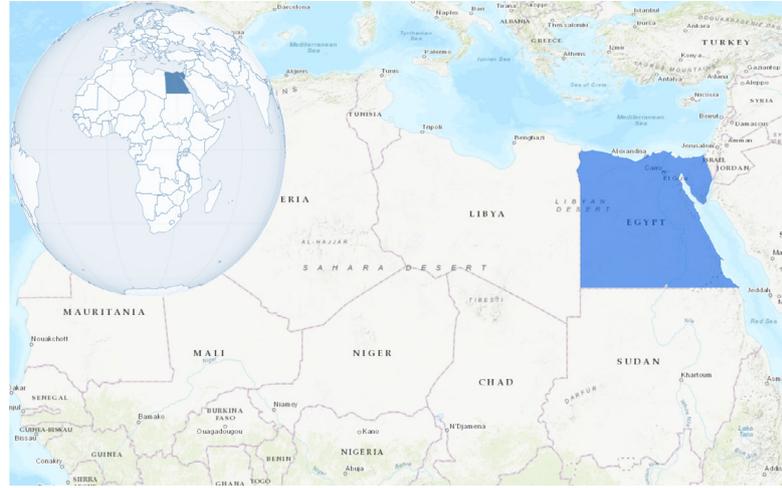




EGYPT

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.¹ 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).²

BACKGROUND

Because of its central position in the MENA region, Egypt has been part of multiple regional migration flows. Over the last years, to deal with these flows, Egypt has put the stress on combatting human trafficking and irregular migration, by prosecuting and enacting more severe sentences for traffickers. Since 2016, the National Coordinating Committee on Combatting and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons (NCCPIM&TIP) has acted as the focal point for irregular migration and trafficking issues, and the coordination of governmental efforts in Egypt. Due to the growing numbers of irregular migrants attempting to pass through Egypt on to Libya and Europe, Egypt has been cooperating with the European Union to stop irregular migrants at the border. According to the Egyptian Armed Forces, in the first half of 2017, approximately 3000 irregular migrants were detained.

Egypt is a participating state of the Khartoum Process, which aims to enhance cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination on migration and mobility while addressing trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.³

MIGRANT PROFILE

INBOUND

Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Egypt mainly come from East Africa and the Middle East. Some of these individuals are refugees and asylum seekers fleeing conflict or other hostile circumstances, while others migrate to Egypt primarily in search of opportunities. As of June 2017, there were 478,000 migrants⁴ in Egypt, the majority of whom are from Syria.⁵

As of December 2017, 219,212 refugees and asylum seekers have been registered with UNHCR in Egypt. Of those registered, 126,688 are Syrian, 35,737 are Sudanese, and 14,452 Ethiopian; the remaining were Eritreans, South Sudanese, Iraqis, Somalis, and Yemenis, amongst others.⁶

As a country of destination and transit, many who initially settle in Egypt, particularly from the Horn of Africa, may later decide to migrate either regularly or irregularly to other countries.⁷

OUTBOUND

Both foreign and Egyptian migrants leave Egypt irregularly in search of economic opportunities, security, and family reunification.⁸ Before 2017, migrants could reach Europe by sea from the Egyptian northern coast. In 2016, out of 4,985 people detained for attempting to depart irregularly by sea from Egypt's North Coast, the majority were Sudanese and Somalis, followed by Eritreans and Ethiopians.⁹ At the end of 2016, Egypt introduced an anti-smuggling law.¹⁰

For Egyptian and international migrants making the journey to Europe, Libya is the point of departure. Many make the crossing to Libya by land from where they make the journey to Italy. For many migrants making the journey to Italy, via Libya, the decision is secondary and is taken after spending a year or more in Egypt. They may be driven by the prospect of a higher quality of life or better employment opportunities, feelings of insecurity in Egypt, or general migration policy barriers.¹¹ Syrians also migrate to Egypt and then travel onward to Italy. Many of them stay in Egypt for up to five years before traveling to Libya and continuing the journey to Europe from the Libyan coast.¹²

The majority of irregular Egyptian migrants reaching Europe are unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs). In 2016, they accounted for 58% of Egyptian arrivals to Europe and most were aged 15-17.¹³

ROUTES TO AND FROM EGYPT

In September 2016, a boat carrying migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers sank off the Egyptian coastal town of Rosetta. At least 168 bodies were recovered and 160 were rescued. After the tragedy, the Egyptian government sought to tighten its borders¹⁴ and launched a national strategy on tackling irregular migration for 2016-2026.¹⁵ The Egyptian border patrol and the Egyptian coast guard are making active efforts to prevent both the arrival and departure of irregular migrants from the country. In January 2017, the Egyptian military announced that in 2016, 12,192 people of diverse nationalities were arrested while attempting to enter and leave Egypt irregularly.¹⁶ Due to these policy and changes and a crackdown on irregular migration,¹⁷ the number of Europe-bound boats departing for Italy has greatly diminished since 2016.

INBOUND

Irregular migrants often enter Egypt through the country's southern and western borders. As a result, the Egyptian army monitors these borders closely.¹⁸ Others enter the country by air with valid visas and remain in the country indefinitely. While some undertake the journey to Egypt with the assistance of smugglers, others travel independently.

OUTBOUND

Egypt is both a country of origin and transit for outbound migrants. Many of these migrants leave Egypt for Libya, primarily through the cities of Marsa Matrouh and Salloum.¹⁹ While some settle in Libya or engage in circular migration, others transit in Libya before making the journey to Europe. This route poses risks for migrants due to the strict monitoring of the borders, the difficult circumstances reaching Libya, and the possibility of being intercepted by border patrols.²⁰

MIGRATION MOTIVATIONS

INBOUND

Migrants enter Egypt to escape conflict and persecution, and to pursue better opportunities than those available in their countries of origin.²¹ Much of the time, individual cases are a mix of both factors. For instance, Sudanese usually come to flee the long armed conflicts which have deteriorated living conditions in the country and left them with little hope of any improvement of the situation.²² However, unmet expectations, poor resources and living conditions as well as absence of desire to go back to their origin country may entice migrants to try to continue their way towards Europe.²³

OUTBOUND

A sizeable number of both Egyptians and sub-Saharan African migrants leave Egypt for Libya. Some of those who do so are motivated by the prospect of finding work in Libya, while others hope to undertake the sea crossing from Libya to Italy.²⁴ Migrants who leave Egypt for Europe, either directly from the North Coast or via Libya, often do so in pursuit of greater personal opportunities and higher levels of security.²⁵

THE MIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN EGYPT

PUBLIC SERVICES

Although there are some support services available to migrants in Egypt, many host governorates and local communities struggle to absorb large numbers of migrant populations, which can put strains on the already fragile infrastructures and public services that address the needs of Egyptian citizens. International and local NGOs implement various projects and platforms that aim to address this gap. For example, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) implemented BOSLA, a database that lists services available to migrants within the country.²⁶

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

The majority of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers face challenges when attempting to meet basic needs such as healthcare, education, and housing. In January 2017, Egypt's Ministry of Health and UNHCR established a new partnership to provide African, Yemeni, and Iraqi refugees with government primary health services at government-run hospitals including maternal and child services, vaccinations, family medicine, curative and preventative care. Until that point, these services were only available to registered Syrian refugees in Egypt.²⁷ Nonetheless, qualified individuals may struggle to access these services due to a lack of required identity documents, language barriers, distance to healthcare facilities and some practitioners' refusal to serve migrants. As a result, many migrants and refugees rely on NGOs for health services. These NGOs have limited capacities and mandates, which impact who they are able to support. Furthermore, these organizations have a limited presence in rural areas, making it difficult for those living in non-urban areas to access healthcare. These challenges mean that the majority of migrants in Egypt, who experience complex health problems during their migration journeys, have many of their healthcare needs unmet.²⁸

ACCESS TO HOUSING AND EDUCATION

The overall economic situation in Egypt and the recent inflation, particularly regarding basic products, has undermined migrants' quality of life and diminished their resources. In 2016, 80% of migrants in Egypt lived in poor housing conditions. They also face difficulties accessing formal employment.²⁹

Migrants also face barriers in accessing education. Complex admission procedures, costs affiliated with school enrolment, and language barriers for non-Arabic speaking children contribute to the low enrolment rate of migrant children in schools in Egypt. IOM studies in 2016 revealed that 64% of Somalis, 40% of South Sudanese and 35% of Ethiopians do not enrol their children in school in Egypt.³⁰ However, Syrians have full rights to attend public education systems, which explains the much higher percentage (82%) of Syrian children attending schools.³¹

LEAVING EGYPT BECAUSE OF UNMET EXPECTATIONS

Difficult circumstances for migrants in Egypt leave many of them searching for other options. While some migrants choose to continue to Libya with the hope of eventually reaching Europe, others wish to return home to their countries of origin or the countries from which they began their migration to Egypt. For both Egyptian migrants abroad and migrants from other countries who reach Egypt, IOM offers assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) services to support migrants wishing to return home.³²

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International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

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