



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, MMC, 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



REGIONAL

The coronavirus pandemic could be devastating for the world's migrants

Collective concerns are primarily for people at greater risk of dying from COVID-19. However, this pandemic will also worsen the [vulnerabilities](#) of 272 million international migrants worldwide. Especially those displaced internally and across borders as well as the majority of the 41.3 million internally displaced persons and the world's 25.9 million refugees, who are in developing countries which only now are starting to be affected by the pandemic. Migrant workers in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are highly at risk of infection as most of them live in densely populated migrant labour camps lacking sanitary conditions. [Irregular](#) migrants in cramped detention center are also at great risk of becoming infected. Migrants will not only be the ones affected, as the virus progresses, lives of many other residents of countries hosting large number of displaced persons, such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon will be affected. A strong [support](#) from the international community to development countries will be needed to combat the virus.

COVID-19 Could Cause Med Migrant Crisis

In 2014-15, the migrant crisis which engulfed the Mediterranean and Southern Europe created tensions, which remain high, between states affected and migrants. In the past years, Libya has become the center of said [tensions](#) and now with the spread of COVID-19 as well as the protracted conflict, all necessary conditions are met to trigger a second migrant crisis. Since the most recent conflict between the UN-acknowledged Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army emerged a year ago, the IOM reported that more than 200,000 people have been displaced in Libya. From these 200,000 displaced persons, 150,000 are situated within Tripoli and its environs, along the coast of Libya where migrants vessels trying to cross the Mediterranean are launch from. But Libya has now [banned](#) migrants from disembarking back on its soil. A decision taken on the basis that a higher number of migrants on Libyan shores would worsen the spread of COVID-19.

LIBYA

Maritime updates

More Europe-bound boats have departed from Libya in April than in March. Due to mounting concerns about the spread of COVID-19, the Maltese and Italian governments introduced further restrictions on disembarkation in their ports. Nonetheless, migrants continue to leave Libyan shores, driven by catastrophic conditions in the country. During the month of April, 395 (375 men, 15 women, 4 girls, 1 boy) migrants were [returned](#) to Libyan shores by the Libyan Coast Guard and a commercial vessel. In 2020 so far, 3,206 migrants disembarked in Libya.

Migrants missing in Libya

Hundreds of migrants were returned to Libya by the coast guard this year and are now unaccounted for. These grave [concerns](#) were expressed on Friday by the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) which also stressed that it is "unacceptable for people rescued at sea to be returned to abuse, trafficking, and war" and reiterated its call to the European Union for urgent action to establish a clear and prompt disembarkation mechanism in order to end returns to Libya.

Malta calls for strong EU support to Libya amid fighting and COVID-19 threat

Malta has called on EU countries to help Libya where the current conflict is undermining the country's ability to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, while also enhancing a [risk](#) of a spike in irregular migration.

Libya says migrants stopped at sea will not be let back in

According to the UN migration agency IOM, 280 migrants were stopped by the Libyan coast guard on Thursday. When trying to return them back to the country, Libya's authorities [refused](#) to let them disembark due to fighting around Tripoli. This decision follows similar measures taken a few days earlier by Malta and Italy as they refused the landing of migrants on their coast, citing the threat of coronavirus.

MOROCCO

Moroccan Police Arrest 5 Suspects Planning Migration by Sea

Five men suspected of involvement in facilitating [irregular](#) migration have been arrested by the prefectural police of Laayoune in southern Morocco. The investigation will aim to determine the extent of the criminal network and consequently at arresting any other involved individuals. In 2019, Morocco's security services dismantled 208 criminal networks linked to [undocumented](#) migration and aborted 74,000 illegal migration activities. This is correlated to the fact that the EU, in 2019, provided support to the Kingdom in the form of 15 surveillance drone and 750 lorries resulting in the lowest number of irregular migrants reaching Spain from Morocco in seven years, which represent a drop of 54 % from the previous year.

TUNISIA

Hundreds of Tunisians stranded in Libya return home

Many Tunisians [stuck](#) at the Libyan-Tunisian Ras Ijdir border due to the coronavirus lockdown have crossed back to their country, confirmed Federico Soda, The head of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) office in Libya. Some 1,300 Tunisians -mostly migrant workers- have been waiting at the border point of Ra Ijdir since the coronavirus lockdown, requesting their government to facilitate their [return](#). According to a Libyan Red Crescent official around 20,000 Tunisians are still on Libya 'soil.

GREECE

First unaccompanied children relocated from Greece to Luxembourg

Relocations of unaccompanied migrant children from Greek islands to Luxembourg [began](#) on 15 April 2020 as part of a [scheme](#) implemented by the European Commission and Greek authorities, with support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the European Asylum Support Office. Ylva Johansson, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, stated that "Today 12 migrant children will start a new life in Luxembourg. This is just a first step. The situation on the Greek islands has been critical for far too long. I am happy we are working together as Europeans to address it and find a safe place at least for the most vulnerable. Our efforts continue with more relocations planned for the coming days and weeks." At least 1,600 unaccompanied migrant children are to be relocated. This includes 50 unaccompanied migrant children who were relocated to Germany, and a further 50 to be [relocated](#) from Greece to Portugal in May. The relocations have nonetheless been delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic, and those who were relocated to Luxembourg and Germany have had to undergo a two-week quarantine.

Greece quarantines camp after migrants test coronavirus positive

A migrant camp in central Greece was [quarantined](#) after 23 asylum seekers tested positive for the novel coronavirus last month. The cases in the quarantined camp, which includes an isolation area for those who test positive for the virus, were confirmed as asymptomatic. Policy and advocacy officer for Caritas Europa said: "It is urgently needed to evacuate migrants out of the Greek islands to EU countries."

Greece ends month-long freeze on asylum applications

The [suspension](#) of asylum applications in Greece that was applied in March 2020, following the arrival of an increasing number of migrants and refugees from Turkey, [ended](#) on 1 April, according to Greek migration minister Notis Mitarakis. Nonetheless, it was announced that asylum applications were not being accepted for at least one week following the end of the suspension, to control the spread of the novel coronavirus.

ITALY

Arrivals to Italy by sea

671 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers [arrived](#) in Italy by sea in April. This figure represents an increase of 178% in arrivals by sea from the previous month of March, and an increase of 163% from a similar reporting period in April last year.

Italy declares own ports “unsafe” to stop migrants arriving

The Italian government [issued](#) a decree in April declaring Italian ports unsafe, due to the coronavirus pandemic, for disembarking migrants. The decree stated that “for the entire duration of the health emergency, due to the outbreak of coronavirus, Italian ports cannot be classified as ‘safe places’ for the landing of people rescued from boats flying a foreign flag.” The decree followed the rescue of around 150 migrants by Alan Kurdi, the rescue boat operated by the German NGO Sea-Eye. Alarm Phone, a hotline service supporting rescue operations for migrants in distress at sea, said: “We are very concerned about the effects of the Italian decree and how European authorities are using the Covid-19 pandemic to increase restrictive measures. With Malta also decreasing rescue efforts, we are witnessing a deadly rescue gap off the Libyan coast.” Italy later [ordered](#) the quarantining of the migrants on board after transferring them to another vessel, without specifying the migrants’ final destination.

Calls in Italy to rescue people at sea after fears of more migrant deaths

Parliamentarians [called](#) on the Italian government to rescue people at sea, following accusations against EU member states of a lack of response to the information provided by non-governmental organizations on four boats in distress and that were carrying 258 migrants. The Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament said: “We implore you to act quickly to help those who need to be rescued at sea. We hear news of a shipwreck, of boats laden with humanity, desperately trying to reach the European coast. We ask the Italian government to intervene before it is too late.”

SPAIN

Arrivals to Spain by sea

248 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers [arrived](#) in Spain by sea in April, which represents a decrease of 67% from figures for March, and a decrease of 77% from a similar reporting period in April last year.

Arrivals to Spain by land

50 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers [crossed](#) into Spain in April, a decrease of 71% in figures from the previous month of March, and a decrease of 87% from a similar reporting period in April last year.

Migrants climb border fence into Spanish enclave of Melilla

On 6 April, around 260 migrants [attempted](#) to climb a barbed-wire fence into Melilla. More than 200 migrants were stopped by Spanish guards, and 53 managed to cross. Spanish police were deployed to enforce the ban on the movement of people during the country’s coronavirus lockdown.

MULTIMEDIA & EDITORIALS OF INTEREST

[Even a pandemic can't stop the desperate flow of refugees to Europe](#) – The Arab Weekly

This piece sheds light on Mediterranean crossings and the rights of migrants and refugees during the coronavirus pandemic.