



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

Deadly crossing takes life of two-year-old Malian girl

Greece to start vaccinating migrants

Migrants freed from traffickers in northern Libya



LIBYA

Maritime updates

According to IOM [data](#), 1,948 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were rescued and returned to Libya in March. Of those who were saved in March, 107 were female, 1750 were male, and 61 were children.

Migrants freed from traffickers in northern Libya

The Libyan army says it has freed 120 migrants from traffickers in northern Libya. In a Facebook post, the army says the mostly Egyptian migrants were held captive and tortured in hideouts in the city of Bani Walid. Citing testimonies from those released, the army further said the victims' captors had subjected them to "torture and extortion". Bani Walid, located about 170 kilometers (105 miles) southeast of Tripoli on the edge of the Sahara desert, is considered a center for human trafficking. According to IOM and UNHCR insiders, some 3,200 people were being held in eleven detention centers in Libya last October.

Migrants intercepted at sea near Libya

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said Monday that nearly 1,000 migrants had been intercepted and returned to Libya by the coast guard and coastal security in the past 48 hours. Around 500 people were reportedly picked up on Sunday night, according to the IOM's spokesperson in Geneva, Safa Msehli. The migrants intercepted by the Libyan coast guard in the Mediterranean over the past two days bring the number of people brought back to Libya this year to around 5,000. Migrants who are picked up by the Libyan coast guard and returned to Libya are regularly held in detention centers where they are subjected to abuse, torture and extortion.

MOROCCO

Dangerous Crossings to the Canaries

Despite the coronavirus [pandemic](#), last year saw 93,000 people enter Europe irregularly, according to the UN migration agency, IOM. More than 90% crossed the Mediterranean Sea or took the Atlantic Ocean route to Spain's Canary Islands. In addition to those who managed to reach Europe, a further 2,000 people lost their lives in the attempt, and already this year another 300 deaths have been documented by the IOM. A report by the IOM's Missing Migrants Project (MMP) says this is a humanitarian crisis which remains unaddressed. The route to the Canaries is dangerous partly because of the distance. The nearest crossing point in Morocco is 95 km from the islands, but most people leave from Dakhla in Morocco or Nouadhibou in Mauritania, which are around 450 km and 775 km respectively. Migrants are often at sea for days or weeks without enough food and water for the journey, according to the MMP report."

TUNISIA

Shipwreck off Tunisia

At least 39 migrants died in [shipwrecks](#) off Tunisia earlier this week. Now, the UN migration and refugee agencies are calling for a new rescue system in the Mediterranean. On average, there have been three deaths on the route from Northern Africa to Italy every day thus far in 2021.

GREECE

Arrivals to Greece by sea

347 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers [arrived](#) in Greece by sea in March. This figure represents an increase of 28.9% in arrivals by sea from the previous month of February.¹

Refugees in Greece relocated to Germany

42 [refugee](#) families -- comprising 77 adults and 85 minors -- landed in the German city of Hanover on Wednesday (March 24), the German interior ministry announced in a statement. Their cases for protection have already been approved by the Greek authorities. The 162 refugees are part of a contingent of recognized refugees that Germany has agreed to relocate from Greece.

Greece to start vaccinating migrants

Greece plans to start [vaccinating](#) residents and staff in migrants camps in May, Migration Minister Notis Mitarakis said in an interview with news agency ANA on Sunday, adding that he saw "no reason" to do it earlier. "The data show that in the [camps] we are not facing an issue with deaths or the spread of COVID-19 and so [they] do not fall into a special category," Mitarakis said. Both employees and residents in the camps will be vaccinated when it is their turn, along with the rest of the population, he explained. The European Commission's list of groups to be vaccinated early includes those whose state of health makes them vulnerable as well as people who cannot socially distance and who are socio-economically disadvantaged. Health workers and humanitarian groups say migrants in camps fit all these categories and are more susceptible to COVID-19.

ITALY

Arrivals to Italy by sea

2,733 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers [arrived](#) in Italy by sea in March. This figure represents a decrease of 35.9% in arrivals by sea from the previous month of February.²

German migrant rescue ship detained

Italian [authorities](#) have detained a German migrant rescue ship that docked in the Sicilian port of Augusta with 385 migrants rescued off Libya on March 3. The Sea-Watch 3 was placed in administrative detention after a coast guard inspection found a number of irregularities onboard, the German NGO denounced. Italy is a major gateway to Europe for migrants, even though the sea route between North Africa and Sicily is one of the most dangerous in the world. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), nearly 530,000 migrants have arrived off the coast of Italy since early 2015, including 6,000 this year. Since January this year, 232 migrants have died or disappeared during the Mediterranean crossing to Italy or Malta, up from 983 in 2020, the UN agency said.

SPAIN

Arrivals to Spain by sea

5,040 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Spain by sea in March, which represents an increase of 3.2% from figures of February.³

Arrivals to Spain by Land

No data

¹ Last seen the 26.04.2021

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Minors onboard a boat to the Canaries

“A total of 52 people from sub-Saharan Africa, including nine [minors](#), were found onboard a boat south of the island of Gran Canaria on Tuesday evening and brought to the port of Arguineguin, Spain’s Maritime Rescue Service said. Emergency services reported that 10 people were admitted to hospital, including a 25-year-old woman and a 2-year-old child in a serious condition. Authorities said a Spanish search and rescue plane was still looking for about 200 people on four migrant boats which had sent alerts the day before, according to the news agency AP. It was not clear whether the boat rescued on Tuesday evening was one of the four that had called for help.”

Deadly crossing takes life of two-year-old Malian girl

A two-year-old Malian girl [died](#) in hospital in Spain on Sunday after having been rescued from a boat packed with migrants. Images of attempts to resuscitate her had traveled around the world last week. The girl was part of a group of 52 sub-Saharan Africans found on a boat near the island of Gran Canaria on Tuesday, March 16. The migrants were intercepted and brought to the port of Arguineguin by Spain’s Salvamento Marítimo maritime rescue service. The girl was unconscious at the time of the rescue, having entered cardiac arrest. According to local media, the girl had been travelling to Gran Canaria with her mother and older sister; she had suffered severe hypothermia at sea, suffering cardiac arrest by the time she arrived at the port of Arguineguin.

MULTIMEDIA & EDITORIALS OF INTEREST

[Migration in the Sahel: putting back human rights, cooperation and solidarity at the centre](#) - MMC

Discourse and policymaking around migration in the West Africa region tend to be dominated by the EU lens focusing on containment and the ‘fight’ against irregular migration. In recent years, the Central Mediterranean Route has seen the number of migrants decreasing, reassuring EU States that their investments have paid off. However, the recent resurgence of movements along the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands, a route which was heavily utilized in the early to mid-2000s but has been more or less “dormant” ever since, seems to question the validity of such an approach. To conclude, the resurgence of movement along the Atlantic route and associated dynamics during the journey, in the Canary Islands and in the context of deportations to Mauritania, is a clear reminder that human rights of concerned individuals should be at the centre when responding to mixed migration challenges.

RESEARCH OF INTEREST

[Labour migration to Libya - Remittances amidst conflict and pandemic](#) - IOM

This study presents key findings about remittances sent by migrants from Libya to their countries of origin, utilizing microdata collected from over 41,000 migrant interviews conducted in 2019-2020, including self-reported data on remittances disclosed by 13,738 migrants. One in three migrants interviewed by DTM Libya in 2019 and 2020 (33%) reported to have sent remittances to their country of origin from Libya, while a vast majority (83% interviewed during 2020) reported that they intended to send remittances. However, throughout 2019-2020 the proportion of migrants sending remittances from Libya and the amounts remitted declined steadily, both due to armed conflict and the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[COVID-19 vaccines: The challenges of protecting Africa’s fragile regions](#) - ECDPM

This briefing note looks at the challenges ahead for large-scale vaccination, as part of our series of looking at the longer term effects of COVID-19 on conflict and fragility in Africa. We ask some of the hard questions about the potential repercussions for highly fragile situations in Africa and what it might mean for the European Union’s role in the global response to the pandemic.

[The impact of COVID-19 on refugees and migrants on the move in North and West Africa](#) - MMC

This paper offers expert insight and analysis on mixed migration trends that have emerged over the course of 2020 in North and West Africa, grounded in existing literature and MMC’s unique primary data on people on the move. The aim of this paper is to raise awareness and strengthen policymakers’ understanding of the challenges and risks refugees and migrants are facing since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in North and West Africa, as well as to promote policies and debate based on data, with the voices and human rights of refugees and migrants at the center.