



MONTHLY TREND REPORT

COVERING MIXED MIGRATION TO, THROUGH & FROM NORTH AFRICA

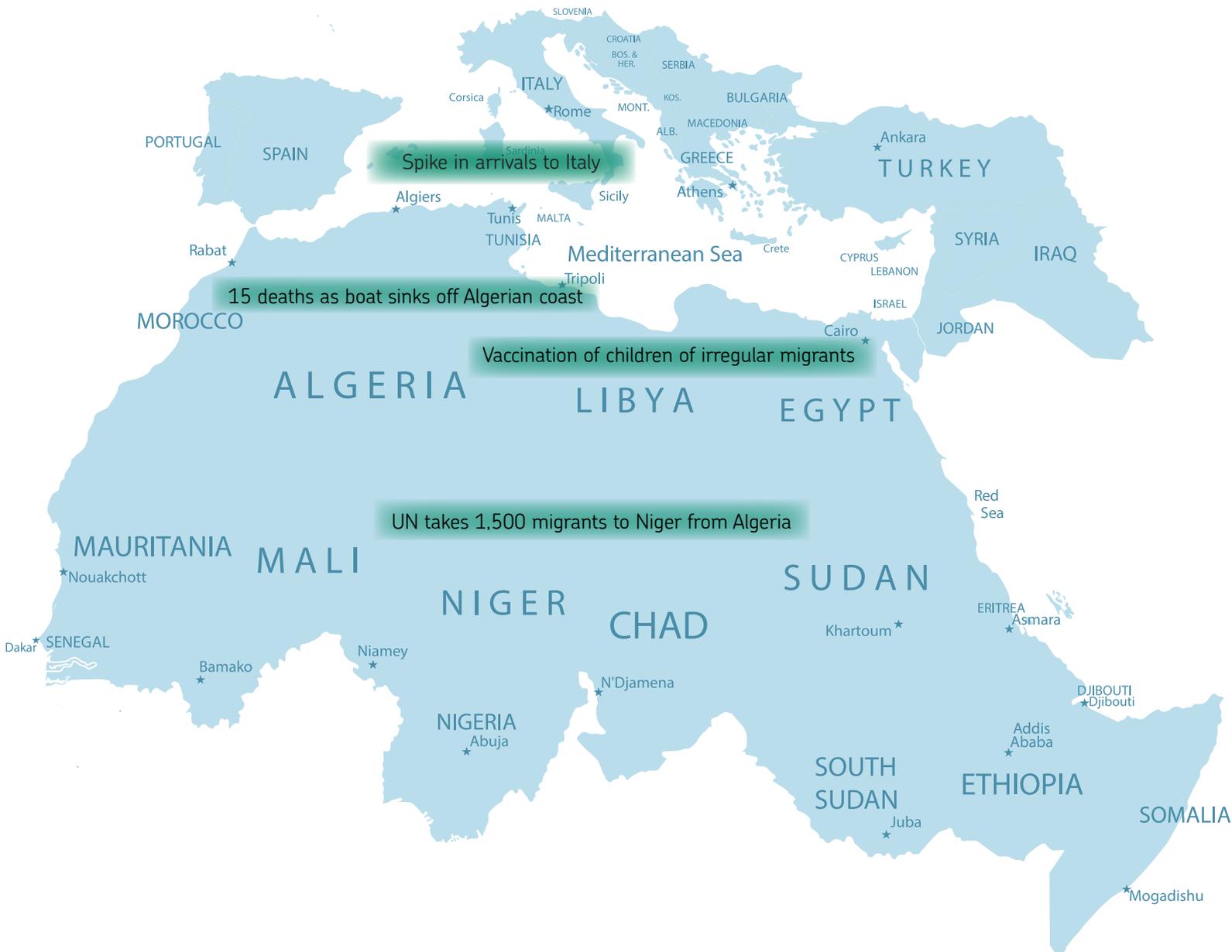
About: MHub is the regional knowledge hub and secretariat for the North Africa Mixed Migration Task Force, comprising of DRC, IOM, OHCHR, RMMS, Save the Children, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNODC. It promotes a human rights-based approach to ensure the protection of people moving in mixed and complex flows to, 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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For updates on the Horn of Africa, visit [RMMS](#)

REGIONAL

German police launch crackdown on organized crime

- German security forces [conducted](#) multiple raids targeting human traffickers and criminals involved in “smuggling, forced prostitution and exploitation” and detained more than 100 people. The security forces targeted a criminal ring suspected of smuggling sex workers from Thailand. Police searched more than 60 brothels and apartments in the northwest of Germany and detained a couple suspected of leading the criminal network involving more than 50 people, most of whom are women. Police said the ring leaders used forged visas to bring women and transgender people from Thailand to Germany, charging between €16,000 and €30,000 for the visas and then forced the newcomers into sex work as a way to repay their debts. Hundreds of such workers were then moved from brothel to brothel to avoid suspicion. “They were not lied about the purpose (of their trip to Germany) but they were deceived when it comes to conditions,” officials said.

Austria to seize migrants’ valuable belongings upon arrival

- Austria is [proposing](#) to confiscate asylum seekers’ cash, seize their mobile phones and make it harder for asylum seekers to become citizens. The measures were included in a bill by the cabinet. “We have very deliberately set ourselves the goal of fighting against illegal migration but also against the misuse of asylum,” Chancellor Sebastian Kurz told a news conference after the weekly cabinet meeting. The bill, which must be passed by the parliament, allows authorities to seize asylum seekers’ mobile phones to confirm where they came from and to confiscate up to €840 in cash to pay for their upkeep while they wait for their asylum claims to be processed. “The only thing this bill achieves is to create more uncertainty and mistrust among the population,” Amnesty International said in a statement. Additionally, the bill will allow refugees to apply for Austrian citizenship after 10 years, as opposed to the current 6-year period.
- In related news, Austria also [introduced](#) a new law on asylum that is expected to make it much more difficult for asylum seekers to lodge formal asylum applications in Austria while increasing the likelihood that newly arriving refugees and asylum seekers will be turned back at the border. The new law allowed the government to declare the ‘migration crisis’ a ‘state of emergency’.

Germany to resettle 10,000 refugees while taking a tougher stance on deportations

- Around 10,000 vulnerable refugees from the Middle East and North Africa will be [resettled](#) to Germany as part of the EU’s voluntary resettlement programme. In September 2017, the European Commission [announced](#) a new EU resettlement scheme to bring at 50,000 of the most vulnerable persons in need of international protection to Europe over the next two years. The scheme will be in place until October 2019 and has been allocated €500 million by the Commission. Increased focus will be put on resettling persons from North Africa and the Horn of Africa, particularly Libya, Egypt, Niger, Sudan, Chad and Ethiopia. Germany’s decision follows confirmations made by 19 other EU countries that have pledged to settle around 40,000 vulnerable people.
- Meanwhile, Germany has [vowed](#) to take a tougher stance on irregular migration and the deportation of rejected asylum seekers. Hundreds of police officers raided a refugee shelter days after a group of migrants prevented authorities from deporting a 23 year old Togolese asylum seeker. As part of the plan, the German government intends to place asylum-seekers in several centralized centers with up to 1,500 persons for up to a period of two years. Judges will work inside these centers where failed asylum applicants will be deported directly from the centers. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer also wants to increase the number of holding facilities for deportees. Seehofer said he also wants Germany to declare several nations — including Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria as well as Georgia — as “secure home countries,” thus lessening the chances that asylum seekers from there will be granted asylum.

2017 witnesses record high remittances to low- and middle-income countries

- The latest World Bank Migration and development brief reported that remittances to low- and middle-income countries have [rebounded](#) to a record level in 2017 after two consecutive years of decline reaching \$466 billion. The growth from 2016 represents an 8.5% increase. Remittance inflows improved in all regions and the top remittance recipients were India, China, the Philippines, Mexico, Nigeria and Egypt. The increase in remittances was driven by growth in Europe, the Russian Federation and the United States. Remittance inflows are expected to continue increasing in 2018 by 4.1% in low- and middle-income countries.

Gallup polls show increase in desire to migrate

- In 2017, nearly one in three (32%) North Africans [said](#) they would like to permanently migrate to another country, up from 28% in 2016. Percentages rose in three countries: Algeria, Morocco and Libya which act as countries of origin, transit and destination. The desire to migrate was highest among young North Africans and those with more education. In 2017, nearly half of North Africans (46%) between the ages of 15 and 29 said they would like to migrate permanently to another country, up from 40% in 2016. Europe, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are some of the most desired destinations for North African aspiring migrants. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are particularly preferred destinations for Egyptians.

UNHCR urges European nations to stop trafficking networks in Libya

- The UNHCR Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean, Vincent Cochetel, [said](#) that European countries need to do more to stop illegal trade in fuel and inflatable boats in Libya which is helping human traffickers. Cochetel claimed that private boat operators with flags registered in Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) nations were buying fuel from trafficking groups. According to the UNHCR official, other countries were failing to enforce a European Union ruling to limit the sale of inflatable boats into

Libya with the inflatable boats bought from China and exported through several OSCE countries. Speaking at an OSCE 18th Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons event, Cochetel said “Private boats registered with OSCE countries are docking in Libya and buying illegal (fuel) from the same militias involved in the trafficking of human beings.” The call comes after Libya’s National Oil Corporation said it was considering using a chemical marking system to help trace smuggled oil products as up to 40 percent of fuel refined in Libya or imported is stolen or smuggled.

ALGERIA

At least 15 migrants die after boat sinks off Algerian coast

- Around 15 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers [died](#) after their boat capsized off the Algerian coast. The boat was trying to reach Europe when it initially took off from Morocco. Coast guards and civil protection authorities rescued 19 out of 34 people on board. The boat sank off the coast of Oran, a city located west of the capital Algiers.

Algeria frets over rise in migrants as Europe tightens controls

- Algeria [expects](#) to accommodate more migrants from Sub Saharan countries as the EU is closing its doors. “The solution is not to close the borders from one side and let people die on the other side,” said Hassen Kacimi, the Interior Minister of Algeria. According to Kacimi, around \$20 million were spent by the Algerian government over the past three years to accommodate the increasing number of migrant arrivals.

UNODC training

- UNODC organized a three-day training workshop in Algiers between 22 and 24 April to strengthen the capacity of Sudanese journalists to report on cases of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. The workshop targeted a total of 20 journalists working in different media outlets in Algeria and comprised different sessions on the international legal framework on trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, how to interview survivors of trafficking, and how to report on TIP and SOM cases. The training also included group work where participants had to write articles on TIP and SOM issues and present them to the audience for debriefing.

EGYPT

IOM, NCCIM & TIP and UNICEF release a song and video to highlight dangers of irregular migration

- IOM Egypt and NCCIM & TIP in cooperation with UNICEF Egypt [released](#) a song and [music video](#) featuring popular Egyptian artists Zap Tharwat and Ahmed Shiba to alert Egyptian youth about the dangers of irregular migration. The video is part of the second national awareness raising campaign against irregular migration and targeting Egyptian youth at risk of undertaking the perilous crossing into Europe. The video successfully reached 3 million views during the week of its release. Announcing the release, IOM Egypt’s Chief of Mission, Laurent De Boeck, said, “This is an important song aimed at raising awareness among the young population of Egypt of the dangers of irregular migration and human trafficking. It is important to try to make Egyptians see Egypt as a solution instead of contemplating migration as the only opportunity to resolve challenges.” The video will be followed by community outreach efforts in six Egyptian governorates with the highest rates of irregular departure.

First regional edition of the Certificate in Migration Governance

- IOM Egypt, in partnership with the American University in Cairo’s Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), [announced](#) that the first regional edition Certificate in Migration Governance will be held in Cairo between 22 and 30 September of this year. The nine-day intensive learning program will include a variety of modules dealing with various aspects of migration governance and it is expected that up to 30 officials from the MENA region will participate in the program. Since 2016, 57 Egyptian government and non-governmental representatives have taken part in the Certificate in Migration

Governance with modules delivered by AUC professors and IOM practitioners. This program supports the Government of Egypt’s commitment under the Action Plan of the [Valletta Summit on Migration](#) to develop and implement a comprehensive national and regional strategy for migration and human mobility.

UNODC trainings

- UNODC organized a training workshop entitled “Seminar on the Critical Role of the Judiciary in Combating Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants” for 29 judges in Hurgghada between 3 and 5 April. The training was held in cooperation with the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling and the National Center for Judicial Studies. This was the second such workshop targeting national judges under the umbrella of the GLO.ACT project.
- UNODC organized a training workshop entitled “Training Workshop to Strengthen the Capacity of Egyptian Prosecutors to Investigate and Prosecute Migrant Smuggling Crimes” in Alexandria between 15 and 18 April. The workshop was organized in collaboration with the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling and the International Cooperation and Human Rights Division at the Office of The Egyptian Prosecutor General. The workshop targeted 20 national prosecutors from the Delta region and included some interesting discussions and exchange of knowledge and expertise as it included 4 prosecutors who worked on the migrant smuggling case in Rashid.

Maritime incidents

- 1,485 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were rescued off the coast of Libya across 10 different incidents in the month of April, which is a 40% increase from rescue figures for March. The figures for March were also an increase from those of February. There were 11 recorded deaths during the month of April.

Vaccination of children of irregular migrants

- The Libyan Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM) [announced](#) on 17 April that children of irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were successfully vaccinated against a number of diseases. The vaccination campaign was implemented in cooperation with the International Medical Corps and the Municipal Health Complex situated in Abu Salim.

UNHCR delivers assistance to displaced Libyan families

- UNHCR spokesperson, Andrej Mahecic, [announced](#) on 20 April UNHCR's latest efforts to provide internally displaced families in Libya with much needed assistance. Mr Mahecic said that displaced families in southern Libya have been in desperate need of adequate shelter, health supplies and food and that humanitarian access to the area had been restricted because of recent eruptions of violence. He further added that a humanitarian convoy composed of seven trucks delivered basic assistance items to 850 displaced families in Sabha on 4 April and to a further 370 families in Murzuq on 18 April. The situation in Libya is still cause for concern with 184,000 internally displaced persons and 368,000 recently returned persons still in need of humanitarian assistance.

MSF expresses concerns for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in detention

- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) [expressed](#) its concern for the safety of over 800 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers being held in an overcrowded Libyan detention center in the city of Zuwara. The humanitarian organization further added that some of the men, women and children detained have been held in sub-par conditions for over five months. Speaking about detention conditions, the head of MSF's emergencies desk, Karline Kleijer, said, "The situation is critical. We strongly urge all international agencies with a presence in Libya, representatives from countries of origin and the Libyan authorities to do everything they can to find a solution for these people over the next few days." The situation is only expected to further deteriorate as Libyan authorities continue to detain migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and house them in already overcrowded facilities.

Libya Migration Working Group

- IOM and the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs [convened](#) the third meeting of the Libya Migration Working Group in Tripoli on 25 April. Among the issues discussed were Libyan national priorities in relation to international assistance in the field of migration and how best to use existing modalities in addressing such priorities. The Chair of the meeting and Director of European Affairs at the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Louai Turjiman, said, "As the main body for coordination with international partners on this domain, the Migration Working Group is the right venue to present national priorities and to plan for a joint approach, fit to the national context, which would address the needs of those vulnerable. Irregular migration is a shared responsibility." IOM Libya Chief of Mission, Othman Belbeisi, further added, "This meeting showed concrete steps and genuine determination among all actors towards a comprehensive long-term migration work-plan. The group is developing actionable tools and practical solutions to aid effective migration governance ensuring respect for human rights, while reducing the impacts of irregular migration."

UNODC conducts training for Libyan law enforcement officers and prosecutors

- Between 2 and 4 May, UNODC organized a basic training for Libyan law enforcement officers and prosecutors on trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. This training gathered 10 prosecutors and 12 law enforcement officers from the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) in Tunis for 3 days. The training included dedicated sessions on the international legal framework on trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, how to identify, understand and interview victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants, as well as on investigation techniques and international cooperation. Representatives from the Attorney-General's Office and of the DCIM were also invited to share an overview of the situation in Libya and of the challenge they face in their duties. This training is the first part of a two-session training addressing the crimes of trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.

Western Mediterranean Route

- [1,093](#) migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have crossed from Morocco to Spain by sea in the month of April bringing the total arrivals by sea for this year to 5,676. April's figure represents approximately 24% increase from the figure for March and is 21% higher than arrival figures for April of last year. According to IOM figures, 97 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers died while attempting the crossing into Spain in April 2018 which is a 978% increase from the April 2017 figure (9).
- An additional [386](#) migrants, refugees and asylum seekers crossed from Morocco into Spain via its land borders with Morocco (through Ceuta and Melilla) during the month of April, bringing the total of number of persons making this crossing this year to 2,001. The number of land crossings in April represent a 7% decrease from those for March but a 30% increase from April 2017 figures.

Spain and US praise Morocco's efforts in addressing irregular migration

- In a meeting with Greek Minister for Migration policy Dimitris Vistas and Greek Deputy Minister of Civil Defense, Spanish Interior Minister Juan Ignacio Zoido [underscored](#) Morocco's efforts in combating irregular migration. According to a statement issued by the Spanish Interior Ministry, Zoido highlighted the effective collaboration between Spain and Morocco in this regard.
- Meanwhile, the United States [welcomed](#) Morocco's achievements in the field of human rights, highlighting in particular the protection of migrants' rights and the policy of regularization and integration adopted by the Kingdom. The Department of State underscored the 'exceptional regularization of persons in irregular situation' under the 2016 migrant regularization program. The regularization campaign announced in 2016 granted regular status to previously irregular migrants who qualified according to government-issued criteria. The regularization campaign facilitated migrants' access to basic services, employment, education and health care. As of October 2017, approximately 22,000 applicants received regular status, out of the more than 25,000 requests submitted.

Morocco hosts 5th Annual Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development

- The Moroccan city of Marrakech [hosted](#) the 5th Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development on 2 May 2018. The conference brought together ministers and high-

level representatives from 60 countries in Africa and Europe as well as the European Commission and the Commission of the Economic community of West African states. The conference was expected to adopt a multi-annual cooperation program as well as the Marrakech Declaration on Migration and its Plan of Action. Key initiatives of the Plan of Action [included](#) promoting the developmental benefits of migration, while addressing the root causes of irregular migration and the phenomenon of displaced persons; promoting legal migration and mobility; strengthening protection and asylum; as well as fighting against irregular migration, smuggling, and human trafficking. The previous Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development took place in November 2014 in Rome, Italy.

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 holds training for local civil society organizations

- Between 12 and 13 April, UNODC held a training for local civil society organizations on the identification and protection of victims of human trafficking in Agadir for the Southern region of Souss-Massa in Morocco. The event was held in partnership with the Delegated Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Residing Abroad and Migration Affairs, with the presence of the Regional Commission for Human Rights and "National Solidarity" (a public social services institution). The event was attended by 33 local actors with diverse mandates and activities all related to social protection, human rights, advocacy and support to vulnerable categories including women, children, migrants and asylum seekers. It was the conclusion of a cycle of trainings that had targeted 7 regions in Morocco since 2017, in an effort to raise awareness about the national and international legal frameworks, their contexts of implementation as well as identification and protection measures to victims.

MALI

Mali violence drives thousands to Burkina Faso

- UNHCR is [concerned](#) about intercommunal confrontations between the Dogon and Peul communities in Central Mali which have driven 3,000 people towards Burkina Faso. The recently arrived 2,000 Malians and 1,000 Burkinabes who had been living in Mali join some 24,000 Malian refugees who fled across the border into Burkina Faso since the start of the conflict in Mali in 2012. This new displacement adds to the challenges Mali is facing alongside with food insecurity due to the lack of rain.

Mali summons ambassador in Algiers over ill-treatment of Sub-Saharan

- Mali has [called](#) its ambassador to Algiers to express its rejection of the ill treatment of Sub-Saharan migrants, refugees and

asylum seekers by Algerian authorities. Mali's Foreign Minister denounced Algeria's discrimination against Malians and urged all Malians feeling insecure in Algeria to leave the country. The anti-migrant populist rhetoric has been on the rise in Algeria with some blaming Sub Saharan migrants for the worsening economic situation in Algeria. In a problematic speech, the current Algerian PM described Sub-Saharan migrants as a "source of crime, drugs and other calamities." International human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the IOM condemned Algeria of bad treatment of migrants as it continues its mass expulsions of these migrants and asylum seekers, who are deprived of a chance of applying for international protection under the 1951 Geneva Convention.

NIGER

UN takes 1,500 migrants to Niger from Algeria

- The UN Migration Agency (IOM) [transported](#) around 1500 migrants from Algeria to Niger. These migrants were stranded in the Nigerian desert near the borders of Algeria after being turned back at border or deported forcibly from the country. Around 3000 migrants are currently housed in the Agadez center in north Niger which can accommodate up to 1000 migrants. IOM is responsible for organizing the repatriation of those migrants to their countries of origin which is not a simple task since more than half of them have no documents.

Red Cross steps up response in Niger as health conditions deteriorate

- The rising number of people fleeing conflict and the arrival of thousands of migrants are [overwhelming](#) public health facilities in Niger, putting scores of families at risk – including tens of thousands of malnourished children. “Migrants living in Niger are very vulnerable and require a lot of support in many areas,” said Dr Fatoumata Nafo-Traoré, Regional Director for Africa at

the IFRC. The Diffa region in Niger, one of the poorest countries of the world, has experienced a humanitarian crisis that caused thousands to flee violence erupting out of extreme poverty. This humanitarian challenge is worsened by Niger’s location along an essential migratory route. In response to this crisis, IFRC is requesting for 1.6 million Swiss franc to strengthen the Red Cross’s humanitarian response in Niger. “Nutritional support, as well as health, water and sanitation services are the most urgent needs. Malnutrition in the Diffa region has reached serious emergency levels”, said Ali Bandiare, the President of the Red Cross Society of Niger.

SUDAN

Sudan, Chad and Niger armies discuss border security

- Senior military officials from Sudan, Chad and Niger [held](#) a consultation meeting in Khartoum to discuss border security after the increase of transnational crime in the Sub-Saharan region. “The meeting tackled ways to enhance solidarity and joint action to confront the challenges of border control and security, combating transnational crime, combating terrorism and rampant groups and achieving security and stability,” said a statement released after the meeting. The political instability in Libya after the fall of the Gaddafi regime negatively affected the security of the whole region and especially of Chad, Niger and Sudan. The statement released after the meeting said that an expert-level meeting will be held to draft a framework document for the mechanism of monitoring and securing the common border between the three countries.

UNHCR, Sudan Government welcome visit of high level donor delegation to refugees in Sudan

- UNHCR and the Sudanese government [welcomed](#) a high level donor delegation including representatives from several countries. The donors met senior officials in Khartoum and East Sudan and seized the opportunity to highlight Sudan’s efforts to protect refugees from trafficking and smuggling activities. “This visit is a message of solidarity; it tells refugees

that they are not alone in their hard time. Without generous donor support we would not be able to protect and assist hundreds of thousands vulnerable refugee families who have been forced to flee war or persecution,” concluded UNHCR’s Representative in Sudan, Noriko Yoshida. Sudan is one of the countries hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees, primarily from South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Syria and Yemen. As the country continues to keep its doors open to people fleeing war, hunger and hardship in their countries, international solidarity and resources are more vital than ever.

UNODC training

- Between 8 and 11 April, UNODC supported the conduct of a basic training workshop on investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases at the Judicial and Legal Science Institute (JLSI) in the Sudanese capital. The workshop targeted a total of 17 participants: 7 Judges, 4 prosecutors and 6 law enforcement officers. In addition, 3 representatives of the JLSI also attended the workshop. This workshop was funded by GIZ (financed by the European Union) and was implemented in the framework of the project Better Migration Management programme.

TUNISIA

Italy busts new smuggling ring bringing migrants from Tunisia

- A smuggling ring that smuggled people from Tunisia to Sicily in high speed boats was [foiled](#) by Italian authorities. Prosecutors issued arrest warrants for around 13 individuals accused of smuggling people and contraband goods into Italy. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers paid between 3,000 to 5,000 euros for these fast trips. The smuggling operation made between 30,000-70,000 euros for each crossing. More than 600,000 migrants have come to Italy since 2014 but most of them travelled in often overcrowded and unseaworthy plastic boats.

Arrivals to Greece

- 506 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived to Greece by sea in the month of April representing an approximate 79% decrease in the number of arrivals from the previous month of March (2,412). April's arrival figures are also the lowest monthly figures so far this year. According to IOM figures, there were no recorded deaths along the Eastern Mediterranean Route in the month of April.

Greek court rules that asylum seekers cannot be held on islands

- On 18 April, the Council of State, Greece's top administrative court, [ruled](#) that refugees and asylum seekers can no longer be held on Greek islands while their asylum claims are assessed and processed. The ruling comes as a victory for newly arriving refugees and asylum seekers who would have previously been forced to spend years in overcrowded and under resourced facilities. The restrictions were imposed in 2016 at the request of the Greek Asylum Service. In the ruling, the court stated that it found "no serious and overriding reasons of public interest and migration policy to justify the imposition of restriction on movement." While this is a much welcome decision, the ruling only applies to newly arriving refugees and asylum seekers while those who have already endured months and years of living in the islands as asylum seekers will have to remain on the islands.
- Following the ruling, rights groups in Greece [pressed](#) the Greek government to comply with the court ruling and to immediately reverse the restrictions placed on refugees and asylum seekers on the islands. In a statement, Amnesty-Greece's President, Gabriel Sakellaridis, said, "The ruling confirms what NGOs and human rights movement have said from the start: the forced retention of asylum-seekers on the islands, often in deplorable conditions, is unfair." In another statement signed by 21 human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International, organizations [wrote](#), "Containing asylum seekers on the Greek islands in substandard and appalling conditions that violate their rights and Greece's international obligations cannot be justified for migration control purposes." The groups further pressed the Greek government to apply the ruling retroactively and to allow 15,000 refugees and asylum seekers already on the islands to move freely.

Greece and other European countries of first arrival to launch new initiative to identify missing migrants

- The International Commission on Missing Persons ([ICMP](#)) [announced](#) on 18 April that Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta will be launching a new initiative to identify migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who are missing or have died on the perilous Mediterranean crossing. Speaking about the initiative, ICMP's Director General, Kathryn Bomberger, said, "if we succeed in launching this initiative, and it looks very good that we will, it will be historical." She further added that cooperation among states will help in efforts to gather accurate data as well as to track down survivors and missing bodies.

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers occupy central square in Lesbos

- Over 200 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, many of Afghan origin, [occupied](#) Sappho square in the center

of the Greek island Lesbos in protest over lengthy asylum processing times. The group of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from the island's Moria camp refused calls for dispersal in the hope of drawing greater attention to their plight. Moria camp is currently housing double its intended capacity with 6,000 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in quarters designed only 3,000 people.

- Following five days of protest, island police [arrested](#) 120 refugees and asylum-seekers participating in the sit-in on 23 April. The arrests came a day after radical members of the far-right group Patriotic Movement [attacked](#) and attempted to forcibly remove refugees and asylum seekers. It is reported that at least 10 people were hospitalized after a night of clashes. According to reports, right-wing extremists had lit trash cans on fire and had hurled objects, including firecrackers, on those refugees and asylum seekers assembled while yelling "burn them alive" and "throw them in the sea." None of the assailants have been identified nor arrested.

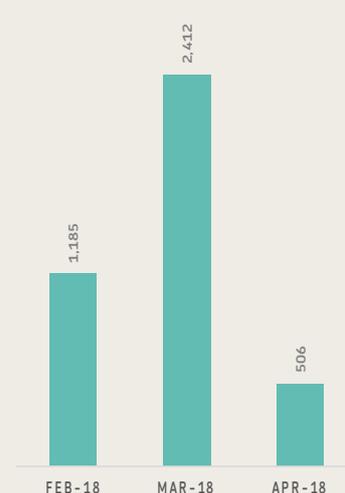
Appointment of new chief to Greece's Asylum Service

- Greece has [appointed](#) Markos Karavias as the new head of Greece's Asylum service which operates under the Greek Migration Ministry and oversees all asylum applications. Mr Karavias is an assistant professor of international law at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands and has been acting director of the asylum service since his predecessor's term came to an end in January of this year.

Thousands of migrants voluntarily returned home from Greece

- On May 4, IOM's spokesperson Joel Millman [said](#) that over 10,000 migrants voluntarily returned home from Greece in previous 20 months. Speaking at a press conference in Geneva, Mr Millman said, "More than 10,000 migrants returned voluntarily and safely to their home countries from Greece between June 2016 and April 2018, with nearly 2,500 eligible migrants receiving targeted reintegration support." He further added that, "IOM assisted with a total of 10,576 voluntary returns to 84 countries and territories over the 20-month period, through an EU and Greece-funded Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme."

Arrivals by Sea, Greece
January 2018 - April 2018



Arrivals to Greece

- 3,306 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived to Italy by sea in the month of April. This is a substantial, nearly threefold increase in arrival figures from the previous month of March (914). 11 deaths were recorded along the Central Mediterranean Route during the month of April.

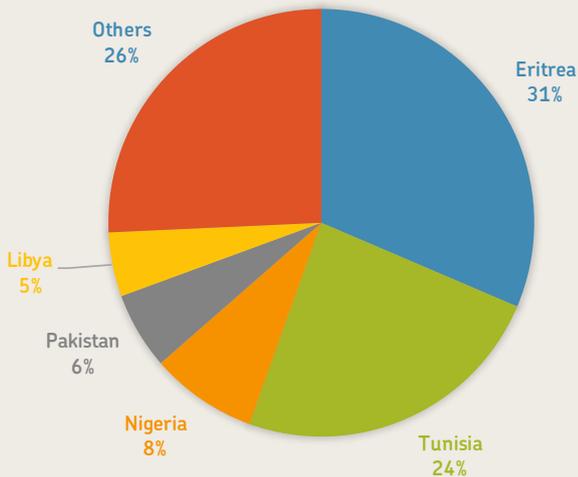
Italy says migration must be a top EU priority

- Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni [said](#) that migration is a 'long term' phenomenon that must be a top priority for the European Union. "We have made a major effort but this phenomenon (migration) is not just momentary and will be with us for decades to come," he said after a meeting with Romania's President Klaus Werner Iohannis. Italy has been implementing measures to stem irregular migration which include a code of conduct introduced last year for search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, an MoU signed with Libya which provided training and support for the Libyan coastguard to intercept boats as well as more recent initiatives along the Libyan-Nigerien border. As compared to figures from the first four months of 2017, arrivals to Italy by sea in 2018 have dropped by approximately 74%.

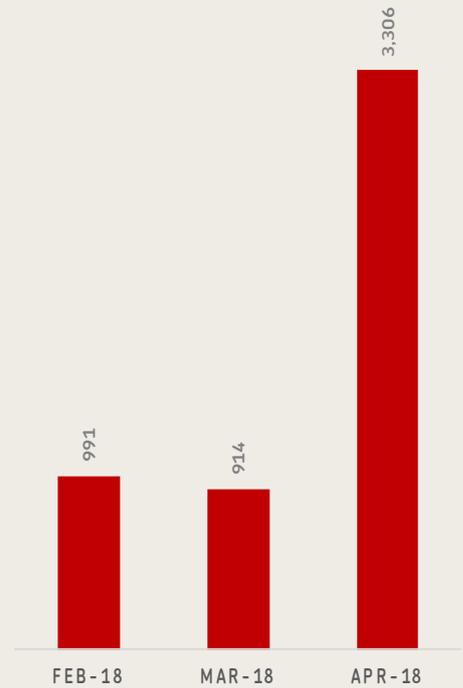
Release of Proactiva's rescue vessel

- An Italian court has [ruled](#) that Proactiva's search and rescue vessel, Open Arms, be released to the Spanish NGO. The search and rescue vessel, responsible for countless rescue operations in Mediterranean, had been impounded by Italian authorities in March over its refusal to hand over migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to the Libyan Coast Guard and for delivering the rescued persons to Italy instead of Malta, which was the closest port of safety at the time. The Open Arms' crew had contended that Maltese authorities had expressed they were unwilling to host those rescued. In his ruling, the judge, said, "the NGO was not expected to solve a long-standing issue on the interpretation of maritime safety rules. Proactiva Open Arms cannot be expected to solve the Malta problem where it comes to migration and maritime rules."
- In a related news, Italy's Supreme Court of Cassation [denied](#) German NGO Jugend Rettet's request for the release of its rescue vessel Iuventa on 24 April. The vessel was impounded in August of last year in relation to a probe into alleged links between rescue NGOs and people smugglers. In a tweet in response to the ruling the NGO said, "We are devastated by the Court's ruling of today. The IUVENTA will not be free! But we will fight for the right to rescue of people in distress at sea."

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



Arrivals by Sea, Italy
January 2018 - April 2018



RESEARCH OF INTEREST

[The Migration Emergency Response Fund and Mixed Migration Flows along the Mediterranean: The added value of a context-specific contingency fund - START Network](#)

This report reviews the value added by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded rapid response, context specific, contingency fund, Migration Emergency Response Fund and the obstacles encountered by the mechanism since its launch in January 2017.

[Death would have been better: Europe continues to fail refugees and migrants in Libya - Refugees International](#)

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

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

This report summarizes the main human rights concerns arising from detention conditions in Libya for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers since the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) in 2015.

[In Dangerous Transit: Filling Information Gaps Relating to refugees and displaced people in Ventimiglia, Italy - Refugee Rights Europe](#)

This report sheds light on the living conditions of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Ventimiglia, Italy and their journeys crossing the border to France.

MULTIMEDIA & EDITORIALS OF INTEREST

[An Italian court decision could keep rescue boats from saving refugees in the Mediterranean - The Intercept](#)

An editorial about Italy's seizure of the German rescue boat Iuventa.

[Proactiva Release Does not spell end of Italy's war on rescue groups - News Deeply](#)

This opinion piece discusses the release of Proactiva's Open Arms rescue ship and Italy's continued determination to enable Libyan coast guard forces to intercept boats in international waters.

[What refugees face on the world's deadliest Migration Route - The New York Times](#)

Editorial describing the deadly circumstances migrants, refugees and asylum seekers face on the journey from Libya to Italy.

[By Stifling Migration, Sudan's Feared Secret Police Aid Europe - The New York Times](#)

This opinion piece discusses the use of violence by Sudan's secret police at the Sudanese border with Eritrea which serves the interests of the EU's migration policy.

[When we think of migrants, why not include Einstein and Ronaldo? - The Guardian](#)

This opinion piece argues that we should change how we see migrants given that many celebrities around the world are migrants.

[In Libya, Migrants fight for survival - VOA](#)

This editorial outlines the abysmal living conditions of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Libya and the challenges the Libyan government faces to regain the security needed in order to eradicate trafficking.

*MHub does not vouch for the accuracy or reliability of articles in its Monthly Bulletin.