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.

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

North African migrants to benefit from Italian employment contracts

53% of migrants lost jobs in Tunisia in COVID-19 lockdown

Coronavirus border closures strand tens of thousands of people across Africa

Rescued migrants stranded at sea, not allowed to any EU port

REGIONAL

Coronavirus border closures strand tens of thousands of people across Africa

In an attempt to reduce the spread of the Covid-19, many states in Africa shut their border causing dire effects for ten of thousands of migrants who are now trapped in unsafe conditions at frontiers, ports, mines and in transit camps.

COVID-19 poses formidable threat for fragile states in the Middle East and North Africa

In Middle East and North Africa, COVID-19 is triggering a severe drop in household income in countries that are in conflict and fragile situations such as Afghanistan, Djibouti, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan and Somalia. As social distancing reduces domestic activity and export earning decrease, incomes will decline, particularly affecting informal and low-skilled workers, including within refugees and large internally displaced population. If these issues are not properly alleviated, it could further damage the underlying social and political instability and spark a reinforcing spiral of economic hardship and conflict.

Migrants stranded 'all over the world' and at risk from coronavirus

Because of travel restriction and the closing of borders, thousands of migrants are now stranded all over the world. In small or large groups, they are blocked in the border areas, in challenging conditions without proper access to health screening or health care. IOM has been asking governments to allow health and humanitarian workers to be able to access the migrants. IOM also highlighted in a statement the plight of migrants left in the desert in central, eastern and west Africa, either abandoned by smugglers or after being deported without due process.

UN rights office concerned over migrant boat pushbacks in the Mediterranean

The UN human rights office called on Friday to lift the current restrictions, put in place against humanitarians who rescue migrants boats in the central Mediterranean, as they are putting lives at risk.
The spokesperson for the UN human rights High Commissioner raised his concern regarding the fact that rescue vessels and humanitarian search, usually patrolling the Mediterranean, are being prevented from supporting migrants in distress, especially as the number migrants trying to make the perilous journey from Libya to Europe have dramatically increased.

LIBYA

Migrants in Libya trapped between war and coronavirus

The dramatic combination of the emergence of coronavirus and the intensification of the Libyan civil conflict have put great constrain on thousands of migrants settled in Libya who, like Abdoulaye and Alpha, survive on daily-paid small jobs. Due to the economic downturn, many people have lost their jobs, and because of the conflict, food prices and rent have dramatically increased. Additionally, all evacuation operations by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have been halted, and most of the NGOs operating in Libya have also shut their activities.

Rescued migrants stranded at sea, not allowed to any EU port

The UN Migration Agency said on Monday that at least 78 migrants fleeing the ongoing conflict in Libya to Europe remained stuck at sea without a designated port to dock. This constituted the fourth boat to depart Libya in less than a week the IOM added. Most migrants leaving Libya make the perilous journey in ill-equipped and unsafe rubber boats. Since 2014, 20,000 migrants died trying to cross the Mediterranean, estimated the IOM.

Conflict and COVID-19 threaten Libyan population

Seven UN agencies in a joint statement raised concerns about the alarming situation that refugees and migrants are facing. Since January, 3,200 people intercepted at sea have been returned to Libya, among them, many ended up in one of the eleven detention centers, to which humanitarian workers do not have access.

Trafficker family kills 30 migrants in alleged revenge attack in Libya

In apparent retaliation to the killing of a Libyan human trafficker, 26 Bangladeshi and four African migrants were killed in Libya. Additionally, eleven migrants were injured in the attacks and taken to a hospital according to the reports. The IOM commented that this murder serves as a reminder of the horror that migrants have to endure at the hands of traffickers and smugglers.

MOROCCO

Moroccan Coast Guard rescues 157 undocumented migrants in three days

Between May 2 and May 4, 157 undocumented migrants were rescued in the Atlantic and Mediterranean by the Moroccan Royal Navy. Despite the dangerous journey, thousands of migrants risk their lives each year trying to travel north. In 2019, the Moroccan Navy intercepted about 60,000 migratory attempts. For those trying to seek Europe, the Mediterranean constitute the shortest and safest route making it the preferable route. The Mediterranean 'thinnest point, the Strait of Gibraltar, separates Morocco and Spain by only 10 miles and in 2019, approximately 75% of clandestine sea arrivals to Spain used this route.

TUNISIA

Migrant shipwrecks off Tunisia leave 1 dead, over 80 rescued

Amid a new wave of perilous attempts to traffic migrants across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, at least one migrant has drowned, six are missing, and 80 have been rescued off Tunisia's coast. In the last two days, Tunisia prevented ten smuggling attempts to send migrants across the Mediterranean. These attempts come at a time when European countries are relaxing strict lockdowns to prevent the spread of the COVID-19.

53% of migrants lost jobs in Tunisia in COVID-19 lockdown

During the lockdown imposed by the government in attempts to curve the spread of the COVID-19, about 53% migrants in Tunisia lost their jobs, the Tunis office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said Wednesday. From the date when the general quarantine was imposed, March 22 and May 3, The IOM noted that the employment rate in the country decreased from 64% to 11%. At the same time and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants 'attempts to leave the country on boats to reach Europe are still continuing.

Tunisia prevents migrant departures to Italy

At the start of the week, officials said that Tunisia prevented several departures of migrants to Italy. Nevertheless, and despite the Tunisian's efforts to stop clandestine immigration, migrants continue to arrive on Italian shores, as 71 migrants managed to reach the Italian island of Lampedusa on Tuesday.

GREECE

Arrivals to Greece by sea

228 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Greece by sea in May. This figure represents an increase of 485% in arrivals by sea from the previous month of April.

Hundreds of migrants moved from Lesbos to mainland Greece

Almost 400 migrants highly vulnerable to contracting the coronavirus were moved by ferry from the overcrowded Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos to mainland Greece last month, following a request by the European Union. Around 40,000 of the 110,000 people living in migrant facilities are in overcrowded camps on five islands.

First cases of coronavirus among migrants on Lesbos

On Tuesday, 12 May, Greek officials announced that two of the 70 migrants who arrived on Lesbos from Turkey on 6 May and 10 May had tested positive for coronavirus. The migrants were placed in a separate quarantine facility. One migration ministry source stated: "There is absolutely no connection between this (quarantine) facility and that of Moria."

ITALY

Arrivals to Italy by sea

1,654 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Italy by sea in May. This figure represents an increase of 147% in arrivals by sea from the previous month of April.

People smugglers disembark migrants near beach in Sicily

On 24 May, at least 70 migrants were disembarked by smugglers near a beach in Sicily. It is reportedly the case that 52 migrants arrived on the island of Linosa, near the Italian island of Lampedusa. Around 20 people arrived on a rubber dinghy on a beach in the town of Marsala one day before. Six Tunisian migrants also arrived on Lampedusa on 23 May, while the coastguards intercepted 40 other migrants before escorting them to the port. It is reportedly the case that seven migrants also arrived in Sardinia on 22 May.

North African migrants to benefit from Italian employment contracts

Italy prepared to offer employment contracts on a temporary basis to around 200,000 undocumented migrants last month, to address the shortage in seasonal workers in the agricultural sector caused by repatriations and travel restrictions amongst the COVID-19 pandemic. Commenting on the need to bring undocumented migrants into Italy's legal workforce, Minister of Interior Luciana Lamorgese said: "We need to bring these workers out, not just to guarantee their rights but also because of the health security requirements at this time."

SPAIN

Arrivals to Spain by sea

1,183 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Spain by sea in May, which represents an increase of 61% from figures for April.

Arrivals to Spain by land

21 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers crossed into Spain in May, a decrease of 76% in figures from the previous month of April.

Moroccan migrants stranded in Spain return home

Following Morocco's border closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic that left 21,000 Moroccan migrants stranded worldwide, the Moroccan government has begun allowing Moroccan migrants back into the country. According to Spanish authorities, 300 migrants were to be allowed to return to Morocco from the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, while many others remain stranded. Those stranded have had to sleep in parking lots, gyms, mosques, churches, or with employers, while others attempted to swim in the Mediterranean to reach Morocco from Ceuta. Two Moroccan migrants stranded in the Spanish enclave of Melilla reportedly climbed a border fence, the same that has been used by migrants to cross irregularly into Spain, to return home.

MULTIMEDIA & EDITORIALS OF INTEREST

Can COVID-19 positively change perceptions on migration? – openDemocracy
This piece analyzes how the COVID-19 pandemic may shape approaches to migration and migration policies.

EU's new migration pact must protect people on the move – EUobserver
A piece that sheds light on the ways in which the new EU Pact on Asylum and Migration can shape migration and asylum policies in the EU.

RESEARCH OF INTEREST

Mixed Migration Centre: COVID-19 global update #3 - Impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants – Mixed Migration Centre
The third update published by the Mixed Migration Centre on the situation for refugees and migrants on mixed migration routes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Middle East And North Africa — Tracking Mobility Impact: Point Of Entry Analysis (29 May 2020) - IOM
This report summarizes mobility restrictions at airports, land and blue border crossing points resulting from the mitigation measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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