



## MONTHLY TREND REPORT

### COVERING MIXED MIGRATION TO, THROUGH & FROM NORTH AFRICA

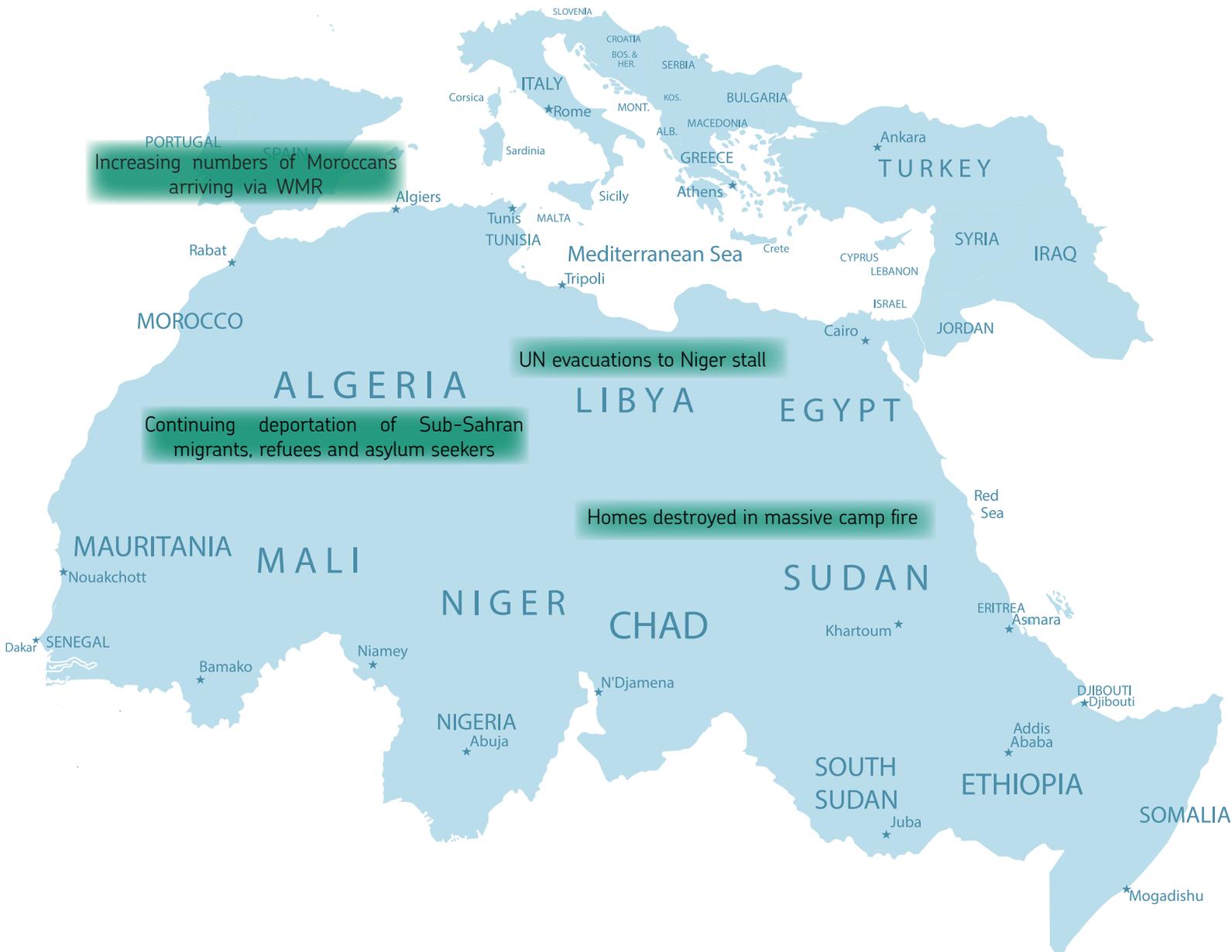
**About:** MHub is the regional knowledge hub and secretariat for the North Africa Mixed Migration Task Force, comprising of DRC, IOM, OHCHR, RMMS, Save the Children, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNODC. It promotes a human rights-based approach to ensure the protection of people moving in mixed and complex flows to, through and from North Africa.

**Scope:** This bulletin covers mixed migration trends in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, Tunisia, Greece and Italy.

**Terminology:** Throughout this bulletin the terms migrant, refugee and asylum seeker are used together to cover all those comprising mixed migration flows. If the original source specifies a particular category, the relevant term will be used.

**Sources:** Data is drawn from a wide variety of sources, including government, civil society and media.

## HIGHLIGHTS



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## REGIONAL

**Conference on tackling trafficking in persons**

- Ministerial delegations from nine African countries, four European countries and representatives from the European Union [met](#) in Niamey on 16 March for a one-day conference titled, “conference on the coordination of the struggle against traffickers of migrants.” The principal aim of the conference was to improve coordination efforts among states and their respective ministries and agencies in the fight against human traffickers. In attendance were ministers from Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal, as well as representatives from France, Germany, Italy and Spain and a European Union delegation. In his opening remarks, the Nigerien Minister of Interior, Mohamed Bazoum, said, “Efficiency can be significantly improved through good security cooperation, at national and regional level, among the countries of origin and transit.” Those assembled made commitments to tighten legislation on human trafficking as well as to set up dedicated teams of investigators.

**IOM and UNODC launch a joint platform to tackle human smuggling**

- IOM and UNODC [launched](#) a joint initiative to tackle human smuggling at an event in Vienna on 28 March. In his opening remarks on the “Joint Platform on Countering Migrant Smuggling,” UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov said, “We must work together to deny criminals the means and opportunity, to protect the lives and safety of people, and end the impunity of smugglers. UNODC is committed to expanding our work and exploring ways of bringing UN agencies together, including to ensure that criminal justice responses to migrant smuggling are part of holistic, multidisciplinary approaches.” The newly established initiative is an opportunity to pool and leverage the expertise of both agencies in the fight against human smuggling. Referring to the words of IOM Director General William Lacy Swing, the agency’s Director for the Regional Office for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Argentina Szabados, said, “there is no lack of political will or legal protection for migrants, the gap is in implementation. The smuggling of migrants across borders is a transnational crime and requires transnational cooperation. We need action. Too many lives are being lost, and too much suffering is being endured.”

**International Dialogue on Migration forum held**

- The [International Dialogue on Migration](#) held a [two-day forum](#) focusing on the role of partnerships and cooperation in addressing the challenges of global migration in New York between 26 and 27 March. The event was the first of two consultative workshops on inclusive, innovative partnerships in migration governance to be [held](#) in preparation for the [Global Compact on Migration](#) (GCM). Speaking at the opening of the forum, IOM Director General William Lacy Swing said, “Partnerships must include all stakeholders: Government, international organizations and civil society. Partnerships are not just about working together but about working together to find new and creative ways of conducting our migration business.” He further stated that concerted efforts at collaboration and cooperation by the international community are needed for both the development and agreement over the GCM as well as for its implementation. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of UNICEF, further said that “no single State or organization can manage migration alone,” and called on all agencies and actors to come together to respect and support a person’s choice to move and to ensure that they are able to do so in a safe and regular manner.

**AU workshop on updated migration framework**

- A two-day workshop on the African Union’s new migration policy and governance framework was [held](#) in the Namibian capital on the 26 and 27 of March. The workshop, titled “Themed Workshop on Creating Awareness of the Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action 2018-2030” marks the beginning of the AU Commission’s capacity-building efforts in the area of migration. The AU adopted a revised migration policy framework at the AU Summit in Addis Ababa in January of this year. Speaking at the event, Peter Mudungwe, Migration Advisor at the AU Commission, highlighted the need for integrating migration governance with national development frameworks in order to ensure sustainability and far-reaching impact. He said, “Despite the numerous migration challenges facing the continent, the Commission is mindful that if managed coherently, nations and regions can reap the benefits of the linkages between migration and development.”

**EU focus on migration in talks over new agreement with ACP community**

- The EU will [place](#) greater focus on migration and security concerns in talks to decide on a successor to the [Cotonou Agreement](#) between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific nations (ACP). Speaking about the upcoming talks, Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa at the European External Action Service (EEAS) at Chatham House in London, said, “The EU’s new partnership with Africa must do more with migration [policy]. We must partner with Africa to fight trafficking and migrant smuggling. However, we also want to improve mechanisms for the legal migration of Africans to come to Europe.” The ACP-EU agreement between the EU and 79 countries from the three aforementioned regions was signed in 2000 to cover a 20 year period and came into effect in 2003. The agreement focused on the three pillars of development cooperation, political cooperation, economic and trade cooperation. The current agreement has provisions for the return of irregular migrants from EU to their countries of origin but enforcement has remained weak. The EU is hoping to broker a separate continental pact with African nations along with the ACP agreement. EU governments will agree on a mandate for the upcoming talks in the month leading up to negotiations which are due to begin in August 2018.

## German plans for federal repatriation center

- An official from the German ministry of interior [announced](#) government plans to open a centralized repatriation facility for irregular migrants in August of this year. The German Interior Minister, Horst Seehofer, has previously issued vows to increase rates of repatriation and to crack down on illegal activity by migrants. Human rights groups have sharply criticized the plans and the proposed Bavarian locations for the center which they argue unnecessarily isolate residents.

## IOM and EU to strengthen ties

- Senior representatives from the EU and IOM [met](#) in Brussels on 4 April in an effort to bolster existing ties and areas of cooperation. Discussions revolved around the way forward on pressing issues of migration including, the GCM, how best to manage migration flows, how to better protect persons on the move, the return and reintegration of migrants and cooperation in situations of forced displacement. The meeting is [part](#) of regular, high-level dialogue established between the IOM and the EU in 2012 as part of the EU-IOM Strategic Cooperation Framework. Ahead of the meeting, IOM's Director General, William Lacy Swing, said, "This is an absolutely critical year for unity in defining migration policy globally. The issues at stake touch all of us, from vast regions, large and small countries, to the most vulnerable of migrants. We have a historic opportunity to build a system for human mobility where people can move safely, legally and voluntarily, in full respect of their human rights. We particularly need to make headway in addressing the movement of the most vulnerable migrants with specific protection needs."

## Rise in criminal smuggling groups in Balkans

- The head of the EU's border agency Frontex, Fabrice Leggeri, [said](#) that there has been an increase in human smuggling activities in the Western Balkan region. His assertions came during a meeting with MEPs in the Civil Liberties Committee. He said that there are now "more flexible organized criminal groups" and "criminal coalitions dealing with trafficking in human beings." Leggeri's comments seem to contradict earlier announcement by EU officials that smuggling activities have been declining.

# ALGERIA

## Deportation of Sub-Saharan migrants

- Algeria continues to expel large groups of Sub-Saharan migrants mostly from Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. Algerian Interior Minister, Nouredine Bedoui, [revealed](#) on 22 March that Algeria has deported 27,000 sub-Saharan migrants since 2015. Speaking to members of parliament in Algiers, he added, "The operation of repatriation is still ongoing." Organizations such as

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have previously decried Algeria's common practice of rounding up large groups of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and expelling them without due process or adequate recourse to appeals.

# EGYPT

## Egypt and Italy launch joint training academy

- A joint Egyptian-Italian project to train thousands of police officers and border officials from 22 African states on combating trafficking in persons and irregular migration was [launched](#) in Egypt on 20 March with a two-day workshop. The training aims to strengthen officials' skills in managing migratory flows, investigating cases of trafficking in persons and related crimes as well as border controls and document fraud. The project plans to establish a regional migration-related, training center at the Egyptian police academy within the next two years. The center will train roughly 360 officials a year through three, four-week training cycles and the trainings will be led by experts from a large number of organizations such as Europol, UNODC, Frontex, IOM and UNHCR (among others). Almost all African states along the continent's migratory routes in central and northern Africa are also partners in the project; Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Djibouti, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Tunisia.

migrant smuggling crimes. The training was held between 5 and 8 March with the participation of 20 national prosecutors who reside in the Suez Canal region. The training was the second in a series of nine such workshops planned for 2018.

- UNODC organized a further training workshop also in collaboration with the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling and the International Cooperation, Homeland Security and the Ministry of Interior Affairs workshop on identifying and investigating trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. The training was held between 19 and 22 March at the police academy in New Cairo. The training was delivered to 20 police officers who are exposed to cases of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. The opening ceremony was attended by Mr. Julien Garsany, the Deputy Representative from the UNODC Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa and a representative from the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The training workshop was the first in a series of six workshops with the law enforcement officers.

## UNODC trainings

- UNODC organized a training workshop in collaboration with the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling and the International Cooperation and Human Rights Division in the Office of The Egyptian Prosecutor General to strengthen the capacity of Egyptian prosecutors to investigate and prosecute

### Maritime incidents

- 1,058 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were rescued off the coast of Libya across 11 different incidents in the month of March, which is a 182% increase from rescue figures for February. It should be noted however that February figures were 78% less than those of the previous month. There was 1 recorded death during the month of March, which represent a return to figures similar to January's after a spike in February.

### Voluntary Humanitarian Return from Libya

- On 13 March, IOM [announced](#) that it has supported the Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) of 10,171 migrants from Libya to their countries of origin since VHR operations were scaled up on 23 November 2017. A further 5,200 migrants returned home with support from AU member states during the same period. IOM's VHR operations were implemented with support from the EU, the AU and the Libyan government and the latest returns brought the total number of migrants assisted with return since January 2017 to 23,302. Speaking about the latest returns, IOM Libya's Chief of Mission, Othman Belbeisi, said, "We are continuing to assist migrants inside Libyan detention centres, while increasing efforts to reach stranded migrants outside of detention. Since the expansion of our VHR operation, the number of migrants in official detention centres have dropped from an estimated 20,000 people in October 2017 to 4,000 people today, a five-fold decrease. IOM in Libya is also working with the authorities to register migrants, provide lifesaving assistance in the form of health care and essential aid items, psychosocial support, improve consular services and projects promoting community stabilization."

### UN Libya evacuation plans stall

- UNHCR has [announced](#) that operations to evacuate highly vulnerable refugees from Libya to neighboring Niger whilst they await resettlement have stalled because European countries are taking too long to resettle them. Speaking about the halt in operations, Karmen Sakhr, head of UNHCR's North Africa unit said, "We received an official request from the government of Niger asking us, for the time being, to hold any further evacuations until people depart. You can very well understand that the government (of Niger) has its concerns. They see people coming but not leaving." The Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) from Libya was initiated in November 2017 with the aim of transferring highly vulnerable refugees to safety in Niamey on a temporary basis until they are resettled elsewhere. UNHCR has transported over 1,000 refugees to Niger while so far only 25 of those flown to Niger have been resettled to Europe.
- Those evacuated to Niger have experienced excruciating abuse in Libya, a fact that is further underscored by UNHCR special envoy Vincent Cochetel's recent [revelations](#) at a European Policy Centre event in Brussels where he said, "All the women that we evacuate from Libya, the first thing they ask arriving in Niamey airport is not a glass of water. It is HIV testing, that is what they are asking." He further added that many of the women evacuated had become pregnant in Libya following long periods of sexual abuse.

### Death of Eritrean man in Italy points to conditions in Libya

- Aid workers and doctors from the Spanish NGO Proactiva Open Arms [said](#) that the recent death a 22-year-old Eritrean man in Italy, following his rescue, points to dire conditions in Libya. The young man died from tuberculosis-related complications that

were exacerbated by severe malnutrition. At the time of rescue the man weighed just 35kg and was immediately transferred to a hospital in Pozzallo where he died 12 hours later. Speaking about the man, Pozzallo's mayor, Roberto Ammatuna, said, "He looked like he had been in a concentration camp," and added, "All the migrants who arrived on Monday were skin and bones, and their muscles were atrophied. Obviously the conditions in Libya are inhuman." The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein, has previously [said](#) that the conditions for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Libya are "an outrage to humanity."

- Rights groups have further weighed in on the dire and worsening conditions in Libya following the seizure of Proactiva's ship, Open Arms, by Italian authorities in Sicily (more on this story in the ['Italy'](#) section of this bulletin). The International medical humanitarian organization, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), has recently [decried](#) European efforts to thwart NGO-led rescue operations and to force the return of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to Libya. Speaking about the latest developments, MSF's operational manager, Annemarie Loof, said, "There's a disturbing level of cooperation between European governments and the Libyan Coastguard, ranging from training and material support, to paving the way for Libyan Coastguards in international waters, aimed at returning people to Libya." She further added, "Under no circumstance should refugees and migrants be returned to Libya or trapped there. Clearly European governments are not prioritising the safety of these people; rather they are playing a dirty game of politics while people's lives hang in the balance."
- Thousands of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers remain stranded and/or in detention in Libya with the head of Libya's Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), Mohamed Beshir, [announcing](#) that there are currently 5166 irregular migrants in Libyan detention shelters.

### EU expands its support package for Libya

- The European Commission has [announced](#) the creation of a new €50 million fund to support highly vulnerable populations in key Libyan municipalities. The fund will be used to improve the living conditions and resilience of refugees, migrants, internally displaced persons and host communities alike through enhanced access to basic and social services. The newest package will be adopted under the [European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa](#) (North of Africa window). Speaking about the funding program, European Commission Vice-President, Federica Mogherini, said, "the municipalities play a key role and have our support. With this decision today, we continue the essential help to and for Libyan municipalities to strengthen governance and public services in the most vulnerable areas. This programme is meant to address the needs of migrants and of the local communities that are particularly exposed to the migratory flows." The program will support the capacities of local public authorities and administrations in providing basic services and will be implemented in 24 Libyan municipalities with support from the Italian agency for Development Cooperation, UNDP and UNICEF.

### Libya rejects AU free movement protocol

- The Libyan government [refused](#) to sign the 'freedom of movement of people and the right of residence protocol' that was attached to the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement

(ACFTA) at the 10th Extraordinary Summit of the African Union. While 44 out of 50 states signed on to the Kigali Declaration on the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, only 30 member states agreed to the [free movement protocol](#).

#### AU-EU-UN Task Force holds a meeting

- The tripartite AU-EU-UN task force on Libya [met](#) for another round of sessions on 29 March in Addis Ababa to discuss ongoing issues of concern. Members of the taskforce reiterated their commitment to supporting migrants and refugees in vulnerable situations in Libya whilst tackling and dismantling organized criminal networks of human smugglers and traffickers. Speaking at a press conference following the meeting, AU Commissioner for Social Affairs and Special Envoy to Libya, Amira Elfadil, told those assembled that conditions in Libyan detention centers have seen a marked improvement and that the taskforce is attempting to scale up migrant return operations. She said, “we have managed to repatriate more than 16,000 migrants; more than 1,000 of them were refugees taken to Niger to be taken to be resettled in other countries, or in third country; and the rest we took them to their countries of origin. And there is a process of reintegrating them in their countries of origin, this reintegration process is with support of the member states themselves, countries of origin, plus packages of integration being delivered by IOM.”

#### Libya and its southern neighbours agree on a cooperation mechanism on a border security

- Libya and its three southern neighbours Chad, Niger and Sudan [entered](#) into an agreement to create a mechanism for cooperation on border security and transnational crime. The agreement came after representatives from the four states met for two-day consultations in the Nigerien capital Niamey between 3 and 4 April. The four states plan to combine armed efforts to combat transnational crime in the Sahel-Saharan region.

#### NGO calls for clarity on Libyan search-and-rescue role

- The Mediterranean rescue NGO, SOS Mediterranee, has made public [calls](#) for greater clarity on the role of the Libyan Coast Guard in search-and-rescue operations along the Central Mediterranean Route. The NGO had reported incidents of tension and potentially dangerous interactions between crew aboard their vessel and the Libyan Coast Guard. Speaking about the state of affairs, the president of SOS Mediterranee, Francis Vallat, said, “The current conditions of rescue at sea, ever more complicated and with confusing and perilous transfers of responsibility during the operations, are unacceptable. While the means at sea to save lives are increasingly inadequate, operations are delayed, human lives are threatened, [and] the return of people in distress to Libya is prioritized instead of their safety.”

## MALI

#### Armed groups rob migrants, refugees and asylum seekers expelled from Algeria

- Human Rights Watch (HRW) has [reported](#) that some of the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers expelled en-masse by Algerian authorities and transferred to a lawless zone in neighboring Mali were attacked and robbed by armed groups as they made their way through Malian territory. Those interviewed by HRW said that they were rounded up in Algeria and

transferred to the Algerian-Malian border. No transportation was provided for those expelled once in Mali and they reportedly had to walk for several hours to reach the first Malian town of Khalil. They were stopped and robbed by armed groups as they made their way from Khalil to Gao on privately-owned trucks.

## MOROCCO

#### Western Mediterranean Route

- [883](#) migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have crossed from Morocco to Spain by sea in the month of March bringing the total arrivals by sea for this year to 4,583. March's figure represents a 20% drop from the figure for February but is 5% higher than arrival figures for March of last year. According to IOM figures, 18 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers died while attempting the crossing into Spain in March 2018 which is more than double the figure for March 2017 (7 deaths).
- An additional [417](#) migrants, refugees and asylum seekers crossed from Morocco into Spain via its land borders with Morocco (through Ceuta and Mellila) during the month of March, bringing the total of number of persons making this crossing this year to 1,615. The number of land crossings in March are almost equal to those for February but this month's figure is 17% higher than that of March 2017.

#### European officials laud Morocco's migration policy

- Morocco's migration governance framework, including policies and border control measures, has [received](#) widespread recognition from visiting European officials for their respect of migrants' right to a dignified life whilst tackling issues of

transnational organized crime. During a recent visit to the Moroccan capital, the Finnish Minister of Interior, Kai Mykkänen, lauded Morocco's key role as a regional partner in the fields of migration and security. He said, “Relations between Morocco and Finland are fruitful and positive and we have to work together within the EU to develop them further.” Mykkänen's comments were further echoed by British envoy for migration, Tim Cole, during his visit to Morocco. Speaking at the East-West Foundation in Rabat, Mr. Cole said, “What really impressed me is the leading role that Morocco plays in the management of migration, not only in Africa, but also within the African Union.”

#### Increasing number of Moroccans crossing into Europe

- A recent [report](#) by the European border and coast guard agency Frontex has [found](#) that there has been a significant increase in the number of Moroccans undertaking irregular journeys into Europe via the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) according to 2017 figures. The report also highlighted the significant increase in arrival figures through WMR in 2017 more generally but notes that 4,809 Moroccans made the journey during the course of the year. The report further stated that domestic issues as well as dissatisfaction among Moroccan youth are fueling the spike in arrivals.

### Morocco's second regularization campaign

- The Moroccan government [announced](#) that it has accepted 14,000 out of a total of 28,000 applications for regularization as part of its second campaign for migrant regularization. Applications for regularization were received throughout 2017. The first campaign for migrant regularization was launched in 2014 following King Mohammed VI's announcement of a drastic overhaul to Morocco's migration policy. This shift in policy allowed migrants in previously precarious situations to regularize their stay in Morocco and to receive access to basic and social services as well Morocco's formal job market. Speaking about the policy change, King Mohammed VI said, "As part of the implementation of this policy, my country has, without any arrogance, pomposity or discrimination, regularized the situation of migrants using fair and reasonable standards. It has provided the conditions needed for migrants to reside, work and lead a dignified life within our community."

### The Moroccan High Commission for Planning launches a study on migrant integration

- The Moroccan High Commission for Planning (HCP) [launched](#) a survey study in March to examine the integration of migrants into the Moroccan workplace. The primary objective of the study was "to comprehend the nature of migratory flows to our country, and assess their [migrants'] level of social and professional integration in Moroccan society," according to a statement released by the HCP on 28 March. The survey found that, contrary to public perceptions, Sub-Saharan migrants make up the smallest percentage of migrants out of the three main groups of migrants in Morocco with Arabs accounting for 33.5% of the migrant population in Morocco,

Europeans accounting for 32.5% and finally Sub-Saharan migrants accounting for 27.3%. The study also found that the vast majority of migrants are male. Further findings state that among the main reasons for migration to Morocco is a search for economic and employment opportunities (41% of respondents), followed by political, social and humanitarian reasons (24.5%) and finally for education (11.7%). The report also found that the vast majority of migrants work in the service sector (78.5%), 3.5% work in the industrial and handicrafts sectors and 18.1% are unemployed. The findings offer important insights into the migrant population in Morocco, their sociodemographic characteristics and motivations as well as their levels of integration into the Moroccan workplace.

### Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers missing in the Strait of Gibraltar

- At least four migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have [died](#) and seven are still missing after their makeshift boat sank in the Strait of Gibraltar. The bodies of those who have lost their lives were recovered by rescuers on 1 April. The only survivor thus far said that there were a total of 12 people aboard the unseaworthy vessel. Andalusian emergency services had warned of dangerous weather conditions along the strait on 1 April.

### UNODC workshop

- UNODC organized a workshop between 22 and 23 March in Marrakech to support the capacities of local NGOs to identify and assist victims of trafficking in persons, while ensuring they are referred to the relevant institutions for protection.

## NIGER

### Increasing needs as migrants and refugees continue arriving in Agadez

- Coverage by the International Federation of Red Cross has [found](#) that basic services (such as health and water and sanitation) in Agadez were being placed under tremendous strain with the continuing arrival of migrants, the transfer of refugees. Mr. Mohamed Anako, the president of the regional council in Agadez said, "The needs are immense, as the number of migrants is increasing rapidly. Unfortunately, humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations are mostly assisting migrants and refugees, while the local communities are equally vulnerable and facing extreme challenges. This can be frustrating." The Red Cross Society for Niger has been working with partners to support local, migrant and refugee populations in the region with activities such as health services through mobile clinics, psychosocial services and family reunification activities with migrants.

### UN experts and international donors visit Niger

- Two separate delegations visited Niger in March. A delegation of international donors [visited](#) IOM's transit centers in Niger and held focus group discussions with migrants who have been supported by IOM activities. IOM operates six migrant transit centers in Niger where IOM teams provide migrants with basic services and assist them with obtaining identity documents. All migrants arriving at the centers are registered, profiled and informed of their rights by IOM staff. The delegation also visited one of IOM's reintegration projects, a kindergarten managed

by a Nigerien returnee from Belgium, in Niger's capital, Niamey. Finally, the delegation met with government officials, traditional authorities and UN agencies during their visit.

- On a separate occasion, UN Special Rapporteur Cecilia Jimenez-Damary [made](#) her first official visit to Niger between 19 and 24 March in order to assess the human rights situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country. Speaking ahead of her visit, Ms. Jimenez-Damary said, "The challenges facing Niger are huge and require a strong and comprehensive response. Since the first attacks in Niger by Boko Haram in 2015, the Diffa region, in the south-eastern part of the country, has been confronted with a continuing security crisis which has uprooted more than 129,000 internally from their homes, in addition to the arrival of 108,000 refugees from Nigeria, and has triggered a humanitarian crisis." She further added that "this visit provides an important and timely opportunity for me to gather first-hand information on the situations of internal displacement in Niger, both new and protracted."

### UNODC training

- UNODC and the National Commission for the Coordination of the Fight against Trafficking in Persons (CNLCT) of Niger organized a 'training of trainers' between 2 and 4 March for 20 magistrates on the fight against migrant smuggling. This activity was held in the context of the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT).

## SUDAN

### South Sudanese refugees to be relocated outside Khartoum

- Sudan's Commissioner for Refugees, Hamad al-Gizouli, [announced](#) that plans were underway for the transfer of South Sudanese refugees in Khartoum to camps in the Gedaref and Sennar States. The commissioner's statement came on 18 March during a workshop on the findings of a recent survey of the situation of South Sudanese refugees. The workshop aimed to develop ways of assessing and meeting the needs of Sudan's sizeable South Sudanese refugee population which, as of January 2018, stood at 770,110 refugees.

### Homes and businesses destroyed in camp fire

- A massive fire [ripped](#) through more than one thousand homes in the Ed Daein camps district in East Darfur in mid-March. While no human casualties were reported, the fire has caused severe and extensive damage to the Dabanga, Areida, Garnaya, and Um Sauna camps. Speaking about the fire, the commissioner for Ed Daein, Ali El Tahir, said, "the fire has been the largest of its kind in the recent period as it has destroyed the whole contents of about 1,000 houses."

### IOM Director General visits Sudan

- Sudanese Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Ghandour, [reiterated](#) Sudan's commitment to tackling irregular migration and trafficking in persons during IOM Director General William Lacy Swing's three-day visit between 11 and 13 March. In

a meeting with Mr. Swing, Foreign Minister Ibrahim also expressed Sudan's preparedness to participate in international efforts in the fields of migration and human trafficking. Mr. Swing also met with Secretary General of the Organization of Sudanese Expatriates Affairs (OSEA), Karar al-Tuhami, and praised the organization's efforts at information and knowledge sharing as well as its fight against irregular migration. Mr. Swing lauded the OSEA initiative to establish the Sudan Centre for Migration Studies which he believes could become an important regional research and capacity-building hub.

### Human Smugglers arrested in Sudan

- Sudanese authorities [announced](#) the arrest of three human smugglers on 4 March. Khartoum's chief of police, Major General Ibrahim Abdelrahim, said the smugglers had held 177 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers for 21 days in six different locations in the Ulwan district of Khartoum and added that the smugglers were accused of "harboring foreigners in preparation for smuggling them out of the country."
- Later in the month, authorities [announced](#) the arrest of twelve migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who were attempting to cross irregularly into Libya on 21 March. Officials from the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF) did not release further information regarding the nationality, age or sex of those detained.

## TUNISIA

### Arrest of smugglers operating between Tunisia and Italy

- Italian authorities have [announced](#) the arrest of four men on 3 March responsible for running a human smuggling ring between Tunisia and Italy. The arrests were the culmination of a year-long investigation by Italian authorities into the activities of the smuggling operation. According to investigators, the smugglers covered the 100-mile distance between the Tunisian coastal town of Al Huwariyah and Sicily's shores using speedboats. An Italian member of the operation travelled regularly to Tunisia to facilitate and coordinate the crossings. They further added that those arrested transported an average of 12 to 15 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers per crossing and regularly smuggled contraband cigarettes into Italy as part of the same operation.

### UNODC trainings

- Between 7 and 8 March and between 12 and 14 March, UNODC organized the third and fourth sessions of the 'training of trainers' on trafficking in persons. The training, which was led by previous trainees and national consultants, comprised sessions on the international and national frameworks against trafficking in persons, on assistance to and protection of TIP victims, investigation techniques and national and international cooperation. Overall, a total of 80 judicial police officers, 16 police instructors and 8 border police officers from 19 Tunisian governorates participated in the roll-out of the training of trainers since 2017.

## GREECE

### Arrivals to Greece

- 2,412 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived to Greece by sea in the month of March representing an approximate 104% increase in the number of arrivals from the previous month of February (1,185). According to IOM figures, there were 11 recorded deaths along the Eastern Mediterranean Route in the month of March which is a significant increase from earlier figures with only 2 deaths recorded in the preceding two-month period.

### Returns from Greece to Turkey

- 22 persons were [returned](#) to Turkey during the month of March under the EU-Turkey Statement.

### Spanish firefighters accused of smuggling in Greece

- Greek authorities have accused three Spanish firefighters who had [participated](#) in a number of Mediterranean rescue operations of smuggling migrants, refugees and asylum seekers into Europe. Whilst all three men vehemently deny the charges, they each face up to ten years in prison if convicted. Speaking to members of the press, one of the defendants, Manuel Blanco, said, "If a person is drowning and you bring them ashore to try and save them, that can be seen as facilitating their entry. We are not smugglers. We are rescuers doing humanitarian work to help the local authorities who don't have the capacity to help the huge number of Syrian refugees escaping the war." Mr. Blanco further added that this case dangerously blurs the lines between humanitarian

## Various Statements released to mark the two year anniversary of the EU-Turkey Statement

- March marked the two-year anniversary of the adoption of the EU-Turkey statement and, to mark the occasion, a number of humanitarian and human rights organizations have released a [joint statement](#) deploring the EU's policy of refugee containment on Greek islands and its effects on conditions in island hotspots. The statement was drafted and endorsed by Amnesty International, Caritas Hellas, the Greek Council for Refugees, the Greek Forum of Refugees, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Oxfam, Praksis, Refugee Rights Europe and the Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR). The statement argues that the containment policy, which Greece states is necessary for its commitments under the EU-Turkey Statement, has trapped over 13,000 refugees in hotspots on the islands of Chios, Lesbos, Samos, Leros, and Kos. Speaking of the current situation, Gabriel Sakellaridis, Director of Amnesty International in Greece, said, "The containment policy has turned the Greek islands, once a symbol of hope and solidarity, into open prisons that put the lives of refugees on hold for months on end, causing them additional suffering. The Greek authorities, with the support of the EU, need to immediately bring refugees to safety on the mainland."
- The international medical humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) released a separate [statement](#) to mark the same occasion. MSF used the statement to highlight the issues of overcrowding and subpar living conditions on the Greek islands and called for immediate action to spare refugees further suffering. Speaking about conditions on the islands, MSF UK's Policy and Advocacy Adviser, Konstantinos Antonopoulos, said, "Médecins Sans Frontières' medical teams on the Greek islands have witnessed daily the misery and desperation created by this deal. Thousands of men, women, and children from countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan continue to arrive on the Greek islands, seeking safety from war and violence. The EU and Greek authorities' policies trap them there, often for months, as they wait for their claims to be processed."
- Abysmal conditions on the islands were further [highlighted](#) by a case of self-immolation by a Syrian refugee whose asylum claim was rejected for the second time in March. The young Syrian was injured and hospitalized after setting himself on fire outside the asylum office at the Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos on 22 March.

## Tension over the EU-Turkey Statement

- The future of the EU-Turkey deal appears to be in question, with Germany's Der Spiegel [reporting](#) that officials from Germany, Austria, Denmark, France, Finland and Sweden have written a letter to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker expressing their opposition to contributing funds towards the next tranche of 3 billion euros in funding pledged to Turkey under the terms of the Statement. The letter further suggested that the EU Commission should cover the required funds. The EU Commission president has reportedly rejected the letter.

## Arrest of human traffickers

- On 24 March, Greek authorities [announced](#) the arrest of three human traffickers who had been holding 21 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers hostage in the city of Thessaloniki. Those kidnapped had reportedly crossed from Turkey into Greece

on 21 March and were transferred to a warehouse by the traffickers. The traffickers demanded €2,500 from each of those held captive for their release. Among the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were 13 Eritreans, 7 Pakistanis and one person from Myanmar.

## Greece striving for agreement with other southern European countries

- Greece's Migration Policy Minister, Dimitris Vitsas, [told](#) reporters on 28 March that Greece was currently in talks with Spain, Italy and Malta to reach an agreement regarding refugee and migration issues. The issue of 'burden sharing' among EU member states is one that all four states share similar positions on and Minister Vitsas intimated that the issue will be raised at the next EU summit in June.

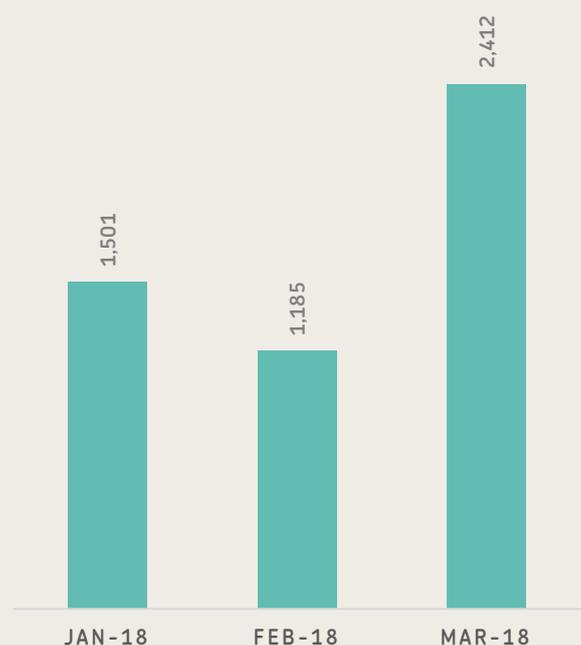
## Tension between Greek and Turkish coast guards

- The Hellenic Coast Guard [reported](#) that the Turkish Coast Guard complicated a rescue operation in the waters between Greece and Turkey on 4 April. According to the Hellenic Coast Guard, a Turkish coast guard vessel was in the vicinity when a dinghy carrying 40 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers crossed into Greek territorial waters but did not attempt to stop the refugee boat from doing so. Moreover, the Turkish vessel interfered and briefly hampered the rescue effort when it claimed that the Greek vessel was in Turkey's territorial waters.

## Search for missing migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

- On 28 March, Greek rescue crews were still [searching](#) for 15 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who had made a call to the European Union-wide emergency number the previous day from the Greek and Turkey border. It is believed that those missing have attempted to cross the fast-flowing Evros River separating Greek and Turkish territory.

Arrivals by Sea, Greece  
January 2018 - March 2018



## Arrivals to Italy

- 914 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived to Italy by sea in the month of March. This represents an approximate 8% decrease in the number of arrivals from the previous month (991). 43 deaths were recorded along the Central Mediterranean Route during the month of March.

## Revelations of abuse at and closure of asylum processing center

- On 12 March, the Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights (CILD) and the Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration (ASGI) [reported](#) on the abysmal living conditions and human rights violations at an asylum processing center on the Italian island of Lampedusa. Members of both organizations said, “Our delegation found that there are no canteens in the hotspot. The food – to be eaten in the room or outside – is of very poor quality. Squat toilets have no doors and mattresses are dirty.” They further added migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were confined to the premises for long periods of time and that in some cases for months despite the fact that the center was designed to process new arrivals to Italy in a matter of days. They also added, “The complete inexistence of personal security is particularly worrying. In fact, it causes a serious breach of fundamental rights which is even worse if migrants belong to vulnerable categories such as minors (either with their parents or unaccompanied), who are forced to live with adults, mostly males.”
- Following these revelations, the Italian Ministry of Interior announced the temporary [closure](#) of center on 13 March. The temporary closure meant that almost all of the 180 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who were being held at the center were transferred to the mainland.

## Spanish NGO vessel seized by Italian authorities

- On 15 March, a rescue vessel operated by the Spanish search-and-rescue NGO Proactiva Open Arms [conducted](#) an operation to save 117 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in international waters roughly 70 miles off the coast of Libya. A Libyan Coast Guard vessel approached the NGO demanding that the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers be handed over to them under the terms of the Italy-Libya agreement. A three-hour stand-off ensued, during which the crew of the NGO vessel were reportedly threatened by Libyan authorities. The NGO refused to hand over any of the rescued passengers and spent the following 24 hours unable to dock. Eventually, and following Spanish efforts to resolve the situation, the vessel was allowed to dock in the Italian port of Pozzallo on 17 March. Upon disembarkation, the crew of the Open Arms’ vessel were [charged](#) with “criminal conspiracy to facilitate illegal immigration” into Italy and the NGO’s ship was impounded by Italian authorities in Catania.
- The incident has provoked fervent reactions from rights groups and organizations that believe it is unconscionable to return migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to the risks and abuses currently being documented in Libya. Speaking about the incident, Judith Sunderland, Associate Director for Europe and Central Asia at Human Rights Watch (HRW), said, “Proactiva acted to save migrants’ lives and then prevented them from being abused in indefinite detention. It is perverse to try to characterize as criminal a refusal to hand victims to Libyan coast guard forces knowing they could face possible

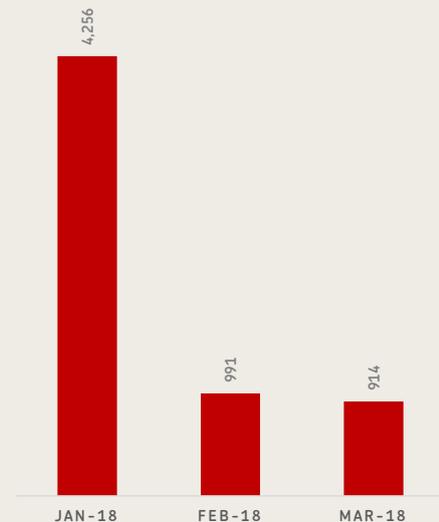
torture and rape in Libyan detention centers.” The Spanish organization itself has hit back against the incident with the NGO’s founder, Oscar Camps, [saying](#), “Proactiva Open Arms is the new target of a clear institutional, political and media campaign that wants to keep away witnesses who could denounce human rights violations in the Mediterranean.”

- In the most recent development, on 27 March, a judge in Catania, Sicily [ruled](#) that the vessel remain in impoundment while the operator faces the charges of ‘facilitating illegal immigration’. Following the ruling, Proactiva Open Arms announced that it was searching for another vessel to in order to continue its search-and-rescue operations.

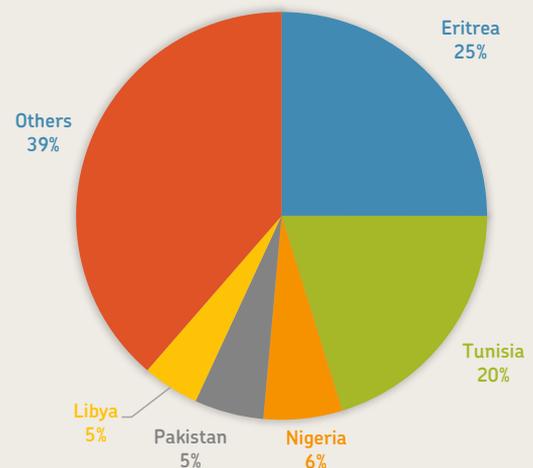
## Training for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

- A new business management and entrepreneurship training program specifically designed for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is [accepting](#) applications till mid-April. The program is part of the IPOCAD project which stands for ‘integrating policies, services and initiatives to involve all sides’ and is coordinated by the Italian government in the Lazio region and co-funded by the European Commission. The course is free, comprised of 48 hours of classes and open to all migrants, refugees and asylum seekers residing regularly in Italy.

Arrivals by Sea, Italy  
January 2018 - March 2018



Arrivals by Sea to Italy, Main Countries of Origin  
January 2018 - February 2018



# RESEARCH OF INTEREST

## [Water stress and human migration: a global, georeferenced review of empirical research](#) - FAO

This study provides a review of empirical research on migration spurred by climate change.

## [Abuse Behind Bars: Arbitrary and unlawful detention in Libya](#) - OHCHR

This report by the OHCHR summarizes the main human rights concerns in the context of detention in Libya.

## [Mixed migration in the horn of Africa and in the Arab Peninsula](#) - IOM DTM

This report by DTM provides an overview of regional trends observed during the second half of 2017.

# MULTIMEDIA & EDITORIALS OF INTEREST

## [‘My crew saved 218 migrants from drowning – so why are we the enemy?’](#) - The Guardian

An editorial about Proactiva’s rescue vessel and its crew.

## [Europe: The magic trick of the EU-Turkey deal](#) - Jesuit Refugee Service

This opinion piece offers a critical analysis and overview of the ramifications of the EU-Turkey Statement two years on.

## [In Niger’s desert, Europe’s migration crackdown pinches wallets](#) - Reuters

An editorial that takes a closer look at the effects of EU’s migration policies on the lives of smugglers, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers Niger.

## [Leaving Greece](#) - Norwegian Refugee Council

An editorial by Norwegian Refugee Council to mark the end of their field operation in Greece.

## [The funding gap for refugees in Africa must be closed](#) - Institute for Security Studies

A critical editorial that calls for an end to the funding gap in the world’s most under-funded refugee situations.

## [Revised Migration Compact Draft Reflects Changes on Implementation, Review](#)- International Institute for Sustainable Development

This editorial provides an overview and review of the first round of revisions to the draft GCM.

## [Greece’s Island of Despair](#) - New York Times

A photo-editorial chronicling the harsh and punishing conditions on the Greek island Lesbos.

## [The principle of non-refoulement in the migration context: 5 key points](#)- ICRC Blog

An editorial that provides a concise yet sharp overview of the key points in relation to the principle of non-refoulement.

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