



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.

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.

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

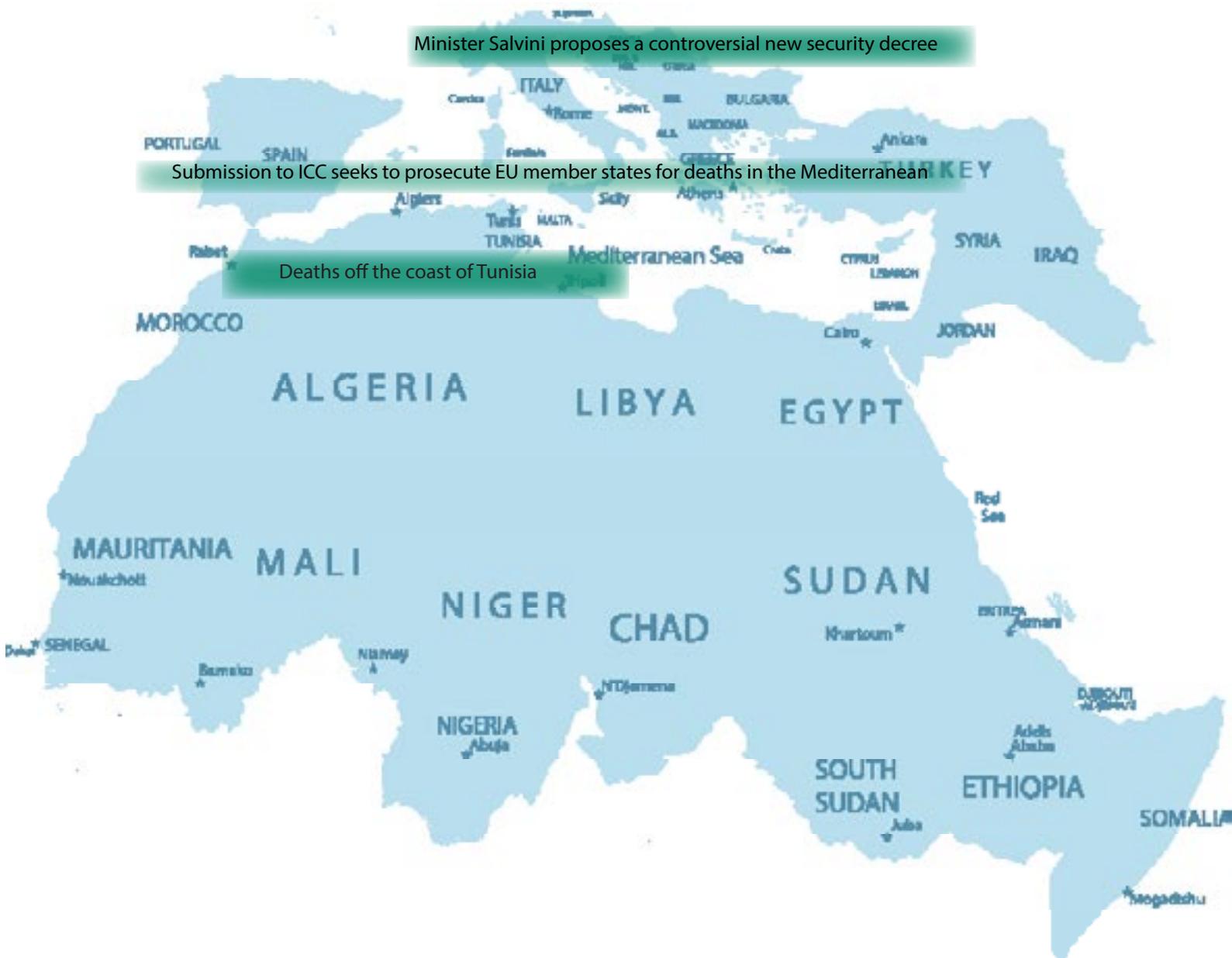
Sources: Data is drawn from a wide variety of sources, including government, civil society and media.

HIGHLIGHTS

Minister Salvini proposes a controversial new security decree

Submission to ICC seeks to prosecute EU member states for deaths in the Mediterranean

Deaths off the coast of Tunisia



REGIONAL

European court rules that refugees cannot be returned even after the commission of serious crimes

- On [14 May](#), the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) [ruled](#) that refugees who have committed serious crimes in EU countries cannot be returned to their countries of origin if doing so will place them at risk of torture and degrading and/or inhuman treatment. The case was brought before the CJEU after national courts could not rule on the cases of an asylum seeker and two refugees who were convicted of serious crimes in Belgium and the Czech Republic. The asylum seeker's application for asylum was denied and the two refugees had their refugee statuses revoked following their convictions. The CJEU ruled that, while the Geneva Convention allows states to derogate from the principle of non-refoulement in cases where a refugee has committed a serious crime or poses a threat to the state of asylum, the European Charter on Fundamental Rights prohibits any actions that might expose persons to torture and inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment. As a result, EU states cannot deport refugees under any circumstances if they face the threat of such treatment upon their return.

Submission to ICC seeks to prosecute EU member states for deaths in the Mediterranean

- A legal submission to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague [seeks](#) to prosecute the EU and Italy, Germany and France for 'crimes against humanity' for the deaths of thousands in the Mediterranean since 2014. The submission claims that the EU's deterrence-based migration strategy "intended to sacrifice the lives of migrants in distress at sea, with the sole objective of dissuading others in similar situation from seeking safe haven in Europe." The legal case, submitted by two international lawyers, claims that officials were aware that the switch from the successful Mare Nostrum operation to Triton in 2014 could lead to a higher number of fatalities but proceeded with the plans anyway. The submission goes on to state, "In order to stem migration flows from Libya at all costs ... and in lieu of operating safe rescue and disembarkation as the law commands, the EU is orchestrating a policy of forced transfer to concentration camps-like detention facilities [in Libya] where atrocious crimes are committed."

ALGERIA

Swiss funding to support refugee camps in Algeria

- The UN World Food Program (WFP) [welcomed](#) additional funding in the total of CHF 2 million (US\$1.96 million) from the Government of Switzerland that will go towards WFP's school feeding programme in refugee camps and covering the basic food needs of thousands of refugee families. Speaking about the funds, Romain Sirois, WFP's representative in Algeria, said, "WFP is grateful to the people and the Government of Switzerland for being long-term supporters of the school feeding programme in the Sahrawi refugee camps," and

added, ""Swiss contributions over recent years have been key in ensuring the continuity of this programme. And we're delighted we can use the funds to support other important activities as well!"

EGYPT

Egypt deports migrants who attempted irregular crossing into Libya

- Egyptian officials [reported](#) on 17 May that authorities had deported 33 Sudanese migrants who were apprehended in Egypt's western governorate of Marsa Matruh earlier in the month in relation to irregular migration. The group in question was apprehended along with Egyptians and other migrants as they reportedly planned to cross irregularly into Libya and to travel onwards by boat to Europe.

LIBYA

Maritime updates

- According to IOM figures, 1,214 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were returned to Libyan shores by the Libyan Coast Guard in May. This is a significant spike in attempted departures possibly instigated by the unrest in Tripoli and its possible ramifications for the rest of Libya. No bodies were retrieved during the month of May but six migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have gone missing off the coast of Libya during that period.

International organizations express concern for migrants and refugees in Libya

- IOM and UNHCR have expressed concerns for the safety and wellbeing of migrants and refugees in Libya. IOM [released](#) a statement on 14 May pointing to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Tripoli and its neighbouring areas and urging action to safeguard migrants trapped in the vicinity. According to IOM's DTM, as of 23 May, [16,460](#) families, or approximately 82,300 individuals, have been displaced by the unrest in Tripoli (since the onset of hostilities on 4 April). In the absence of a ceasefire it is expected that more families will be displaced. Speaking about the situation, IOM Libya's Chief of Mission, Othman Belbeisi, said, "While our teams on the ground continue to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected populations, we recognize that more needs to be done from all sides to ensure the safety of civilians," and added, "We are worried about the dramatically deteriorating humanitarian situation in Tripoli and reiterate that there is an urgent need to end the detention of migrants in Libya and stop displacement." IOM's statement also expressed concern for the return of migrants and refugees to an unsafe port and their possible internment in detention centres. "While we provide health assistance, non-food items, emergency food assistance and Voluntary Humanitarian Return support to migrants wishing to return home, we reiterate that IOM cannot guarantee the protection of detained migrants and continues to call for an urgent end to detention," reads the statement.
- UNHCR [echoed](#) IOM's concerns and called for an increase in the number of evacuations from Libya for the most vulnerable of the refugee population. 149 refugees were evacuated to Rome from Tripoli on 30 May. 65 of those evacuated that day were children under the age of 18, while 13 were under the age of one. Jean-Paul Cavalieri, UNHCR's Chief of Mission in Libya, said, "More humanitarian evacuations are needed. They are a vital lifeline for refugees whose only other escape route

is to put their lives in the hands of unscrupulous smugglers and traffickers on the Mediterranean Sea." UNHCR's Head of Organizational Development, Dominik Bartsch, [added](#) that, "People rescued by the Libyan coastguard in the Mediterranean should, under no circumstances, be brought back to the detention camps in Libya. Any political leverage, including from the EU, must be used to end the suffering in the camps." He further commented, "The humanitarian situation of the people in the camps is devastating. There is a lack of food, water and many urgently need medical help. In addition, the detention camps in the capital Tripoli are caught in the crossfire of the armed groups."

- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and OHCHR have also joined in the calls for action on the humanitarian situation in Libya. MSF has [called](#) for the evacuation of thousands of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers currently trapped in detention centres in Libya. Speaking at a press conference on 4 June, MSF's Head of Mission in the country, Sam Turner, said, "There are no safe places in Libya to take these migrants and refugees in order to remove them from the risk of conflict," adding, "This is why we are urgently calling for their humanitarian evacuation." OHCHR's spokesperson Rupert Colville's comments on the situation paralleled Mr. Turner's with Mr. Colville describing conditions in detention centres as "ghastly". Mr. Colville further added, "We are also extremely concerned about ongoing reports of disappearances and human trafficking after people were intercepted at sea by the Libyan Coast Guard and taken back to Libya." He called for greater accountability and immediate action to remove migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from harm's way.

MOROCCO

Morocco's efforts to curb irregular migration

- A spokesperson for the Moroccan government, Mustapha El Khalfi, [revealed](#) on 23 May that Morocco has reportedly thwarted over 30,000 attempts at irregular migration since the beginning of the year. These figures cannot be independently verified but they follow [revelations](#) early this year that Morocco thwarted 89,000 similar attempts in 2018. In May, it was also reported that the Moroccan Royal Navy [rescued](#) 169 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from a number of different vessels on 19 May, and a further 249 between 25 and 26 May. Morocco has been intensifying its border control efforts and has increased cooperation with Spain in various areas of mutual interest, one of which is migration management.

- In a related development, Morocco's chief for border control and migration, Khalid Zerouali, has [said](#) that Morocco's efforts to curb irregular migration have reduced the strain on Spain. He further said that Morocco has increased interceptions by roughly 30% so far this year as compared to the roughly the same period of last year. Mr. Zerouali further added that Moroccan authorities dismantled 50 smuggling and trafficking networks so far in 2019, adding, "up 63 percent compared with a year earlier."

- Morocco's Foreign Minister, Nasser Bourita, has also [highlighted](#) Morocco's successes in curbing irregular migration to Europe citing arrival figures in Spain, with arrivals in May 2019 reportedly 40% lower than arrivals in May of last year (please refer to figures in the section on Spain). Minister Bourita further highlighted the importance of Moroccan-Spanish relations and cooperation in tackling issues of migration.

The African Observatory for Migration and Development

- On 29 May, the Moroccan House of Representatives unanimously [approved](#) a draft law to set up the African Observatory for Migration and Development (OAMD) in Rabat. According to the draft text of the law, the observatory will expand on the knowledge base on migration by collecting data and making available information that will facilitate coordination among African states on issues of migration.

Moroccan commission on human trafficking

- On 23 May, the Prime Minister of Morocco, Saadeddine Othmani, [chaired](#) a ceremony establishing the Moroccan National Commission for Coordination of Measures to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings. The commission is a step towards strengthening Morocco's human rights infrastructure and addressing the issue of human trafficking which Prime Minister Othmani has described as a modern

NIGER

IOM opens recreational centre for minors

- On 17 May, IOM [opened](#) a new recreational centre for minors in Zinder province in Niger. The centre, dubbed the Centre for the Prevention, Promotion and Protection of Children (CEPPP), will be managed by the Nigerien Ministry of Women Promotion and Child Protection (MPFPE) and will support families in the area and the reintegration of child and youth returnees in the region. Speaking about the centre, one of the social workers based at the centre, Abdoulaye, said, "We are very happy to have this centre. Before we were sharing an office with other departmental services. We now have a dedicated centre, where we can ensure the confidentiality of the interviews and services, while also welcoming beneficiaries in a child-friendly environment." The centre was funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) through a project titled, Assistance for Nigerien Returnees in Agadez and Zinder Regions (ANRAZ).

form of slavery that cannot and will not be tolerated. Under its mandate, the commission will be able to present proposals to the government with regards to prevention and awareness-building, deterrence, and protection mechanisms against human trafficking.

Reports of concerning treatment of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

- The NGO Watch the Med Alarm Phone has [reported](#) an increase in the repression and poor treatment of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco. Watch the Med based its assessment on interviews, videos and pictures depicting worsening conditions for migrants in Moroccan transit hubs. The NGO linked the reported deterioration in conditions to Morocco's increased cooperation with Spain, with Morocco acting as Spain and the EU's "watchdog at the South-western EU border."

UNHCR: Thousands fleeing Nigeria to Niger

- A spokesperson for UNHCR [announced](#) that roughly 20,000 persons have fled from northwest Nigeria to Niger since April of this year due to an increase in violence in the area. UNHCR spokesperson, Babar Baloch, said that the new wave of displacement is not related to the Boko Haram insurgency but is due to a number of factors. Speaking about the situation, he said, "People are fleeing due to multiple reasons, as far as we understand, including clashes between farmers and herders of different ethnic groups, vigilantism, as well as kidnappings for ransom in Nigeria's Sokoto and Zamfara states."

Three migrants die in Nigerien desert

- Nigerien officials have [revealed](#) that three Nigerien migrants died from thirst after their vehicle broke down in the Nigerien desert while on their way to Libya. Roughly 10 migrants were rescued when Nigerien army personnel spotted the vehicle. The group were lost while searching for one of two wells on their itinerary.

TUNISIA

International organizations assess Tunisia's readiness to receive people fleeing Libya

- On 16 May, representatives from UNHCR, WHO and the Tunisian Ministry of Health [visited](#) regions in Tunisia bordering Libya to assess the readiness of and resources available in those areas in case of a mass influx of migrants and refugees fleeing the violence in Tripoli. The visit was an attempt to prevent a humanitarian emergency such as the one reported in 2011 after the fall of the Gaddafi regime. UNHCR had already begun to [meet](#) with officials from the Tunisian government, IOM and relevant agencies "to update the emergency plan and control mechanisms of intervention in light of developments in the country."

- While international organizations were assessing Tunisia's preparedness to receive a mass influx of migrants and refugees, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the international humanitarian medical NGO, [made](#) statements saying that Tunisia should not be considered a place of safety for migrants and refugees. MSF released a tweet on 3 June saying, "#Tunisia has no functioning asylum system in place and thus cannot be defined as a place of safety for #migrants and #refugees. The nearest places of safety for rescues in the Central #Mediterranean are #Italy or #Malta." MSF cited a recent incident involving 75 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as a main reason for their assessment.

- MSF cited a recent incident where migrants, refugees and asylum seekers [saved](#) at sea were not allowed to disembark in Tunisia and were left aboard a crowded vessel for over a week. The group in question were brought aboard an Egyptian tug boat after they were found adrift at sea. According to the captain of the vessel, both Italian and Maltese authorities were informed of the situation before the boat made its way to Tunisia. Once in Tunisia, those aboard were refused disembarkation. Speaking to a news outlet, the captain of the vessel said, "We're in a critical situation, we're nearly 100 on board and we don't have more than two days of supplies of water and food."

Deaths off the coast of Tunisia

- In one of deadliest single incidents in the Mediterranean this year, 65 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers [drowned](#) off the coast of Tunisia on 10 May when their boat sank. The persons in question departed from the Libyan port of Zuwara on 9 May but, [according](#) to Mongi Slim, a Red Crescent official in Zarzis, "...were transferred into a smaller inflatable boat which was overloaded, and 10 minutes later it sank," Mr. Slim further added, "The migrants indicated they spent eight hours in the cold water and to have been saved... by Tunisian fisherman." Speaking about those that have lost their lives, one of the survivors said, "One after one they let go, they departed under the water, one after one."
- Later in the month, IOM Tunisia [announced](#) that it had returned the first group of 19 out of a total of 85 survivors from two separate shipwrecks to their countries of origin, one of which is the incident in described above. The first group, comprising 18 Bangladeshis and one Egyptian, left Tunisia on 20 and 22 May. As of 31 May, 20 of the survivors had applied for refugee status in Tunisia.

ITALY

Arrivals to Italy by sea

- 782 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Italy by sea in May, which is roughly two times the number of arrivals for a similar reporting period the previous month. This figure represents a roughly 80% decrease from figures for May of last year.

Minister Salvini proposes a controversial new security decree

- Italy's Minister of Interior, Matteo Salvini, [announced](#) in May a new security decree that would crackdown even further on NGOs supporting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Minister Salvini has previously proposed and passed a controversial [security decree](#). The newly announced, second security decree has spawned further political turmoil with members of the Five Star Movement already calling for a halt to the process. Article 1 of the decree, one of the most contentious and potentially detrimental to the preservation of lives at sea, would fine rescue NGOs between €3,500 and €5,500 per person rescued if they do not 'abide by the instructions of countries responsible for the rescue area'. The same article also threatens to revoke the licenses of organizations in 'serious cases' thereby effectively ending their operations in the Mediterranean.

- This decree has come under heavy criticism from rights organizations and international human rights actors who see it as imperilling the lives of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and hampering efforts of well-meaning organizations to preserve lives and rights at sea. A number of UN human rights experts have [addressed](#) a letter to the Italian government urging it to halt the decree. Among those who have signed the letter are, Felipe González Morales, special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Nils Melzer, special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, special rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. A section of the letter reads, "The right to life and the principle of [not returning people to a country where they are in danger] should always prevail over national legislation or other measures purportedly adopted in the name of national security... We urge authorities to stop endangering the lives of migrants, including asylum seekers and victims of trafficking in persons, by invoking the fight against traffickers. This approach is misleading and is not in line with both general international law and international human rights law... Restrictive migration policies contribute to exacerbating migrants' vulnerabilities and only serve to increase trafficking in persons."

- Minister Salvini [hit](#) back against the UN's criticism with a letter addressed to Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi. In his letter, Minister Salvini called the allegations 'baseless' and added, "It is unwarranted interference in our government's political programme, spawned by ideological preconceptions shared by those who oppose the new direction in our national migration policy."

- UN experts were not alone in criticizing the decree, Human Rights Watch (HRW) also [spoke](#) out against the proposed decree with the organization asking the coalition government to reject what HRW sees as a thinly veiled attempt at

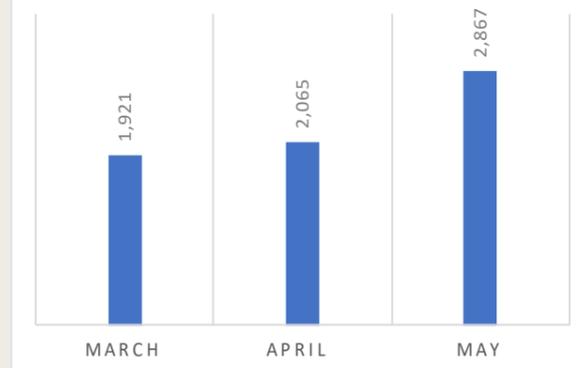
discouraging sea rescues. Responding to news of the decree, the organization said, "The proposed measure is based on a partial and deeply flawed reading of international law. The law of the sea governing rescue operations imposes obligations on shipmasters to respond to situations of distress at sea and to take the people rescued to safe places. This includes general guidance to cooperate with and follow instructions from coastal states that have assumed responsibilities to conduct and coordinate rescue operations in their declared search-and-rescue region."

Catania prosecutor's office finds no connection between NGO and smugglers

- After a long investigation, Catania's public prosecutor's office has [requested](#) that an investigation into Spanish NGO Proactiva Open Arms be archived after no evidence was found of collusion between the NGO and people smugglers or traffickers. The investigation was launched into commander Marc Reig Creus and the head of mission Ana Isabel Montes Mier after it was alleged that there was a connection between the NGOs rescue activities and smugglers. Speaking about the decision, a representative for Proactiva [said](#), "We are happy to learn that one more step towards the truth it has been done, we reiterate that we have always operated in compliance with international conventions and the law of the sea and that we will continue to do so with a single objective: to defend life and the rights of the most vulnerable people." The organization has repeatedly denied any such connection and insisted that it only acted to preserve lives.



ARRIVALS TO GREECE BY SEA



GREECE

Arrivals to Greece by sea

- 2,867 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Greece by sea in May. This is an over 30% increase from a similar reporting period the previous month. This figure represents an 18% increase from figures for May of last year.

Man charged with people smuggling

- A 22-year-old man was [charged](#) with smuggling in persons in Thessaloniki after police discovered eight migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in his vehicle, two of whom were in the trunk of the vehicle. The discovery happened along the Turkish-Greek border as the man was attempting to smuggle the migrants and refugees in question irregularly into Greek territory.

SPAIN

Arrivals to Spain by sea

- 1,315 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have crossed from Morocco to Spain by sea in May of this year, which represents a 44% decrease from figures for a similar reporting period the previous month of April and approximately 63% decrease from figures for a similar reporting period last year.

Arrivals to Spain by land

- 613 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have crossed into Spain via its land borders with Morocco (through Ceuta and Melilla) in May, this represents a roughly 42% increase from the previous month of April. This figure represents a roughly 48% increase from land arrival figures for May of last year.

[Migrants and startups: a match made in the EU](#) - EU-Startups

This piece discusses how startups may help migrants in host countries, and how the latter benefit from them.

[European migration stories told one object at a time](#) – InfoMigrants

This piece presents a virtual migration museum in Germany and its archive of migration stories.

[Setting the Record Straight About African Migration](#) – Project Syndicate

This commentary addresses misconceptions about migrant flows from Africa and highlights ways of improving migration management in the continent.

[Hundreds of Europeans 'criminalised' for helping migrants – as far right aims to win big in European elections](#) – Open Democracy

This piece discusses the punishment and criminalization of individuals who help and rescue migrants in Europe.

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

RESEARCH OF INTEREST

[Rescue at Sea: A guide to principles and practice as applied to refugees and migrants](#)- International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
IMO, ICS and UNHCR developed a guide for shipmasters, ship owners, Governments, insurance companies and other parties involved in search and rescue operations. The guide provides information on relevant legal provisions, practical procedures to ensure the prompt disembarkation of rescued persons, as well as measures to meet their specific needs.

[Gone with the wind: International migration](#)- Global and Planetary Change

This study explores how climate change has become a more important push factor than economic inequality or conflict.

MULTIMEDIA & EDITORIALS OF INTEREST

[Migration is a growing issue, but it remains a challenge to define who actually is a migrant](#) - Phys.org

An editorial highlighting the challenges of understanding contemporary migration and the definition of a migrant, concerns about accuracy of migration statistics, and the challenges of reporting on migration.

[Libyan migrants fleeing civil war create new political waves in Europe](#) - The Washington Times

This piece explains how instability in Libya may create new political waves in Europe and give rise to anti-migrant forces.

[How Europe Can Win on Migration](#) - Bloomberg Opinion

An editorial exploring the ways in which the European Union can improve migration management, such as through an improved response to illegal migration, more spending by host countries on integration, and partnerships between individual governments and non-European countries.

[They Tried to Reach Europe and were Turned Back. Now they're Trapped in Libya's Crossfires](#) - Newsweek

This piece highlights the risks and abuse faced by migrants and refugees in Libyan detention centers amidst escalating violence in the country.

[A Lesson from the Greeks: Migration, Elections to the European Parliament and the Polish Interpretation](#) - Visegrad/Insight

This piece compares the debate on migration in Greece and Poland, highlighting the importance of drawing on lessons learned from Greece.