



## ALGERIA

The increase in the numbers of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers traveling in mixed migratory movements constitutes a major political and humanitarian challenge. North Africa is affected by such movements as a region of origin, transit and destination.

European restrictions on inward regular migration processes has contributed to the rise of irregular migration flows.<sup>1</sup> These restrictions have forced those on the move to find other ways to reach European shores, which, has resulted in a surge in the activities of organized transnational criminal networks operating smuggling and trafficking rings across the region. Migrants continue to face abuse and exploitation at the hands of these smugglers and traffickers who promise passage across the Mediterranean Sea and national borders.



These movements are driven by those who are fleeing war and searching for security; those looking for better opportunities and future; Geographic proximity and historical ties have also contributed as drivers for North Africans to migrate to Europe (particularly those from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) and to the Gulf countries (particularly those from Egypt and Sudan).<sup>2</sup>

## BACKGROUND

Algeria has a long history with mixed migratory flows. Movements to and from France has been a staple for decades because of historical and linguistic ties. Algeria also attracts migrant populations from Sub-Saharan countries, and in the recent years, it witnessed a rise in the arrival of foreign workers, especially from China (in the construction sector) and India (in the steel industry).<sup>3</sup>

Algeria is signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, the Algerian Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons (BAPRA) is responsible for deciding upon asylum requests and recognizing refugee status determined by UNHCR.<sup>5</sup>

Algeria recently made two substantial modifications to its legal regulations regarding migration. On the 25th of June 2008, it adopted the law 08-11 governing foreign nationals' conditions of entry, stay and circulation, which abrogated the order n° 66-211 of the 21st of July 1966 regulating foreign nationals. This new law penalizes irregular entry, staying and departure from Algeria. In 2009, it reformed its penal code to add the offence of irregular exit from its territory for its citizens and foreign residents, as well as the crimes of migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons.<sup>6</sup>

## MIGRANT PROFILE

### INBOUND

As of June 2017, there were approximately 249,000<sup>7</sup> migrants in Algeria.<sup>8</sup> Migrants in Algeria primarily originate from across Africa and the Middle East. Nigeriens, Malians and Guineans represent the largest Sub-Saharan migrant community in Algeria.<sup>9</sup>

Algeria is the last stop on a long journey that Sub-Saharan African migrants undertake before reaching North Africa and for some, Europe. As a possible indicator of migrant presence in Algeria, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded that between February and the end of September 2016, nearly 22,000 migrants passed through Arlit in Northwest Niger on their way to Algeria.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the difficulty of departing for Europe from Algeria, it is considered by some a safer place to transit and seek informal work than Libya, where migrants face a risk of exploitation, forced labour and kidnapping for ransom. While migration routes into Libya are difficult to monitor, the DTM Libya Migrant Report (April 2017) noted the increase in people transiting through Algeria, with Algeria being the main point of

crossing into Libya for Malians (87%).<sup>11</sup>

Most Sub-Saharan migrants arrive in Tamanrasset in the South of Algeria and are left stranded without resources, without documents and sometimes without means of communication. Many either try to seek jobs in Tamanrasset and the surrounding towns or to make their way up to the northern shores of Algeria to go to the cities of Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Annaba amongst others to seek employment.<sup>12</sup>

As of September 2017, there are 95,200 refugees and asylum seekers in Algeria registered and supported by UNHCR. 90,000 come from Western Sahara (most of them are cared for in camps since the 1970s) and 5,200 from Syria, Palestinian, Yemen, Mali and other countries.<sup>13</sup>

## OUTBOUND

The irregular migratory route out of Algeria to Europe (with Sardinia, Italy as the main point of entry), is typically dominated by Algerian nationals. Increase in departures from Algeria to Spain and Italy have also been recorded. According to the Italian Ministry of the Interior, from January to mid-July 2017, 792 Algerians (754 men and 21 women) landed irregularly in Italy. During the same period, more than 550 Algerians arrived in Spain from the Algerian coast of western Oran.<sup>14</sup> However, according to the UNHCR, between January and the end of October 2017, 6,397 arrived irregularly in Europe through the Mediterranean.<sup>15</sup>

Migrants who enter Algeria irregularly can face six months to two-year jail time and a fine ranging between 10,000 to 30,000 upon for entering the country irregularly.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, national citizens or foreign residents may be given two to six-month jail time for irregular exit

# ROUTES TO AND FROM ALGERIA

## INBOUND: FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Migrants who enter Algeria from sub-Saharan Africa typically arrive to Agadez in Niger from throughout the region and travel to Tamanrasset before moving to other cities in Algeria.

## OUTBOUND: THE MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE

Migrants bound for Italy typically depart from the northeastern coast of Algeria, while migrants bound for Spain depart from the northwest. When weather conditions are favorable, the boat crossings from Algeria to Sardinia in Spain can be made overnight.<sup>17</sup> Taking these routes entails significant risks for migrants, both due to the risk of drowning and the possibility of being intercepted by the coastguards.

# MIGRATION MOTIVATIONS

Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, particularly from francophone countries, may travel to Algeria in search of employment opportunities, and to escape violence and conflict. Sub-Saharan migrants in Algeria are employed in sectors including agriculture, construction, tourism and domestic work.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, Algerian migrants leave the country due to high unemployment, lack of opportunity and high rates of poverty in the country. Algerians may also migrate to study abroad or to reunite with family residing abroad.<sup>19</sup>

# THE MIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN ALGERIA

## TREATMENT IN ALGERIA

Algeria's treatment of migrants has been the subject of many media reports in 2017. Migrants face challenges in renting homes, accessing employment and finding property for places of worship.<sup>20</sup> Discrimination against migrants has been exacerbated by a recent anonymous online campaign that blames Sub-Saharan African migrants for taking jobs and spreading HIV in Algeria.<sup>21</sup> NGOs have also criticized conditions under which irregular migrants are allegedly brought back to Niger's border.<sup>22</sup> They argue that the fear of being arrested and repatriated forces migrants to lead hidden lives, which makes it hard for migrant services to reach them and undermines their quality of life and safety.

## IRREGULAR STATUS

Many irregular migrants risk being returned to their countries of origin after arriving in Algeria due to existing laws regulating irregular entry and exit from Algeria.<sup>23</sup> Numerous large scale return operations have taken place since 2016. Between August and October 2017, 5000 West Africans have been pushed out of the borders, most of them across the Nigerien border. According to figures released by the Algerian Ministry of Interior and Public Infrastructure, in 2017 10,000 Sub-Saharan migrants have been returned to their countries of origin.<sup>24</sup>

## RETURN TO COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

In Algeria, migrants in irregular situations wishing to return to their countries of origin require an 'exit authorization' which is delivered by the Algerian authorities. However, even with the 'exit authorization', migrants report being stopped at the airport border control to undergo an 'examen de situation' (situation assessment) before they are permitted to leave the country.<sup>25</sup> Currently this exercise is conducted on a case to case basis on the day of departure. There are no standard operating procedures in place which often results in migrants being held at police stations for an undefined period (between 3 and 12 hours from current observations) and missing their flights.<sup>26</sup> Since December 2017, IOM has been granted authorization to conduct a situation analysis 1 day prior to the day of travel to avoid migrants missing their flights. The increasingly precarious situation of migrants in the country is reflected in an increasing number of migrants as well as Embassies and Consulates of Sub-Saharan and Western African countries requesting various forms of assistance and/or support for voluntary return from IOM.<sup>27</sup>

1. Hooper, Kate. ["European Leaders Pursue Migration Deals with North African Countries, Sparking Concerns about Human Costs"](#) (December 2017).
2. International Organization for Migration. [World Migration Report 2018](#).
3. Migration Policy Centre, [Migration Profile: Algeria](#) (June 2013).
4. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). [States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol](#) (April 2015).
5. Migration Policy Centre, [Migration Profile: Algeria](#) (June 2013).
6. Ibid
7. UNDESA, [International migrant stock: The 2017 version](#) (June, 2017).
8. These are based on census data that is collated by UNDESA. As such, these figures may include irregular migrants and refugees as well as regular migrants.
9. IOM Algeria
10. Ibid
11. IOM, [DTM Libya's Migrant Report, round 10 April-May 2017](#).
12. IOM Algeria
13. UNHCR, [Algeria factsheet](#) (September 2017).
14. IOM Algeria
15. Le Monde Afrique, ["L'émigration algérienne repart à la hausse"](#) (December 2017).
16. Migration Policy Centre, [Migration Profile: Algeria](#) (June 2013).
17. The Telegraph, ["Italian island of Sardinia alarmed by increase in number of migrants arriving on its shores"](#) (September 2017).
18. Migration Policy Centre, [Migration Profile: Algeria](#) (June 2013).
19. The Telegraph, ["Italian island of Sardinia alarmed by increase in number of migrants arriving on its shores"](#) (September 2017).
20. The North Africa Post, ["The Plight of Minorities in Algeria"](#) (September 2017).
21. Reuters, ["Algeria to grant legal status to African migrants amid worker shortages, racism"](#) (July 2017).
22. Le Monde Afrique, ["L'émigration algérienne repart à la hausse"](#) (December 2017).
23. Mixed Migration Hub, [July Monthly Trend Bulletin](#) (July 2017).
24. IOM Algeria
25. IOM Algeria
26. IOM Algeria
27. IOM Algeria



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
The UN Migration Agency

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