narratives deployed by refugee advocates, by the UNHCR for example, which tend to be around trying to generate compassion. Compassion isn't a great sentiment when it comes to trying to build public support for refugees and immigration. It has a short half-life and it can diminish others. There are much better ways to build support, and I think polling gives us real insights. The pandemic now makes polling around immigration really difficult to interpret. It's natural for people to be scared in a pandemic. Even state borders in the United States—people in one state became suspicious of people from out-of-state in the early months of the pandemic. I think foreigners, depending on the state of the pandemic, will create greater fear. On the other hand, immigrants who were already in

countries when the pandemic started generated greater sympathy than before because of the disproportionate risk and burden they bore as essential workers. So I think there has been a build-up of greater sympathy for immigrants over the past year or so.

> **We shouldn't stigmatise the sense of concern people have when somebody comes into their community, especially in smaller ones, whether it's someone who shares your nationality or not. It's going to raise suspicion.**

We've ended up with two global compacts. Was this a mistake?

In early 2015, Peter Sutherland proposed to the secretary general to host a UN conference that could develop a comprehensive plan of action for the Syrian refugee crisis, much as had been done in the late 1970s during the Vietnamese exodus and in smaller refugee crises since then. We had been trying for years to bring European and other leaders together to address what was and had been evident for a long time—a massive shortfall in financial support for refugee-hosting countries in the Middle East and Turkey. You could see what was happening, building up from 2012 onwards, and you knew it was a pressure cooker. We knew we had to be able to get leadership, and that it would have to come from the UN; the European Union was not going to do this on its own. And we also knew that the US was willing to act. So once it became a crisis, we tried to get the United Nations to host a summit on the Mediterranean crisis.

We were not successful. There simply wasn't enough support in the UN system. We were told that we were not successful because most countries do not focus on refugees. But they do care about migrants. Most countries in the world care about making immigration and emigration easier because it is a financial benefit to them. So we ended up with a UN summit on migrants and refugees. But we were in the midst of a moment that demanded action—not a 24-page document with aspirations, which is what the UN summit produced.[2] We wanted action and we got aspiration. The US saw the risk and tried to get the UN to play a role. We didn't get the comprehensive plan of action, what we got were two compacts. We were fine with that in the end, obviously, better than not having them. And the question of whether there should have been one or two is another story. Again, just to be clear, our focus at that time was, "Can we generate a comprehensive plan of action for the Syrian refugee crisis or not."

Once that did not succeed as a plan, we had to accept what we got: the compacts as aspirational vehicles. I think the Global Compact for Migration is more important than the Refugee Compact because the Refugee Compact was kind of retrograde. What the Refugee Convention says is more ambitious in many ways than what the Refugee Compact says. On the other hand, the Migration Compact was wholly new in terms of international understanding and agreement—even at an aspirational level.

What is the medium-term future going to look like in relation to refugees and migrants? Are you optimistic or are you pessimistic?

On questions of integration of immigrants, I think there will be significant progress because there is support for integration, both from progressive and from more centrist political leaders. I think when it comes to refugee protection, there will also be progress—if the progressive community focuses on policies that open up pathways that are regulated. I think there will be progress also on understanding the impact of climate on displacement and acknowledging collective responsibility, though not to create a new category of refugees—I don't think that will happen. I'm not an open borders type; I believe in regulated migration and would have liked to have seen much more work done to open up regulated channels in recent years. I think that in general we're in a period where nativism is at a high-level plateau and will continue to create natural political resistance to what I would consider progressive migration and refugee policies. But even in this environment we can make a great deal of progress if we come together to design and implement smart strategies, and join forces across sectors.

> **I have a huge gripe around the imagery and narratives deployed by refugee advocates, which tend to be around trying to generate compassion. Compassion isn't a great sentiment when it comes to trying to build public support for refugees and immigration.**

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2   UN General Assembly (2016) New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

Return to sender: The divisive complexities of repatriating irregular migrants and failed asylum seekers

Meeting the Global Compact for Migration's objectives requires improving the governance of return, reception, and reintegration. Success depends on overcoming an array of practical and political obstacles. And as the Covid-19 pandemic has vividly illustrated, poor international cooperation is high on this list.

By Camille Le Coz[1]

Introduction

Return is one of the most contentious topics between countries of destination and origin. Destination countries often say that an efficient return system for immigrants who do not have legal status and asylum seekers whose claims have been denied is a pre-requisite for credible migration and asylum policies.[2] For some, such a system is essential to maintaining public trust in migration and international protection and preventing the further rise of populist and nativist ideas.[3] European leaders, for example, regularly complain that only a third of the 450,000 orders to leave issued on average each year are eventually enforced.[4] Moreover, policymakers in Europe and the United States have referred to return as a tool against irregular migration, one that can disrupt the business model of smugglers and deter migrants from moving outside legal channels.[5]

On the other hand, these same migrant populations are often a major source of remittances, which represent a lifeline for their families, particularly in times of crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic.[6] In turn, their contributions make the governments of these countries less inclined to cooperate on forced return. The sensitivity of public opinion to deportations can also explain the reluctance of countries of origin to engage on this topic,[7] especially in the context of fraught relations with destination countries rooted in colonial history or a record of foreign interference.[8] Some countries are also concerned about additional pressures on public services and local economies, particularly in the case of mass and uncoordinated returns.[9]

Not all returns are so controversial, and some returns are incentivised by origin countries and development actors who seek to attract diasporas back to promote direct investment and knowledge transfers and to boost trade and remittances.[10] Examples include countries such as Ireland, Ghana, and the Philippines, where governments have policies encouraging the temporary or definitive return of their expatriate nationals. Migrants may also choose to go home because they have come to the end of their migration cycle and wish to retire, reunite with their family, or simply go back to where they used to live.

But when this decision is not fully voluntary, the situation tends to be more sensitive. This is the case for returns that are "obliged" or "accepted", because the migrant does not have the right to remain in the destination

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1   Camille Le Coz is a Senior Policy Analyst with MPI (Migration Policy Institute) and MPI Europe, primarily working on EU migration issues. Her research areas include EU policies on asylum, resettlement, legal migration, and integration.
2   Most recently, European Commission (2020) Communication on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum.
3   See for instance, European Commission (2015) Towards an Effective Return Policy.
4   European Parliament (2021) Data on returns of irregular migrants. The very concept of return rates has been, however, challenged, including by the EU Joint Research Centre. See: Belmonte, M., Tarchi, D. & Sermi, F. (2021) How to measure the effectiveness of return, EU Joint Research Centre.
5   European Commission (2021) Commissioner Johansson's speech at the Launch of the Study on Return, Readmission and Reintegration Programmes in Africa.
6   Dilip, R. et al. (2020) Migration and Development Brief 33: Phase II: COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens, Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD)–World Bank.
7   Radio France Internationale (2016) Mali: controverse sur la question du retour au pays des Maliens sans papiers.
8   This is the case, for instance, for France and Mali. Daouda, G-K. (2013) La gestion des migrations de retour, un paramètre négligé de la grille d'analyse de la crise malienne. Politique Africaine.
9   For instance, between 2013 and 2014, Saudi Arabia deported over 160,000 Ethiopian migrants, resulting in a humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia. Lecadet, C. & Tafesse Melkamu, M. (2016) The expulsion of Ethiopian workers from Saudi Arabi (2013-2014). The management of a humanitarian and political crisis. Annales d'Ethiopie.
10 Newland, K. & Salant, B. (2018) Balancing Acts: Policy Frameworks for Migrant Return and Reintegration Migration Policy Institute.

country and is driven to accept their departure.[11] The most disputed (and expensive to enforce[12]) returns are the ones that are forced, with migrants being deported against their will, sometimes after a period in detention. Returns usually take place to one's country of origin, but migrants are sometimes sent to a country through which they transited on their way to their destination.[13] In all these scenarios, reintegration tends to be more challenging as returnees are less prepared to leave and may experience a greater mental toll.[14]

Despite the conflicting interests between countries of destination and origin, international cooperation remains the linchpin of a functioning return system whereby migrants can safely return to their country and receive reintegration assistance as needed. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) precisely enshrines this principle and encourages signatories to work towards these common goals—which have become even more pressing since the outbreak of the global coronavirus crisis.[15] Beyond international cooperation, many countries of destination and origin, as well as service partners and researchers, concur that a better governance of return, reception, and reintegration is needed to deliver on the GCM's objectives, especially to achieve better reintegration outcomes for returnees.[16] But many sticking points remain, from the lack of cooperation of countries of origin on readmission to the threats of retaliatory measures by countries of destinations, the limitations of reintegration programmes, and the practice of pushbacks and collective expulsions.

The Covid-19 crisis and the pressure for strengthened international cooperation on return

The global pandemic has driven hundreds of thousands of migrants to return home, often in a hurry and in circumstances that have put them at risk of infection.

Returnees have also become vulnerable to heightened economic, social, and psychosocial issues once they get home, especially in regions under lockdown or severely affected by the pandemic. Many migrants did not initially plan to go home (and many had legal status in their country of destination); but many felt they had no other choice, for fear of getting sick in a foreign country, being far away from their family, or because they lost their job. Many of these returns were cross-border, but many were also internal. In India, for example, the government assisted over 600,000 international migrants to return home between the beginning of the pandemic and October 2020.[17] At the same time, the country experienced mass migration from urban centres to rural areas involving several millions of people.[18] Around the world, the unprecedented scale of these returns, as well as uncertainties on when borders would re-open (or close again), how many people would opt to re-migrate to their initial destination, and the effects of the pandemic on labour markets and remittances, made it challenging for governments to manage return, reception, and reintegration internally and to work together to address these problems.

Another pressure point stemmed from the difficulties faced by many migrants to go home. In the midst of the crisis, in July 2020, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated the number of stranded migrants at 2.75 million globally.[19] The situation triggered a whole range of new conundrums for international cooperation, at a time when national health and safety measures kept evolving. The United Arab Emirates, for instance, warned several South Asian countries it would cancel their migration agreements if they did not help organise the return of their workers.[20] Meanwhile, countries such as Morocco adopted even more restrictive measures and sealed their borders for several months, leaving out their own nationals.[21] These conditions proved particularly difficult for migrants who did not have legal status, as they often lost employment and could not access emergency response plans. Around the world, measures that had been taken unilaterally became difficult to lift.[22] Ultimately, bilateral and multilateral

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11 Newland and Salant uses the word "obliged" for "migrants who do not have the right to remain in the destination country and are ordered to leave. Those who comply may receive return and reintegration assistance." Ibid. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) uses the concept of "accepted" returns. DRC (2018) DRC Return Policy: Position and guiding principles for DRC's engagement in return of refugees, IDPs and rejected asylum seekers. They also refer to returns that are "reluctant" and "pressured", and result from the conditions in the country of destination (e.g., unemployment, narrow access to decent housing) or to the migrant's personal situation (e.g., disease, inability to secure family reunification).

12 A 2018-study estimated that the fiscal cost of forced return was about six times higher than that of voluntary return. van Ballegooij, W. & Navarra, C. (2018) The Cost of Non-Europe in Asylum Policy. European Parliamentary Research Service.

13 In the case of safe third-country agreements, like the one between Canada and the United States. Fratzke, S. (2019) International Experience Suggests Safe Third-Country Agreement Would Not Solve the U.S.-Mexico Border Crisis. Migration Policy Institute.

14 Bob-Milliar, G. & Kleist, N. (2013) Life after Deportation and Migration Crisis: the Challenges of Involuntary Return. Danish Institute for International Studies.

15 Objective 21 of the GCM is "Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration". United Nations General Assembly (2018) Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

16   European Commission (2021) Migration management: New EU Strategy on voluntary return and reintegration.

17 Ratha, D. et al. (2020) op. cit.

18 Gettleman, J., Raj, S. & Yasir, S. (2021) In India, Second Wave of COVID-19 Prompts a New Exodus The New York Times.

19 IOM (2020) Immediate Action Required to Address Needs, Vulnerabilities of 2.75m Stranded Migrants.

20 Shivakoti, R. (2020) Can Nepal Cope with the Return of Migrant Workers? OpenDemocracy.

21 El-Masaiti, A. (2020) Morocco to Start Reopening Borders after Strict Lockdown. Associated Press.

22 Benton, M. et al. (2021) COVID-19 and the State of Global Mobility in 2020. Migration Policy Institute.

negotiations, as well as the mediation of organisations like IOM, led to the creation of humanitarian corridors allowing for the evacuation of the most vulnerable (often a few hundred people at a time).[23]

The conduct of forced returns during the health crisis stirred additional tensions between countries. In May 2020, the UN Migration Network—a group of UN agencies and stakeholders overseeing the implementation of the GCM—called for a suspension of forced removals during the pandemic.[24] Many countries agreed to put deportations on hold, especially in Europe, but some continued. Saudi Arabia, for example, forcibly sent back tens of thousands of migrants, often after keeping them in dire conditions in detention centres and without prior coordination with their countries of origin.[25] The United States did not halt deportations either. The government even exposed migrants to the coronavirus by detaining them in facilities where social distancing was not possible, and by not enforcing systematic testing before sending them back.[26] In Guatemala, the government repeatedly blamed the US for returning people infected with Covid-19.[27] As the pandemic continues unabated, more destination countries have started revisiting these initial restrictions and resuming return operations for migrants without legal status and failed asylum seekers. In France, for instance, the government reported exploring the possibility of conducting Covid-19 tests after return, and not pre-departure as usually required by origin countries, to prevent migrants delaying their forced removal by refusing to take the test in France.[28]

All these developments have put even more pressure on return systems and shed light on the diverging priorities and constraints of countries of destination and origin. Still, the pandemic has also shown how critical international cooperation is to conduct returns in a dignified way and mitigate the negative impacts of returns on communities of origin, especially the ones highly dependent on remittances.

Paths to better governance of return and reintegration

Many of the obstacles to effective return and reintegration also result from how return operations and reintegration programmes are being rolled out. In the past few years, governments on both sides have precisely tried to better coordinate and move towards a more comprehensive approach to return and reintegration so as to deliver more systematic services to returnees. These efforts have involved better internal organisation. For instance, since 2015, Germany has spearheaded a whole-of-government approach to return and reintegration with a close collaboration between its Ministry of Interior, Community and Building, its Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, as well as its Foreign Office, its Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, and its development agency (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ).[29] In practice, Germany has sought to link its reintegration assistance for returnees to its broader development cooperation in countries of origin. Thus, it operates job centres across 12 countries where GIZ works with the authorities to deliver information about the local labour market and legal migration opportunities, as well as to provide training for returnees and their broader community.[30]

At the regional level, European countries have attempted to better coordinate their actions, to address the various discrepancies in their return and reintegration programmes, and move towards a more coherent European return system.[31] Most recently, in April 2021, the EU launched its first ever common Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration, with the ambitious goals of strengthening cooperation and learning between EU Member States and increasing the quality control of EU-funded reintegration activities.[32] The document addresses a range of strategic issues with, for instance, the design of a common approach on the return counselling provided to migrants. Such efforts would allow for counsellors from all EU countries to follow a similar approach on reaching out to migrants without

23 For instance, in June 2020, IOM helped organise the return of over 300 Malians who were stranded in Niger due to border closure. IOM (2020) Stranded for Three Months, 338 Malians Come Home Via Humanitarian Corridor.

24 IOM (2020) Forced Returns of Migrants Must Be Suspended in Times of COVID-19.

25 Human Rights Watch (2020) Saudi Arabia: Migrants Held in Inhuman, Degrading Conditions; Pilling, D. & England, A. (2020) Saudi Arabia Repatriating Thousands of Migrants Back to Ethiopia, Financial Times; and Endeshaw, D. & Paravicini, G. (2020) U.N. Says Saudi Deportations of Ethiopian Migrants Risks Spreading Coronavirus. Reuters.

26 Dickerson, C. & Semple, K. (2020) U.S. Deported Thousands Amid Covid-19 Outbreak. Some Proved to Be Sick. The New York Times.

27 France 24 (2020) Des migrants renvoyés par les Etats-Unis sont porteurs du Covid-19, affirme le Guatemala; and AP (2020) Guatemala says 8 minors of 60 deported were COVID-positive.

28 L'Obs and AFP (2021) Macron veut accélérer l'expulsion des étrangers en situation irrégulière. L'Obs.

29 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, IOM, and Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (2019) European Dialogue on Return and Sustainable Reintegration of Migrants; and OECD (2020) Sustainable Reintegration of Returning Migrants: A Better Homecoming.

30 GIZ (n.d.) Allowing people to start over successfully in their country of origin.

31 Since 2018, the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN), for example, gathers 16 European countries that work together and pilot new initiatives on return and reintegration. Some countries also work together through bilateral programmes, such as France and Germany, which have a partnership on voluntary return to Kosovo, building on Germany's presence and networks in Pristina: Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration (2021) Rapport d'activité 2020.

32 European Commission (2021) Migration management: New EU Strategy on voluntary return and reintegration.

legal status and disseminating information about their options and assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes. Still, its operationalisation could go unheeded without clear political steering and frank conversations on engagements with third countries.

In turn, some countries of origin have strengthened their capacity and infrastructure to better manage the return and reintegration of their nationals. In some cases, the pandemic triggered this evolution, due to heightened public health considerations and the difficulties faced by returnees to resettle at home.[33] An increasing number of countries of origin have also integrated return and reintegration into their broader migration and development policies. In Ghana, for example, the government referred to return and reintegration in its 2016 National Migration Policy and committed to (among other measures) better assist returnees in their reintegration process.[34] Countries have also invested in operational capacity, through their own funding and via donor support. In Central America, for instance, governments work with IOM, civil society organisations, and international donors to manage reception centres for returnees.[35] In these facilities, migrants are registered upon arrival and referred to relevant services.[36]

At the regional level, countries with migrant communities in the same destination states rarely negotiate together on return and reintegration issues, for instance to standardise reintegration support or capitalise on successful programmes. There have been, however, a few regional initiatives, most recently with the African Union (AU) contributing to a joint study on return, readmission, and reintegration with the European Union and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). Released in May 2021, the report draws on an analysis of return, reintegration, and readmission policies and practices in nine African countries. It introduces a common definition for the African Union of sustainable reintegration and outlines a series of operating procedures and recommendations for AU Member States.[37]

In parallel to these efforts, the field has been enriched by the work of actors at the sub-national level and of civil society organisations, which are taking a greater

role to complement central governments. In countries of destination, for example, the EU-funded European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) launched in 2019 the "Reach Out" campaign, an initiative led by France and Belgium to increase awareness among migrants without legal status about their options and AVRR programmes.[38] The Reach Out team worked closely with local authorities in six European cities, to share insights on how to best disseminate this information and provide tailored counselling to these vulnerable groups.[39] In countries of origin, cities have also gained a greater role on migration,[40] including supporting returnees, as local authorities often witness first-hand the difficulties faced by returnees and their families. In Senegal, for example, the Reception, Orientation, and Follow-Up Offices for Senegalese Abroad have branches across the country and are responsible for recording returnees and assisting them. These mechanisms have, however, not been especially active and a EU-funded project aims to strengthen them.[41]

Civil society organisations also play a key role in counselling migrants pre-departure and providing reintegration assistance post-return, either through AVRR projects funded by a donor (often a country of destination), the government in the country of origin, or through a network of volunteers. In Europe, diaspora groups are sometimes involved in raising awareness among migrants about AVRR programmes and their eligibility conditions.[42] Several organisations have also been active in engaging with communities in countries of origin, to fight against the stigma faced by returnees at home, and to help them get in touch with their families. In Guatemala, for example, the local organisation Poj No'j assists unaccompanied minors to reconnect with their families.[43]

At all levels, development agencies and international organisations like GIZ, IOM, and ICMPD support these actors and regularly organise trainings and peer exchanges. Capacity-building activities have featured more prominently in recent reintegration programmes, including in the landmark EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, launched in 2016 under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. Under this €44-million programme, IOM has delivered a variety

33   Le Coz, C. & Newland, K. (2021) Rewiring Migrant Returns and Reintegration after the COVID-19 Shock. Migration Policy Institute.
34   Government of Ghana, Ministry of the Interior (2016) National Migration Policy for Ghana.
35   Ruiz Soto, A. et al. (2019) Sustainable Reintegration: Strategies to Support Migrants Returning to Mexico and Central America. Migration Policy Institute.
36   Ibid.
37   African Union (2021) Study on Return, Readmission and Reintegration Programmes in Africa ICMPD.
38   ERRIN (n.d.) About ERRIN; and ERRIN (2021) ReachOut – Sharing the Project Outcomes.
39   ERRIN/FedAsil/OFFII (2021) Reach Out Conference.
40   See for instance the analysis of the MC2CM project: ICMPD (n.d.) Mediterranean City-to-City Migration (MC2CM).
41   European Commission (n.d.) Renforcement de la gestion et de la gouvernance des migrations et le retour et la réintégration durable au Sénégal et accompagnement des investissements de la diaspora sénégalaise.
42   Le Coz, C. (2021) EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration: Crafting a Road Map to Better Cooperation with Migrants' Countries of Origin. Migration Policy Institute.
43   Asociacin Poj No'j (n.d.) Programa de Migración.

of trainings to national and local authorities, and to civil society actors working on return and reintegration.[44] The initiative has had two main objectives: to strengthen authorities' capacity to facilitate safe and dignified returns (e.g. improving access to consular services for migrants); and to enhance reintegration outcomes (e.g. strengthening referral mechanisms for returnees). Despite these efforts, governments in countries of origin continue to face numerous operational, technical, and political challenges—some of them due to the lack of coordination on the side of donors and destination countries.[45]

Three stumbling blocks

Three main obstacles have hampered further progress on the GCM's objective of safer and more dignified returns and better reintegration outcomes: the persistent lack of cooperation between countries of destination and origin; limitations on what reintegration programmes deliver; and pushbacks at the borders of destination countries.

1. Lack of common ground

A first stumbling block remains the difficulty for countries of destination and origin to find common ground on return issues. Despite the pandemic and the pressure for more international cooperation, governments still fail to see eye to eye. The economic crisis and likely reliance on remittances for the recovery efforts in several origin countries may make them even more averse to cooperating on forced returns. These same governments often argue that destination countries do not offer enough legal channels, while the latter retort they first need to secure guarantees on return and readmission of third-country nationals. This discussion leads to deadlocks and illustrates the lack of trust on both sides.

Widening this divide, destination countries have often threatened retaliatory measures against countries not cooperating on return and readmission. In Europe, these methods are not new but since 2015, policymakers—

especially on the home affairs side—have increasingly tried to leverage the whole range of EU policy instruments to increase the number of returns.[46] Most recently, the EU started using its visa policy to pressure third countries into readmitting their nationals.[47] There are parallel discussion on the conditionality of EU development funding.[48] A number of actors, including European development agencies, have long objected that such methods contradict the EU's own policies; risk hampering the effectiveness of EU development assistance (which supports countries based on criteria other than migration cooperation), as well as its transparency and accountability; and ultimately hurt the trust the EU is precisely trying to build with partner countries.[49] Besides, a main limitation of EU return policies remains their lack of internal coherence—sometimes the first obstacle to the implementation of return decisions to third countries.[50]

On the other side of the Atlantic, the US government went one step further and, for example, pressured Guatemala into signing up to an Asylum Cooperative Agreement in 2019.[51] Under this agreement (terminated by the Biden Administration), the US could send nationals from El Salvador and Honduras to Guatemala, regardless of their protection claims. This measure directly contradicted the principle of safe and dignified returns as many asylum seekers were not even informed as to where US officials were sending them.[52] Ultimately, the policy failed to reach its objective of enforcing permanent returns: none of the 945 people who were sent back to Guatemala received refugee status there—mainly due to the weaknesses of the national asylum system—and a number of them tried to move to the United States again.[53]

2. Limited reintegration

Beyond these divisions, a second main issue for return systems is that the successful reintegration of returnees remains elusive. Not all stakeholders agree on the notion of sustainable reintegration to begin with. Most actors concur that successful reintegration means that returnees have reached a level of economic and social stability, as

44 EU-IOM (n.d.) EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration. For examples of programmes, see IOM (2021) IOM Partners with WHO to IOM enhance psychosocial support to migrants, returnees and disaster victims in Ghana; and IOM (2021) Migration stakeholders in communities build capacity on Reintegration of Returnees in Ghana.
45 Le Coz, C. op cit.
46 This has been particularly the case under the new Migration Partnership Framework. Collett, E. & Ahad, A. (2017) EU Migration Partnerships: A Work in Progress. Migration Policy Institute.
47 Statewatch (2021) EU moves ahead with plans to use visa policy as "leverage" to increase deportations; and European Commission (2021) Report from the Commission to the Council: Assessment of third countries' level of cooperation on readmission in 2019. The principle of linking cooperation on return and visa facilitation agreement is not new, however: it was already mentioned in the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility. European Commission (2011) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility.
48 Horwood, C. (2020) Setting the highest standards for Global Europe implementation: Policy paper on EU ODA, migration and Global Europe. Concord.
49 European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2020) Migration Control Conditionality: a flawed model.
50 Lindberg, H. (2020) Those Who Cannot Stay: Implementing Return Policy in Sweden. The Migration Studies Delegation (DELMI).
51 Senate Foreign Relations Committee Democratic staff (2021) Cruelty, Coercion, and Legal Contortions: The Trump Administration's Unsafe Asylum Cooperative Agreements with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.
52 Sieff, K. (2020) The U.S. is putting asylum seekers on planes to Guatemala – often without telling them where they're going. The Washington Post.
53 Senate Foreign Relations Committee Democratic staff (2021) op cit.; and Human Rights Watch (2020) Deportation with a Layover: Failure of Protection under the US-Guatemala Asylum Cooperative Agreement.

well as psychosocial wellbeing.[54] But for a number of destination countries and donors, success also means that AVRR beneficiaries will not attempt to migrate again. Other stakeholders, including service partners and researchers, have emphasised that returnees' immobility should not be an objective in itself. In fact, remigration could be a sign of success and gaining access to new opportunities. But in the absence of legal pathways, returnees are still most likely to migrate irregularly if they decide to move again.

Despite these dissensions, there is a growing acknowledgement that a more systematic, comprehensive, and high-quality support to returnees and their communities is a condition for a more balanced and sustainable return system.[55] It is needed to minimise the negative effects of these returns and maximise their development potential. At the same time, many migrants continue to go home without any form of assistance, because they have been deported and do not qualify for it, or are unaware of its availability, or for operational reasons such as delays in the processing of the reintegration package or security risks traveling to the office of the service partner.[56]

Besides, many reintegration programmes continue to be short-term and focus disproportionately on economic aspects. In the case of many initiatives, reintegration packages consist of a form of in-kind assistance to launch a small revenue-generating activity and counselling comes to an end after six months. There is limited data and information on the longer-term experiences, challenges, needs, and aspirations of returnees.[57] Donors, service partners, migrants, and other stakeholders in countries of origin have increasingly recognised the need to provide psychosocial assistance, especially for the most vulnerable populations. This has led to some promising developments, including incorporating counselling into reintegration activities and developing

referral mechanisms for returnees with special needs.[58] For example, in Guinea, Senegal, and Morocco, IOM recently piloted a mentoring approach for returnees, with mentors working closely with these populations and their communities to provide them with direct assistance.[59] These practices remain, however, uncommon. They require a significant investment and documenting their positive effects (and what works) is also challenging due to the difficulty quantifying well-being.

In parallel, the interlinkages between reintegration and development cooperation are still to be fully tapped. Reintegration actors are now more aware that improving conditions at home is essential to social reintegration and for the returnees to gain access to public services such as education, health, or justice. Some, such as IOM and GIZ work towards better connecting these two fields, but the reality is that return and development practitioners often operate in separate silos and building bridges between them raises a wide range of operational challenges. Difficulties include defining common objectives, managing individual and structural approaches to reintegration, working out the correct timing for initiatives that have different trajectories by nature, identifying the right actors to partner with, and addressing the specific challenges faced by returnees.[60]

3. Pushbacks

Third, pushbacks and mass expulsions continue to hamper the realisation of a rights-based return system. These practices are not new, but they are now reported more systematically. For instance, in 2020, a group of civil society organisations published over 900 testimonies showing cases of refoulement at EU borders—in Greece, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, and Hungary.[61] Thousands of people, including minors, were returned from Europe to their country or a third country without due process. These practices flout the principle of safe and dignified returns and have cascading effects as they make it more

54   OECD (2020) op. cit.

55   European Commission (2021) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration; and Samuel Hall (2021) Study on Return, Readmission and Reintegration Programmes in Africa, ICMPD.

56   Newland, K & Salant, B. (2018) op. cit.

57   In that sense, more solid research, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms can help take the field forward. There have been a number of improvements, with more programmatic and academic research on return and reintegration. Monitoring of reintegration outcomes has also made some strides, building on persistent demands for greater accountability. IOM, for example, has set up and operationalised a monitoring and evaluation framework, and sought to expand it to better document reintegration outcomes for vulnerable populations such as victims of trafficking and minors. ERRIN has also been active in this area, by designing a quality monitoring framework to track the results of its reintegration support. All this evidence should ultimately help to move the needle on psycho-social assistance, as well as to inform and improve relations with development actors. Paasche, E. (2014) Why Assisted Return Programmes Must Be Evaluated. Peace Research Institute Oslo; Samuel Hall/IOM (2017) Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration; IOM (2021) Netherlands and IOM Launch Global Migration Initiative to Protect People on the Move; IOM (2020) Reintegration Handbook: Module 6 – A Child Rights Approach to The Sustainable Reintegration of Migrant Children and Families; and European Commission (2021) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration.

58   For example, psychosocial support is now mainstreamed into all reintegration activities of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative in Africa. IOM aims to conduct a systematic assessment of the mental health conditions of returnees upon arrival and has conducted a series of training for its staff and partners on how to deliver such support. IOM (2020) Biannual Reintegration Report #3. See also: Eager, R. et al (2020) Impact Evaluation of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative Programme for Migrant Protection and Reintegration (Horn of Africa) Itad; IOM (2019) and Reintegration Counselling: A Psychosocial Approach, EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration.

59   Paone, J. (2020) Migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean – Chapter 29: Operationalizing an Integrated Approach to Reintegration (ORION). IOM.

60   Le Coz, C. (2021) op. cit.; and Knoll, A., Veron, P, & Mayer, N. (2021) A sustainable development approach to return and reintegration: Dilemmas, choices and possibilities. European Centre for Development Policy Management.

61   Border Violence Monitoring Network (2020) The Black Book of Pushbacks.

difficult for European leaders to press other countries on this issue.[62] In May 2021, the report of the special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants documented cases of pushbacks and mass expulsions from around the world, including the Western Balkans, Algeria, Libya, and also Mexico and Guatemala.[63]

Conclusion

Three years ago, the GCM set out an ambitious agenda for countries of destination and origin to work together towards a more balanced return system. In recent months, the Covid-19 crisis has provided a vivid illustration of how the lack of international cooperation could lead to serious issues in terms of border management, public health, and pressure on communities already hit by the pandemic. At the same time, the pandemic has put more strain on relations between countries, which have diverging priorities and internal constraints and are at different stages in the containment of the virus. Incorporating a public health dimension into upcoming negotiations on return and readmission will be key in the next year, especially where destination countries want to establish mutually beneficial partnerships with countries of origin.

Although not new, working towards increasing the proportion of voluntary returns—or of "obliged" returns or "soft deportations"[64]— could also be a way to improve cooperation and better support migrants upon their return. This is the spirit of the new EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration, and some progress has been made in partnering with origin countries.[65] The US has not traditionally been very active in this type of scheme, but the new Biden administration may become more inclined to offer reintegration support as part of its broader cooperation with Mexico and Central America. Countries that are at once destination, transit, and origin countries, such as Morocco, Turkey,[66] and Mexico,[67] also operate AVRR programmes, even though these remain largely funded by donors and their ownership tends to be limited.

Moving forward, increasing the engagement of origin countries, by outlining what is needed for reintegration assistance to be more successful, should help to align programmes with needs on the ground. In turn, destination countries may need to acknowledge that the low performance of their return policies sometimes stems from the complexity and lack of coherence of their own regulations and procedures.

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62 Bathke, B. (2021) EU commissioner tells Bosnia to better manage migration, Infomigrants.
63 Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants (2021) Report on means to address the human rights impact of pushbacks of migrants on land and at sea – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe Gonzàlez Morales.
64 Leerkes, A., van Os, R. & Boersema, E. (2017) What drives 'soft deportation'? Understanding the rise in Assisted Voluntary Return among rejected asylum seekers in the Netherlands.
65 See for instance the Tounesna initiative in Tunisia.
66 IOM (2019) IOM and the European Union Helping Thousands of Vulnerable Migrants to Get Home from Turkey.
67 IOM (2019) Honduran Migrants Return from Mexico with IOM support.

Interview

Where there's a will...

The issue of migrant workers has long been a source of tension between sending and receiving countries within ASEAN, explains **Yuyun Wahyuningrum**. But while a 2017 deal eventually ironed out some of these problems, the text is not legally binding and members states, for lack of political resolve, still struggle to get to grips with the more "politicised" management of refugees, especially Rohingya from Myanmar.

Yuyun Wahyuningrum is Indonesia's representative at the Association of South East Asian Nations' (ASEAN) Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. She is also a PhD candidate at the Erasmus University's International Institute for Social Studies. Her research deals with global-regional interaction of human rights norms with specific focus on ASEAN.

International migration news often focuses on Europe and North America. Has ASEAN had its own migration crisis in recent years? Has there been much debate about mixed migration in Asia?

Yes. Speaking from the ASEAN perspective, the issue of migration has been very sensitive because internally, within Southeast Asia, we come from the countries that send migrant workers, as well as receiving migrant workers. So there has been a number of debates among member states on how to regulate the flow of migrant workers. I'm talking about migrant workers, not refugees or irregular migration. So, on this issue ASEAN has found it very difficult to find a consensus, and it took more than 10 years to agree and develop a regulation. Eventually, by 2017 they came up with the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Right of Migrant Workers.[1] This relates to cross-border hiring of professionals—doctors, nurses, architects,

accountants, etc. So the movement of people working in eight areas of profession has been regulated and agreed by consensus by all ASEAN countries.

Previously, tensions emerged in ASEAN when they [member states] talked about migrant workers, especially those working in homes as domestic workers, or on plantations and other jobs where migrants are informal workers. So the sending countries always complain that the receiving countries are not treating them well from a human rights perspective. So the ASEAN Consensus consists of a number of clauses referring to human rights, but then according to national laws, allowing some ambivalence and avoiding setting clear norms across the whole region. The consensus is also not a legally binding document.

What is the perspective on irregular migrants? Are irregular migrants considered and treated as illegals?

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1 ASEAN (2017) ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Right of Migrant Workers.

We do not use the term "illegal workers" anymore, because there is no illegal human being. The Consensus removed the word "illegal" in reference to migrant workers. That's the result of years of civil society advocacy. Removing the word "illegal" in an official document agreed by all 10 countries is very useful, because then the direction, the perspective of that document is more on human rights.[2] It is not about violating immigration law or making migrant workers criminal. So this kind of shift of perspective took almost more than 10 years.

> ❝ **We do not use the term 'illegal workers' anymore, because there is no illegal human being.** ❞

What about attitudes in ASEAN to refugees?

It's complicated and politicised, and as a structure ASEAN has struggled in its joint approach to refugees. The issue of refugees especially came to the surface since the problem of the Rohingya in 2015, when boats with fleeing Rohingya were rejected by Thailand, and then by Malaysia, and then by Indonesia. Finally the Acehnese fishermen [in Indonesia] pulled their boats to the shore and allowed them to land in Aceh. The officials in Aceh couldn't do anything because this is what many local people wanted. So that issue created a lot of discussion and discourse at the ASEAN level. And at that time, Myanmar initially refused to join the discussion unless ASEAN removed the words "Rohingya" and "refugees" from all related documents. So countries used the term "boat people" and "irregular migration" rather than "refugees". But even when the issue of refugees was discussed, primarily in the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Organised Crime, the discussion centred around irregular migration, with a specific focus on trafficking in persons—again avoiding the issue of refugees. It all became very politicised. The issues couldn't even be referred to except as the "Rakhine crisis" in any official ASEAN documents from 2015 to 2017. Only from 2018 onward do we see the word "refugee" starting to be mentioned in relation to the Rakhine crisis.

Of ASEAN's 10 member states, only the Philippines and Cambodia have ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention. Why so few?

I think some countries here felt that the sharing of responsibilities among states is very imbalanced, not only in the region, but in the world. Developed countries pick and choose who can be resettled etc. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, even though they are not party to the Refugee Convention, host refugees but refer to

the people affected with different names. In Thailand, for example, they call them as "the people who flee from a country". Malaysia calls them "migrants". In Indonesia, we use the word "refugees", but in the context of anyone moving from one place to another because of a hazard or something … they are all called "refugees". It's actually closer to the term "displaced people" rather than "refugee" as in the legal definition provided by the [Refugee] Convention. There is an understanding among governments in Indonesia and Malaysia and some other countries in the region that if they ratify the convention it will give additional burden to what they have so far.

What about Australia's approach to maritime irregular migration and its Operation Sovereign Borders, also known as Stop the Boats? Has that had an impact on the region?

Well, in Indonesia the impact is still being felt because the refugees that are in Indonesia who actually wanted to go to Australia are now stranded. The refugees come from Afghanistan, Yemen, and Iran, but the highest number is from Afghanistan.[3] I'm not sure what say ASEAN has in the policies of Australia, but they have the Bali Process in which they discuss these kinds of issues.[4] The Bali Process was actually an initiative from Indonesia and Australia. Indonesia has used the Bali forum to express concerns about responsibility-sharing in dealing with refugees. Indonesia felt that while they continue to receive asylum seekers irregularly arriving on their coast, none of the other countries were helping them deal with the issue.

> ❝ **In ASEAN countries the political will around asylum seekers and refugees is almost non-existent. If political will existed, ASEAN could do many things in relation to these problems.** ❞

The government also complains that they use a lot of resources to deal with the refugees, but NGOs refute that argument saying that all refugees in Indonesia are actually taken care of by the International Organization for Migration and UNHCR, and so Indonesia hasn't paid anything. But the government's calculation is because they feel the drain on government resources is in terms of human capital and the number of staff that need to deal with refugees and asylum seekers that could be dealing with other issues.

But in my personal opinion, it is all about political will. If political will existed to assist and manage the refugee issue it would not be difficult. But what I personally

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2   ASEAN's 10 member states are: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
3   This interview was conducted in June 2021, weeks before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August, prompting a new surge in departures from the country.
4   For details, see the webpage of The Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

appreciate is that Indonesia did not expel or deport refugees, because they are trying to comply with the non-refoulement principle even though they are not signatories to the Refugee Convention. However, I think political will from governments needs to be improved and increased. More generally, in ASEAN countries the political will around asylum seekers and refugees is almost not existent. If political will existed ASEAN could do many things in relation to these problems.

What's going to happen to the 800,000 Rohingya refugees currently in Bangladesh?

I think we need to look at it before and after the coup of February 2021. Things have changed, but the outcome for the Rohingya is more or less the same. Before the coup, there was no real appetite [in Myanmar] to bring the Rohingya back from Cox's Bazar.[5] There were some efforts such as Kofi Annan's report[6], as well as an agreement between ASEAN and Myanmar on repatriating Rohingyas from Cox's Bazar back to Myanmar.[7] There was a verification process to determine who were eligible to return home or return to Sittwe or Rakhine, but no one got on to the bus. They refused to go even though the Myanmar government claimed to have welcoming procedures such as transit centres, receiving centres, and then processes to allocate them to specific places. But many areas where Rohingya come from have already become mining sites, with lots of new investment there from outsiders. And then we continue to hear that Myanmar's government would like to relocate them into an island or something. But mostly the messages we are hearing from the Rohingya is that they do not want to return.

> **" Myanmar initially refused to join the discussion unless ASEAN removed the words "Rohingya" and "refugees" from all related documents. "**

After the coup, when the military took over from 1st February, they implemented a state of emergency. And the agenda of state emergency is to return the country back to democracy in the Tatmadaw's [=the army's] definition of democracy, with five main agenda points. One of them is to ensure the repatriation of Rohingya goes smoothly during the one year of state of emergency, and then there will be an election organised by the Tatmadaw. It is not yet being implemented.[8] The Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar were actually very worried that they could not go back before and they refused

to go back because they did not trust the government that committed all the atrocities, especially when their right to citizenship is not secured. They have come up with a number of conditions to be able to go back, but now with the Tatmadaw in power, they do not want to go back, but they also cannot stay indefinitely in Cox's Bazar. Cox's Bazar living conditions have become inhuman. It's not fit for human habitation.[9] I'm worried that the military will use their force to make Rohingyas return and meanwhile Bangladesh has been complaining about having Rohingya as a burden.

Have some been trying to move away from Cox's Bazar themselves?

Yes. Many Rohingya are running away from Cox's Bazar, from the camps, trying to sail to Thailand for example. Not just because of their living conditions but insecurity as well as the fear of Covid. But their boats were again pushed offshore by the Thai navy, saying that they were afraid the incoming boat and its passengers will bring Covid into Thailand so they could not accept them. Malaysia gave a similar reason for rejecting them. And then again, what happened in 2015 repeated in 2020: the Achinese fishermen rescued them. Some Rohingya now live with them there.

> **" It is all about political will. If political will existed to assist and manage the refugee issue it would not be difficult. "**

We often hear about human trafficking in South East Asia, and in Asia generally. Do you think states are taking it seriously enough?

Compared with the issue of migrant workers, the issue of trafficking in persons is more embraced by governments. They respond to the issue quicker than the issue of migrant workers. Perhaps because trafficking in persons has the security and crime dimension governments feel the responsibility to protect their citizens. Law enforcement is something that is very prominent in the trafficking in persons efforts.

In ASEAN, governments are very sensitive about the tier system that the US introduced. If any of them are in Tier 3 for two years they'll be subject to the sanction of freezing US financial support, which none of them want. So there is also an incentive to be seen to be doing something. They approach trafficking better than the issue of migrant workers, because migrant

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5   Almost 900,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar are living in the Bangladesh district of Cox's Bazar.
6   Kofi Anan Foundation (2017) Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine -Final Report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.
7   The Nation (2018) Asean plans to explore Rohingya repatriation.
8   In August 2021 the junta prolonged the state of emergency for an additional year: BBC News (2021) Myanmar: State of emergency extended with coup leader as PM.
9   See for example, MSF (2021) As camp conditions deteriorate, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh face a terrible dilemma.

workers is always having a human rights perspective. Of course trafficking in persons also has a human rights perspective, as reflected in ASEAN's Convention on Trafficking in Persons, which is a legally binding document. States agreed this convention in an unusually fast time, just five years. It was quickly followed by a trafficking in persons action programme, the ASEAN Plan of Action, and then a work plan. All sectoral bodies, organs, and institutions in ASEAN have responsibility to implement activities in relation to trafficking in person, including the institution that I belong to, the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights. So that's a clear difference compared to the issue of migrants and refugees.

> **During Covid-19, trafficking in persons has not reduced, but instead it's actually worse because restriction of movement creates limitations for many.**

During Covid-19, there were several reports that mentioned that the number of trafficking in persons cases increased, and those who were trafficked and in [lockdown] couldn't go out because there was no one on the street so they couldn't get help. So during Covid-19 it has not reduced, but instead it's actually worse because restriction of movement creates limitations for many. For example, when it comes to trafficking of children, they have moved from offline to online. To escape from poverty, people, often their own parents, promote children having sexual activities or exposing themselves online to paying clients. This seems to be happening more and more in the Philippines and most of the clients are mainly coming from Europe and North America, normally not from the [South East Asia] region, but there are a number of clients in the region too. I'm not sure whether this can be categorised as trafficking, because a central part of trafficking is that you have to move physically from one place to another, but in the era of digital, you don't have to move, but you can still be a victim. But I consider that as rather exploitation, sexual exploitation of children, for instance, rather than trafficking in persons, but many organisations call it as trafficking in persons.

What about the engagement of ASEAN states with the Global Compact for Migration? How do you see their engagement?

I believe all 10 ASEAN countries are signatories to the Global Compact for Migration, and I think this year in March, there was a review on the implementation of the Global Compact in the Asia-Pacific region organised by UNESCAP. It seems like the consultation went well as a forum in which member-state stakeholders expressed their challenges, gaps, and achievements in the Global Compact. And I was informed that this kind of process will continue. So judging from this kind of engagement, there has been a positive development on how member states and stakeholders perceive the Global Compact.

I personally think that the Global Compact could be effective and useful, especially in the regions where not all states ratified the convention, either the 1951 Refugee Convention or the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Sometimes, on issues that are more sensitive, like refugees and migrants, non-legally binding instruments work more effectively.

Are you seeing behaviour by governments and people that you think would previously have been unacceptable, but now is becoming more acceptable? A kind of normalisation of the extreme?

I saw this "normalisation of the extreme" in terms of public perception in some parts of the region recently during Covid and because of Covid. For example, in Malaysia in relation to undocumented migrant workers, refugees, and asylum seekers, there has been defence of what the police had done in terms of raid operations and deportations in many places. What surprised me was the argument usually posed by the public saying, "They're not us, why should we have to help them? Why does our government need to protect them? It is not our responsibility. This is not our obligation." Because Malaysia was the place that was initially rather friendly to refugees compared with other countries in the region. The same happened in Thailand: because of Covid their reactions to these kinds of foreigners have been strong. At the same time, many Malaysians who worked in Singapore faced a lot of stigma and they got locked down and detained so they couldn't go back to their country, but when they did manage to go back their country, immediately they were labelled as "virus carriers"; those who came back from Thailand, regardless of their status, whether they are migrant workers, businessmen or artists, they were labelled as a 'virus carrier'.

Here in Indonesia people refuse to live together or mix with refugees because they're worried about health issues. People inside the country have stigmatised those who are coming from outside, despite the fact they are Indonesian. Indonesians working in Malaysia, when they return home, the community, the village will stigmatise them. But we didn't see an extreme kind of rejection, and the government did not raid places or deport people from Indonesia because of Covid. I think the changes we saw happening in Malaysia and Thailand shocked me as a person as did the way people supported the idea of deporting migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers from Malaysia. That's something new, we did not see that before.

> **Sometimes, on issues that are more sensitive, like refugees and migrants, non-legally binding instruments work more effectively.**

Untapped potential: The overlooked resource of partnerships with city leaders

By Samer Saliba[1]

Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been a growing tide of evidence on how international humanitarian and development actors can best meet the needs of the tens of millions of migrants and displaced people living in cities.

For displacement, this evidence is anchored by the 2010 Port-au-Prince earthquake, a predominantly urban crisis which displaced hundreds of thousands of Haitians, and by the Syrian conflict, in which 95 percent of nearly six million Syrian refugees displaced since 2011 live outside of refugee camps, many in urban areas in the region.[2] For migration, it is anchored by the growing climate crisis, which is increasingly pushing people into cities. It is now estimated that one billion people are at risk of being driven from their homes for climate-related reasons within the next 30 years.[3] Many of these journeys will likely involve cities; already the primary destinations of international and internal migrants.

A common thread throughout this evidence on best meeting the needs of migrant and displaced communities is the importance of partnerships between international actors and city governments.

This lesson is not new. A 2016 International Rescue Committee study on livelihoods programming in urban areas of Lebanon and Jordan found that "leveraging the partnership of municipal, community-based, and private sector actors often leads to improved programming, not only for individuals facing high levels of vulnerability but entire communities as well."[4] The study found that partnerships between international practitioners and city governments pushed the programmatic boundaries of what each could deliver on behalf of urban migrant, displaced, and receiving communities, especially within restrictive national policy environments.

Five years later, a 2020 Oxford University study of six refugee-hosting cities in Turkey and Lebanon similarly highlighted "the importance to refugee policymakers of working with mayors and other municipal actors, whether to shape implementation of national government policies, to bypass the central government and promote more progressive outcomes, or to mitigate the effects of locally restrictive policies."[5]

These studies are just two examples demonstrating that international actors and city governments are stronger together. Unfortunately, the importance of international actors and city government partnerships on migration and displacement issues largely remains relegated to the pages of academic reports such as those mentioned, while international actors remain reluctant to extend partnerships to the city level into practice. While examples of international actor-city government partnerships are far more frequent than they were a decade ago, they remain outside of the norm. As we enter a new era of urban migration and displacement at an unprecedented scale, the international community must view partnership as a resource to be shared with the thousands of city governments which are and will remain at the centre of migration and displacement trends.

The case of Amman

Take Amman, Jordan, for example. Over ten years since the start of the Syrian conflict, there are now over 5.6 million Syrian refugees, the majority of whom reside in cities in neighbouring countries such as Beirut, Lebanon; Gaziantep, Turkey; and Amman, Jordan. Some refugee families have called these cities home for over five years, raising their kids and building new lives within them.

However, the international humanitarian community still speaks of Syrian displacement as if it were an acute crisis. In 2020, UNHCR's regional director for the Middle East and North Africa stated, "the Syrian crisis remains the world's biggest refugee crisis, and frankly the situation for many refugees and host communities is worse than it has ever been."[6] Although the situation has persisted for a decade, the response has yet to change from one of immediate emergency relief delivered within the silos of one-to-three-year project timeframes led by international agencies to a longer-term, holistic, and

1   Samer Saliba is Head of Practice at the Mayors' Migration Council.
2   UNHCR (n.d.) Syrian Regional Refugee Response.
3   Institute for Economics and Peace (2020) Ecological Threat Register 2020: Understanding Ecologic Threats, Resilience, and Peace.
4   Saliba, S. (2016) Finding Economic Opportunity in the City: Lessons from the IRC's Cash and Livelihoods Programmes in Cities within Lebanon and Jordan. International Rescue Committee.
5   Betts, A., Memiso Glu, F. & Ali, A. (2020) What Difference do Mayors Make? The Role of Municipal Authorities in Turkey and Lebanon's Response to Syrian Refugees. Journal of Refugee Studies.
6   UNDP (2021) Appealing for urgent support, UN agencies and partners say 2021 risks becoming more difficult than ever for Syrian refugees and their host.

coordinated solution led by city governments. While this may be linked to donor funding schedules, amounts, and requirements, it is likely that more international funding has been invested in Jordan's refugee camps than in city government service structures, despite the prevalence of urban refugees within the country.

While unverified, according to UNHCR and the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) figures for September 2021 approximately 198,000 Syrian refugees reside within the Amman metropolitan area.[7] By comparison, Zaatari camp is home to under 80,000 refugees[8] and Azraq camp to just over 38,000 refugees[9], meaning the two largest refugee camps combined host fewer refugees than Amman. Yet in ten years of hosting Syrian refugees—and after decades of hosting Palestinian refugees—GAM can count its number of refugee-focused international partnership agreements on one hand. These partnerships, with the likes of UN-Habitat, the International Rescue Committee, and UNDP, are crucial to GAM's ability to contribute to the self-reliance of Amman's refugee residents, but they are too few and far between. As a capital city, Amman has real potential to show leadership not only locally but nationally. As Mayor Yousef al-Shawarbeh—who is also engaged in international migration governance through his role in the Leadership Board of the Mayors Migration Council—has said, "Amman is committed to protecting the rights and opportunities of refugee and forced migration communities, both within our city and on a national level."[10]

Trending in the right direction

While there is still much progress to be made, the past five years have also seen a rise in international actor-city government partnerships and the increasing recognition of mayors as influential actors in the migration and displacement governance space.

In 2016, states recognized for the first time the role of cities as first receivers of migrants and refugees and agreed to strengthen cooperation with local authorities. They also committed to develop the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

Recognizing the opportunity, a group of global mayors seized upon the negotiation of the compacts to lead from the front and push for bold, ambitious goals to be included in the final drafts, often ahead of their national

governments' positions. Their investment paid off: the priorities of cities and their vital role going forward is reflected in both compacts. Within the GCM, for example, cities' joint diplomacy safeguarded the fundamental issue of non-discriminatory access to services regardless of immigration status.

Upon the adoption of the compacts, mayors further demonstrated their commitment by endorsing the Marrakech Mayors Declaration on "Cities Working Together for Migrants and Refugees," pledging to advance the principles and objectives of the compacts, to continue to participate internationally, and to take direct action within their communities to improve the lives of migrants and refugees.[11] Critically, mayors agreed it was essential to advance both compacts in unison rather than addressing migrants and refugees as fundamentally separate populations requiring entirely different structures, as the international system continues to do. Moving beyond the siloes, mayors and cities are addressing the realities of people within their communities and making the goals of the compacts a reality.

To support this reality on the ground, the Mayors Migration Council established the Global Cities Fund (GCF) in collaboration with the IOM, UCLG, UN-Habitat, and UNHCR as a response to the unmet needs of cities as they support migrants, refugees, and IDPs in the face of Covid-19.[12] By directly funding cities to implement inclusive response and recovery programs of their own design, the GCF builds precedents of fiscal feasibility in city governments within low-to-middle-income countries that are often disregarded by donors with low tolerance of risk, despite these cities' tremendous efforts in protecting migrant and displaced residents.

The GCF has nearly doubled in size since 2020 and now provides nine cities with financial and technical support to meet the needs of thousands of migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people.[13] For example, the Municipality of Beirut is piloting its first municipal mobile health clinic to respond to the urgent health needs of refugees and migrants in marginalised areas of the city. As Beirut's Mayor Jamal Itani has said, "the needs are far too great for us to meet alone, and it is partnerships such as the ones with the Mayors Migration Council and UN-Habitat that enable us to serve every resident of Beirut equally."[14] The Global Cities Fund project prospectus elevates 20 other mayors looking for international partnerships.

7   UNHCR (n.d) Syria Regional Refugee Response – Jordan.
8   UNHCR (2021) UNHCR Jordan: Zaatari Refugee Camp - Factsheet, June 2021.
9   UNHCR (2021) Azraq camp fact sheet June 2021.
10   Mayors Migration Council (2021) The Global Cities Fund for Inclusive Pandemic Response: Project Prospectus.
11   Text of the declaration available here.
12   Mayors Migration Council (n.d.) Global Cities Fund for Inclusive Pandemic Response.
13   Namely: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Barranquilla, Colombia; Beirut, Lebanon; Freetown, Sierra Leone; Kampala, Uganda; Lima, Peru; Medellín, Colombia; Mexico City, Mexico; and Quito, Ecuador.
14   Public remarks made by Mayor Jamal Itani during the MMC's Global Cities Fund event, 22 by 2022: A Global Movement to Support Local Action on Inclusive Pandemic Response, 23 July, 2021.

Partnership as a resource

While we have made progress, international support to local leadership on issues of urban migration and displacement remains outside of the norm. As one representative of Mogadishu, Somalia, recently told me:

> *the mistrust of city governments has prevented us from improving our capacity for financial management and service delivery. Until we have the resources to demonstrate and improve our capacity, city governments will continue to play a peripheral role in our core mandate of serving all our residents, regardless of status.* [15]

One resource too often overlooked is partnership. While financial and technical resources are crucial to programmatic success, partnership is the resource that brings these other resources down to the local level and leverages them for impactful and lasting success. The problem is that partnership is too often only shared between international and national actors and too infrequently shared with cities.

Not only are mayors and city governments willing to create inclusive plans, policies, and programmes on the ground, but they are willing to use their experiences and leadership to guide international governance and drive a global agenda of inclusivity. The evidence is clear: working with mayors as partners, not around them, leads to more effective, scalable, and long-lasting responses to migration and displacement in cities. Now we must act on it..

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15   Quoted in Saliba, S. (2021) Urban Migration: To Meet the Needs of Migrants and Displaced People, Trust Cities. Urbanet.

The global context is rapidly changing and with new conflicts, new public health threats, new levels of environmental stress, and changing trends and perceptions around human mobility, now is the time to reframe mixed migration through the lens of different themes in one volume.

How does the Covid-19 pandemic change migrant decision-making, migration governance, urbanisation trends and public sentiment towards migration? How is the climate emergency affecting mobility and displacement? Why do most people in the world not migrate, and to what extent do different forms of immobility affect individuals, communities, and regions? What are the trends and realities around returns, many of which are forced? What are the experiences of people on the world's overlooked mixed migration routes? Should internal migration and displacement be viewed through a mixed migration lens too? What extraordinary actions and policies towards refugees and migrants were witnessed this past year—both negative and positive?

All this and more is explored in this 2021 edition of MMC's annual flagship report, the Mixed Migration Review (MMR), offering a comprehensive annual analysis of mixed migration, through the overarching lens of "reframing mixed migration".

For a full electronic copy of the Mixed Migration Review 2021, extensive data from 4Mi, and additional commentary, visit our website at: **www.mixedmigration.org**

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