



**MMC North Africa**

**QUARTER 1 2023**

A photograph showing two men on the deck of a boat. They are looking out at a vast blue sea under a clear sky. The man in the foreground has his hand to his face, and the man behind him has his hands clasped together. The boat's railing is visible in the foreground.

# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the North Africa (NA) region. The core countries of focus for this region are Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to some of the countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs hosted in Danish Refugee Council (DRC) regional offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels. For more information on MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit [mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and follow us at [@Mixed\\_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

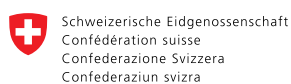
### **MMC's understanding of mixed migration**

“Mixed migration” refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people engaged in mixed migration have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Mixed migration describes refugees and migrants travelling along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly, and wholly or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

#### **Front cover photo credit:**

Taha Jawashi (2017)

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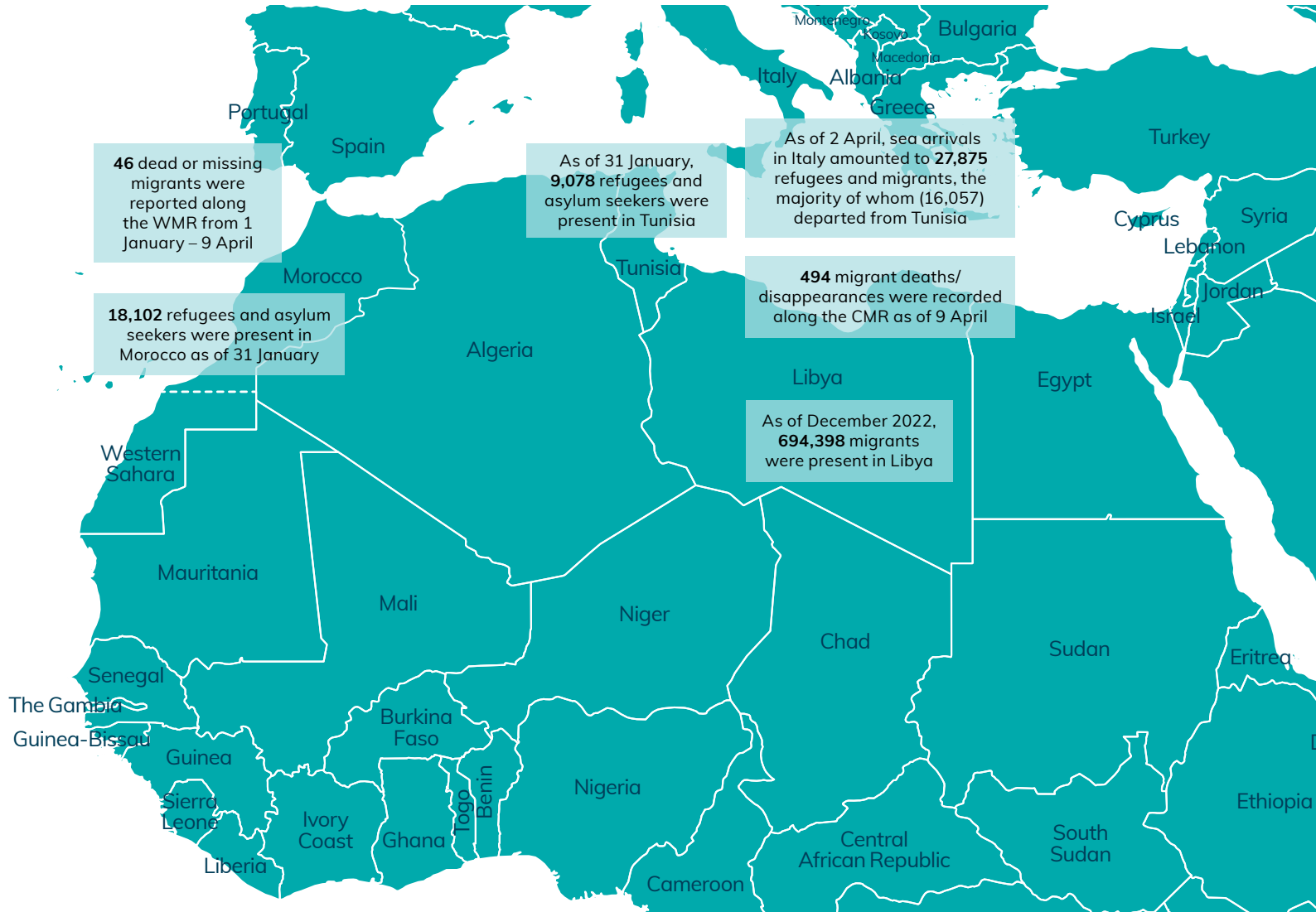
# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa

## Quarter 1 - 2023

## Key Updates

- **The UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya finds evidence of crimes against humanity against Libyans, refugees, and migrants:** In their latest [report](#) published on 27 March, the Fact-Finding Mission stated that these crimes include arbitrary detention, rape, torture, murder, enslavement, and enforced disappearance, including in places of detention.
- **Tunisia overtakes Libya as the country with the most irregular maritime departures to Italy:** According to official Italian figures obtained by [Agenzia Nova](#), at least 12,083 individuals have arrived in Italy from the Tunisian coast from the start of this year until 13 March. This marks a steep increase of 788% compared to the same period in 2022. This trend represents a shift in migration dynamics in the central Mediterranean, as Libya had previously been the main maritime departure country for people arriving in Italy. Through mid-March, Italy recorded [7,057 arrivals](#) of people who had left Libya.
- **Increased anti-Black racist violence in Tunisia:** During a National Security Council meeting held on 21 February, the Tunisian President gave a statement on the situation of irregular migrants in Tunisia, which was followed by an increase in [anti-Black racist violence](#) targeting sub-Saharan African [refugees and migrants](#) in the country (also see Thematic Focus).
- **Morocco–EU Migration Cooperation:** During an [official visit](#) to Morocco in early March, the EU Neighborhood and Enlargement Commissioner [presented](#) new cooperation programs with Morocco. The newly introduced assistance package includes a €152 million “comprehensive program on migration.” Morocco and Spain also convened for their first bilateral [summit](#) in eight years, which resulted in the signature of two [Memoranda of Understanding](#) on migration.
- **Expulsions from Algeria:** During the first quarter, [expulsions](#) from Algeria to Niger continued. As of 15 March, the NGO [Alarme Phone Sahara \(APS\)](#) estimated that the number of people expelled from Algeria had reached at least 9,686, and [Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (MSF) declared the situation an “emergency.”

## Regional Overview\*



\*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration patterns within and out of North Africa.

# Mixed Migration Regional Updates

## Mixed migration from North Africa to Europe

### Western Mediterranean Route & Atlantic Route (arrivals to Spain)

According to the [Spanish Ministry of Interior](#), between the start of the year and 31 March, a total of 4,287 refugees and migrants arrived in Spain irregularly via land and sea. This figure represents a decrease of 51% compared to the same period in [2022](#). This decrease is consistent with the trend reported in the last quarter. According to a report published on 7 February 2023 by the Association for Human Rights in Andalucía (APDHA), arrivals at the Spanish borders and entry into Ceuta decreased by approximately 40% in 2022 compared to 2021. The report also states that the decline in arrivals has been accompanied by an alarming and “dramatic” rise in death rates. The Spanish mainland and the Balearic Islands registered a slight increase of about 15% in the first three months of 2023. The islands are a common location of arrival for [departures](#) originating in Algeria. At the same time, a decrease of 78% was noted in arrivals by land and sea through the enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta.

During the first two months of 2023, [Frontex](#) recorded a decrease of 38% in maritime arrivals via the Western Mediterranean Route (top countries of nationality of those attempting this route are Morocco, Algeria, and Senegal) and a decrease of about 68% on the Atlantic Route/Western African Route (top countries of nationality of those attempting this route are Morocco, Côte d’Ivoire, and Senegal) compared to the same period in 2022.

### Central Mediterranean Route

[Frontex](#) reported that the number of recorded irregular border crossings (i.e. sea arrivals) via the Central Mediterranean Route more than doubled during the initial two months of 2023. During this period, the Central Mediterranean route was the most active migratory route into Europe and the [deadliest](#), with approximately 12,000 irregular border crossings representing a 118% increase from the same period in the previous year.

As of 2 April, [UNHCR](#) reported that the number of refugees and migrants who arrived in Italy by sea amounted to 27,875, with the [majority of arrivals](#) (16,057 individuals) having departed from Tunisia. This represents a change from [last quarter](#), wherein departures from Libya represented the largest share. Following Tunisia, 10,626 refugees and migrants departed from Libyan shores, 993 from Turkey, and 199 from Algeria. According to [UNHCR](#), the most common countries of origin among arrivals to Italy in January and February were Côte d’Ivoire (17%), Guinea (16%), Bangladesh (9%), Tunisia (8%), and Pakistan (8%).

## Interceptions and rescue operations in the Mediterranean<sup>1</sup>

According to the spokesperson of the Tunisian Forum for Social and Economic Rights (FTDES) during an interview with the Tunisian radio station [Shems FM](#), as of 27 March the Tunisian coast guard had intercepted around 14,082 refugees and migrants trying to cross the sea up to that point in 2023. According to the FTDES spokesperson, the 2023 figures are four times higher than the number recorded during the same period in 2022. As of 1 April, [IOM Libya](#) reported that 4,241 refugees and migrants were intercepted and returned to Libya.

A [report](#) from Alarm Phone states that in 2022, approximately 105,000 individuals crossed the Mediterranean to Italy and Malta, which is a notable increase from the 67,500 recorded arrivals in 2021. Despite the large number of individuals crossing the Mediterranean, the report notes that tens of thousands of individuals were unable to reach Europe, as they were intercepted at sea and returned to their countries of departure. The report states that Alarm Phone's collaboration with search and rescue NGOs resulted in the rescue of over 100 boats in distress over 2022.

Alarm Phone sheds light on the challenges faced by NGO search and rescue vessels in their efforts to disembark rescued individuals in Italian harbors. The [report](#) also denounced Italy's decree that took effect in January 2023, mandating NGO rescuers to move immediately to a port after a single rescue operation, which substantially curtails their operational time and limits their rescue capacity. As reported by MMC in the [last quarter](#), a joint [statement](#) signed by 20 organizations expressed concern that the new decree would "reduce rescue capacities at sea, making the central Mediterranean, one of the world's [deadliest migration routes](#), even more dangerous," potentially leading to an increase in fatalities.

## Dead or missing refugees and migrants

As of 9 April 2023, IOM's [Missing Migrants Project](#) reported that at least 26,334 refugees and migrants had been recorded as dead or missing in the Mediterranean since 2014, including 576 in the first three months of 2023. This marks an increase compared to the [same period](#) in 2022 (410). Between January and March 2023, 36 incidents were recorded in the Eastern Mediterranean Route, 46 incidents in the Western Mediterranean Route, while 494 incidents were recorded along the Central Mediterranean Route.

## Mixed migration in Libya

### Latest figures on refugees and migrants in Libya

The latest publicly available IOM numbers (as of December 2022) estimate that there were some 694,398 migrants in Libya from over 42 nationalities, an increase of approximately 2% compared to [31 August 2022](#). 54% are located in the west of the country, 34% in the east, and 12% in the south. IOM [identifies](#) that most migrants in Eastern Libya (66%) were from North African countries, including Egypt and Sudan.

<sup>1</sup> Note that information on interceptions and rescue operations as well as shipwrecks and other situations of distress at sea are not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of these phenomena.

Migrants from sub-Saharan African countries such as Niger and Chad comprised the majority of migrants in southern (87%) and western Libya (57%).

According to [UNHCR](#) data published on 28 March 2023, some 42,821 asylum seekers and refugees were registered in Libya, mainly [from](#) Sudan (20,355), Syria (11,308), and Eritrea (6,716). This represents a slight decrease from the [previous quarter](#) (44,724 as of 1 January 2023).

Based on UNHCR and IOM statistics [obtained by Statewatch](#), as of 30 November 2022, the number of “collective expulsions” from Libya has increased, with approximately 14,563 recorded incidents involving both third-country nationals and nationals of the country of return. The highest number of expulsions were to Egypt (8,171), followed by Niger (3,895), Sudan (1,535), and Chad (243).

## The UN Fact-Finding Mission on Libya: “Crimes against humanity” committed against refugees and migrants

The UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya raised the alarm on the situation faced by refugees and migrants in the country in its final [report](#), published on 27 March. The Mission found that there are grounds to suspect that crimes against humanity have been committed against refugees and migrants since the beginning of the Mission’s reporting period in 2016. The Mission documented cases of “arbitrary detention, rape, torture, murder, enslavement, and enforced disappearance.” It also reported for the first time on evidence of “sexual slavery” committed against refugees and migrants in places of detention in Bani Walid and Sabratah.

Among other things, the Mission reported on the treatment of refugees and migrants in detention, including the absence of bedding and sleeping facilities, adequate food and nutrition, potable water, and medical care in detention centers in Libya. The [report](#) also mentions that suicide attempts among refugees and migrants were reported to the Mission and may be linked to torture. Instances of human rights violations have been documented in both official and unofficial detention centers. The [report](#) states that the pervasive exploitation of refugees and migrants – in detention and beyond – has generated substantial profits for various state and non-state actors, incentivizing the continuation of these abuses, and highlights evidence suggesting that “guards in detention centers demanded and received payments for releasing migrants, with trafficking, enslavement, forced labor, imprisonment, and extortion generating significant revenue.”

The Mission also addresses the financial and technical support provided by the EU and its Member States to the Libyan Coast Guard and the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration, which has been used to intercept and detain migrants. As reported by [Reuters](#), the Mission is not leveling accusations of direct criminal culpability against the EU or its Member States but does contend that the EU’s “support given has aided and abetted the commission of crimes.” The [report](#) calls on European states and Libya to adhere to their obligations under international law, including non-refoulement, and to implement immigration controls in alignment with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

The European Commission [has responded](#) to the Mission’s findings by acknowledging the seriousness of the allegations while affirming that the EU’s actions in Libya are executed in collaboration with relevant UN organizations. The Commission’s spokesperson, as reported by the [Libya Update](#), underscored that

the EU does not provide “physical money to partners in Libya” but “instead allocates funds to international partners, such as the UN.” He also highlighted that the EU is actively working to address the challenging situation in Libya and is investigating the allegations that have been brought forward.

The UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission's recommendations include ending the criminalization of irregular entry and stay of refugees and migrants in Libya; releasing those who have been arbitrarily detained; and ending any direct or indirect support to Libyan actors involved in crimes against humanity and gross human rights violations against refugees and migrants. The [Mission](#), which was established by the United Nations Human Rights Council, also [emphasized](#) the urgent necessity of establishing new monitoring and investigation mechanisms to assist in the reconciliation process in Libya and to aid the authorities in achieving "transitional justice and accountability." This comes as the mission's mandate is set to expire on April 4th.

## Detained refugees and migrants in Libya on hunger strike

A group of 22 detained Syrian nationals, including three minors, went on a hunger strike on 26 February to protest their extended detention. As reported by the Libyan NGO, [Belaady](#), the Syrian nationals were arrested in their homes on 13 October 2022.

The Libyan NGO [Human Rights Solidarity in Libya \(HRSLY\)](#) released a statement condemning the detention and arrest of the Syrian nationals. The statement included a copy of the judgment from the Ajilat Court of First Instance against 14 Syrians. They had been sentenced to fines ranging from 200 to 600 Libyan dinars (USD 40–125) and immediate deportation: their clearance to enter the country in Benghazi was not recognized by authorities in Tripoli. The 22 Syrian nationals are currently detained in the Jodeddaim Prison in Zawiya.

According to [Belaady](#), the three minors initiated the hunger strike to protest what they described as prolonged and unjustified detention in a facility where skin diseases such as scabies have been spreading. The minors' action sparked a wave of solidarity from other detainees, who joined the strike to draw attention to their situation. According to the [statement](#) by HRSLY, detainees are experiencing malnutrition, inadequate access to drinking water, and the proliferation of skin diseases. Additionally, the NGO highlighted that some individuals remain in detention despite their fines having been paid. [Belaady](#) and [HRSLY](#) have called for the immediate release of the detainees and urged the Libyan authorities not to return them to Syria.

## Ongoing cooperation between Italy and the Libyan Coast Guard

As reported in the [last quarter's QMMU](#), the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MoU) on Migration between Italy and Libya was [renewed](#) automatically on 2 February 2023. The deadline for making changes passed in November 2022, and several [civil society organizations](#) and [Italian unions](#) in Rome protested at the time, demanding that the Italian government suspend the agreement.

In March 2023, human rights organizations issued a [statement](#) warning of the “deteriorating situation of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Libya.” The statement indicates that since the signature of



the MoU, the Libyan Coast Guard has intercepted and detained a total of around 185,000 refugees and migrants. Between January and February 25th, 2023, the Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and returned more than 3,000 people on the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) to Libya, as indicated by [IOM](#).

Italy's proposal to provide Italian police boats to the Libyan Coast Guard came to fruition on 6 February, when the first of five specialized search and rescue vessels were [handed over](#), as reported by [InfoMigrants](#), as a part of the EU project "[Support to Integrated Border and Migration Management in Libya](#)" (SIBMMIL), primarily financed by the EU and implemented by Italy. As reported by the [European Council on Refugees and Exiles](#) (ECRE), the transfer ceremony in Adria, Italy met with strong opposition and [protest](#).

Italy's support to Libyan authorities comes as the EU continues "exploring ways to improve the process to disembark migrants in Libya." This objective is outlined in a 12-point action file obtained by [Statewatch](#) that aims to "identify short- and medium-term actions that will help manage the Libyan border and migration more effectively, prevent irregular departures, and improve search and rescue capabilities." According to the action file, the European Union will continue funding the SIBMMIL project and will also launch two new actions valued at €10 million, aimed at providing support to Libya's Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC) and establishing a training academy for the state's coast guards. As previously mentioned, (see above), the UN Fact-Finding Mission in Libya has [criticized](#) the financial and technical support provided by the EU and its Member States to the Libyan Coast Guard, alleging that such support has aided and abetted the [commission](#) of crimes against refugees and migrants.

## Mixed Migration in Tunisia

### Latest figures on refugees and migrants in Tunisia

As of 31 January 2023, [UNHCR](#) reported that there are 9,078 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia, of which the top nationalities are Ivorian (35.4%), Syrian (27.9%), Cameroonian (5.9%), Sudanese (5.7%), and Guinean (5.1%). Grand Tunis (5.116), Sfax (1.515), and Medenine (620) [continue to host](#) the largest refugee and asylum seeker populations.

### Tunisia overtakes Libya as the top country for irregular maritime departures to Italy

In the first quarter of the year, Tunisia has overtaken Libya as the primary country of departure for irregular maritime arrivals to Italy. According to UNHCR, Libya has been the primary departure country for sea arrivals to Italy since [2015](#), with the exception of [2020](#), when Tunisia briefly surpassed it. However, in [2021](#) and [2022](#), Libya re-emerged as the primary departure country for sea arrivals to Italy. According to official Italian figures obtained by [Agenzia Nova](#), at least 12,083 individuals have arrived in Italy from Tunisian coasts from the start of this year up until 13 March. This marks a steep increase of 788% compared to the same period in 2022. UNHCR [data](#) from the first two months of the year indicate the top three countries of nationality of people departing from Tunisia were Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Tunisia. In February, "almost two out of three new arrivals [in Italy] departed from Tunisia," according to [UNHCR statistics](#). This trend represents a shift in migration dynamics in the central Mediterranean, as Libya had previously been the

main maritime departure country for people arriving in Italy, with 53,118 arrivals in 2022. However, as of 13 March, Libya has fallen to second place with [7,057](#). However, the number arriving from Italy is still an increase of approximately 80% compared to the same period last year.

## Cooperation between Italy and Tunisia

On the first visit to Tunisia since the new Italian government took office, the Italian Interior and Foreign Ministers met with the Tunisian President and other officials on [January 18th](#). During their discussions, Italy expressed its willingness to accept more regular migrants who have received training in Tunisia to work in specific sectors such as agriculture, in which Italy is facing a [labor shortage](#). In exchange, Italy is asking for Tunisia's support in [managing irregular departures](#) from its coasts and facilitating the repatriation of Tunisian nationals with irregular status in Italy. As quoted by [Africa News](#), the Italian Foreign Minister highlighted the importance of solving “[problems at their roots](#).” This visit occurred a month before the President’s statement of February 21 (see Thematic Focus), after which the Italian Foreign Minister [called](#) his Tunisian counterpart and expressed Italy’s [commitment](#) to helping Tunisia with border control.

On March 1st, the Tunisian Prime Minister and her Italian counterpart [discussed](#) migration, with a particular focus on circular migration. The Italian Prime Minister reaffirmed Italy’s commitment to supporting Tunisia in implementing its [reform programs](#), as well as in its negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which have been [stalled](#) for several months. In response to Tunisia surpassing [Libya](#) as the primary North African country of departure for irregular maritime migration, the Italian Foreign Minister [contacted](#) the IMF Managing Director, urging flexibility in releasing the loan to prevent a possible financial collapse in Tunisia. Additionally, Italy has been [advocating](#) for the release of the \$1.9 billion loan to Tunisia as a means of preventing its destabilization and averting a potential influx of migrants toward Europe.

## Bilateral talks between Italy and France regarding Tunisia

Although there have been recent diplomatic tensions [between France and Italy](#) regarding the Ocean Viking SOS Mediterranean search and rescue (SAR) vessel, in February the two countries [agreed to collaborate](#) in countries that are considered of “fundamental importance [to Italy and France] such as Libya and Tunisia.”

During the European Summit held in Brussels on March 23-24th, both the [French President and Italian Prime Minister](#) emphasized the need to extend support to Tunisia, including in reaching an agreement with the IMF, to manage the [potential migration pressures](#) that they believe the country’s challenges may pose to Europe. According to [Jeune Afrique](#), despite the “more than cold” relations between France and Italy, “Rome and Paris now seem to be speaking with one voice on the subject [Tunisia] and have apparently succeeded in influencing the European position.” Three days before the Summit, the EU High Representative [warned](#) of the “very dangerous situation in Tunisia” that could translate into “new flows of migrants coming to Europe.”

## El Wardia Center

An investigation into the Wardia reception and orientation center in Tunis, overseen by the Tunisian Ministry of Interior, found mistreatment of detainees, inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of access to medical services and legal representation, and a shortage of bedding. The report, published by [France 24 Observers](#) on 10 March, is based on testimony from an Ivorian migrant who has been held in the El Wardia center since last year, supported by photographic and video evidence shared by other detainees. It is reported that the majority of the fifty-one detained individuals are from sub-Saharan African countries.

Access to El Wardia is limited, and detention and release processes are based on administrative rather than legal or judicial procedures, creating [ambiguity](#) about the legal rights of those detained in the center.

More than three years ago, in 2019, [an investigation](#) by the Tunisian Forum for Social and Economic Rights (FTDES) reported that the Wardia Center did not comply with the standards necessary for it to be categorized as a reception and orientation center, and instead referred to it as a “detention center”. In 2020, the FTDES issued a [statement](#) on the various detention centers in Tunisia, including the Wardia Center, calling for several actions including the allowance of visits from civil society organizations, journalists, and other institutions.

## Mixed Migration in Morocco

### Latest figures on refugees in Morocco

As of January 2023, [UNHCR](#) reported that there were 9,702 refugees and 8,400 asylum-seekers present in Morocco from over 48 countries of origin. These figures suggest a decrease in the number of refugees and asylum seekers present in Morocco in the first quarter of 2023 compared to the [last quarter](#). Most registered refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco are nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic (5,515), followed by Guinea (2,359), Sudan (1,364), Côte d'Ivoire (1,192), Central African Republic (1,142), and Yemen (893).

### Developments in migration cooperation between Morocco and the European Union

During an [official visit](#) to Morocco in early March 2023, the EU Neighborhood and Enlargement Commissioner [presented](#) new cooperation programs with Morocco. The newly introduced assistance package includes a €152 million “comprehensive program on migration.” Its primary goals are to enhance Morocco’s border control measures against smuggling networks; assist the country’s National Strategy on Immigration and Asylum; and facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of migrants.

According to an EU [factsheet](#) issued in February 2023, a total of €234 million had been pledged to Morocco through bilateral and regional contracts under the EU Trust Fund (EUTF) from 2015 to 2021. Projects will continue until December 2025. Out of the total sum, 77% will be directed towards border management and combating human trafficking and smuggling. Protection and community stabilization will receive 12% of the funds, while 7% will be allotted to support labor migration. The remaining 4% will be utilized for

migration governance and assisted voluntary returns. Additionally, the EU Neighborhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe) has committed a further €150 million to Morocco through a Budget Support program, extending over four years starting from 2022. The primary objective of this initiative is to reinforce EU-Morocco cooperation and promote dialogues on migration.

## Increased cooperation between Morocco and Spain

In early February 2023, Morocco and Spain convened for their [first bilateral summit](#) in eight years, marking a significant milestone in their bilateral ties. Since Spain [declared](#) its support for Morocco's position on the autonomy of Morocco's disputed region of Western Sahara last year<sup>2</sup>, amid opposition from Spanish [citizens](#) and the Spanish [Parliament](#), tensions between Rabat and Madrid have significantly eased, facilitating renewed cooperation in relation to [migration control](#).

The two-day summit resulted in the signature of more than [20 agreements](#) spanning various policy areas, including migration. According to the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs [website](#), one MoU aims to establish a “framework for cooperation to share experiences in the areas of migration policy.” This entails institutional strengthening and technical training for the Moroccan administration. Another MoU aims to create a reference framework aligned with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) to provide opportunities for regular and secure migration.

Cooperation on migration featured prominently in the [Joint Declaration](#) adopted at the end of the summit. The two countries agreed to enhance their collaboration in several areas, including combating irregular migration, working together on border control, dismantling criminal networks, and readmitting irregular migrants. They also pledged to reinforce circular migration and reaffirmed their shared commitment to promoting dynamic mobility that facilitates fluid and regular migration.

The [Spanish Interior Minister](#) stated that “Spain is the only country of first entry in the EU to register a [decline](#) on its migratory routes” and ascribed this decrease to the “close” cooperation with Morocco. The Association for Human Rights in Andalucía expressed [concern](#) over the Spanish government's “short-term decision to increase the externalization of migration control to Morocco and the potential severe violations of the human rights of migrants in transit.”

## Moroccan Court of Appeal extends jail terms for refugees and migrants involved in Melilla incident of 24 June

In January, the Moroccan Court of Appeals in Nador extended the jail terms of 13 refugees and migrants by six months. This ruling came after the individuals were initially sentenced to two and a half years in August. The defendants were among the group of nearly [2,000](#) refugees and migrants from different countries who attempted to cross over into the Spanish enclave of [Melilla](#) on 24 June 2022. According to their lawyer, as cited in [InfoMigrants](#), the individuals were accused of “participation in a criminal gang of clandestine immigration; irregular entry to Morocco; and violence against law enforcement officials.” In a

<sup>2</sup> Western Sahara has been on the United Nations [list](#) of Non-Self-Governing Territories since 1963.

similar case in [September 2022](#), 12 individuals faced an extension of their prison sentence from 11 months to three years after an appeal hearing. Amnesty International released a [report](#) in December 2022 that highlights additional instances where appeals related to events in Melilla have led to the extension of the initial sentence for refugees and migrants.

## Mixed Migration in Algeria

### Expulsions from Algeria

During the first quarter, the series of expulsions from Algeria to Niger continued. This follows the expulsion of more than [25,300 people](#) in 2022. As of 15 March, the NGO [Alarme Phone Sahara \(APS\)](#) estimated that 9,686 people had been expelled from Algeria so far in 2023 and reported an increase in the rate of deportations since mid-February. Although the [majority](#) of deportees were from sub-Saharan African countries, there were also deportees of other [nationalities](#), such as Yemen, Palestine, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Egypt, and even Costa Rica.

Both APS and [Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (MSF) highlighted the grave situation for refugees and migrants who are stranded in the northern Niger desert without access to protection and necessities. MSF has declared the situation an “emergency” and has called on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to provide urgent protection and assistance for those in dire and precarious circumstances. According to the [MSF head of Mission](#) in Niger “this is an unparalleled situation that requires an urgent humanitarian response.”

The Coordinator of APS in Agadez [condemned](#) the racist acts reported by many of the expelled migrants and refugees (the majority of whom come from sub-Saharan African countries). This includes being physically and verbally harassed and being racially profiled, which can lead to arrest and deportation.

IOM expressed concern, in a [statement](#) on 5 April, over the rising number of stranded migrants living in poor conditions in Assamaka, Niger. The number of migrants seeking IOM assistance increased by 35% in 2022 compared to 2021, with over 17,000 migrants assisted. The numbers continue to grow in 2023, with an estimated 5,000 of 7,700 stranded migrants in Niger being in Assamaka. IOM [reported](#) that its capacity to provide assistance is limited to 1,500 individuals, while a group of 3,500 refugees and migrants currently awaiting assistance outside of the IOM transit center.

### Algerian Consulate in France suspends the issuance of laissez-passer travel documents

Following the arrival of a [Franco-Algerian activist](#) in France via Tunisia, Algeria has accused France of [involvement](#) in facilitating the activist’s irregular border crossing into Tunisia. In addition to calling back its Ambassador in Paris, Algiers suspended the [issuance](#) of consular “laissez-passer” documents, which function as travel passes for Algerian nationals in France. According to the [Algerian Consulate](#), a laissez-passer is issued to Algerian nationals who have lost or had their passports stolen and need to return to Algeria. The document is also used for the repatriation of Algerian nationals who have been [expelled](#) from French territories.

# Thematic Focus:

## Sub-Saharan Refugees and Migrants in Tunisia: An Assessment of Recent Events

During a national Security Council meeting, held on 21 February, the Tunisian President gave a statement on the situation of irregular migrants in Tunisia, which was followed by an increase in [anti-Black racist violence](#), targeting sub-Saharan African [refugees and migrants](#) in the country, as well as [Black Tunisians](#).

### Background and context

Earlier this year, misinformation and disinformation went viral on social media, purporting to show sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants engaging in violent and disruptive behavior in Tunisia. An article by the [BBC](#) examined several videos that claim to feature sub-Saharan African individuals in Tunisia, but were actually filmed in other locations, such as Senegal, Morocco, Mali, and Algeria. According to the [BBC article](#), these videos have been widely shared “amid a wave of anti-migrant sentiment in the country,” with some claiming that Tunisia is “under [sub-Saharan African] occupation.”

The president of the Association for Active Ivorians in Tunisia [noted a particular surge](#) in racially motivated and hateful messages on social media from 10 February. On 16 February, more than 20 civil society organizations in Tunisia released [a statement](#) expressing concern over what they view as the arbitrary arrest, racial profiling, and targeting of sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants in Tunisia. According to the statement, between early and mid-February, more than 300 sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants were unlawfully detained. [Human Rights Watch](#) also reported that at least 850 sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants, including regular migrants, have been arrested since February 2023.

This follows actions by the Tunisian Nationalist party which launched an [online petition](#) in mid-2022 against the presence of sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants in Tunisia and led “mobilization” [campaigns](#) warning of the perceived dangers associated with sub-Saharan African “settlements” in the country. The party also issued a [report](#) that, among other points, criticizes the [Tunisian Basic Law No. 50 of 2018](#), which aims to eradicate all forms of racial discrimination in Tunisia.

### An increase in incidents targeting sub-Saharan Africans

On 21 February, the President instructed the security forces to take action against what he [characterized](#) as large numbers of irregular migrants. [February](#) and [March](#) saw a rise in discrimination and violence against sub-Saharan refugees and migrants. According to [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#), incidents have included open physical violence in public places, targeting of homes where sub-Saharan Africans reside, verbal harassment, and detention and arrests regardless of legal status. In addition to facing violence, some refugees and migrants were also [evicted](#) from their homes. This has been attributed to a [2004 law](#) that requires landlords to obtain a residence permit and notify the police when they rent to

a foreigner, with penalties for non-compliance. Other incidents included refusal of [transportation services](#), [overcharging](#) in grocery stores, and [dismissal](#) by employers. On 23 February, during an interview with the Tunisian TV Channel [Attessia](#), the spokesperson for the Tunisian National Guard issued a warning that individuals who offer housing or hire undocumented foreigners could face a fine or arrest.

Some sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants, including those with valid residency permits, have been [too afraid](#) to leave their homes due to the heightened risk of violence. In one February incident [reported by France 24](#), Tunisian armed men attacked a building in Tunis housing LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers from sub-Saharan African countries. In responding to the incident, the police reportedly arrested eight individuals who were recognized refugees in Tunisia. [Amnesty International reported](#) another case in which multiple sub-Saharan African individuals were victims of physical assault. According to one of them, a group of about 10 men forcefully entered their apartment and attacked them. He recounted his harrowing experience:

**“They were armed with batons; some forced two of my flatmates out and beat them until they fell on the floor. Others started destroying everything in the house; they took the money and phones of some of us. The National Guard came 30 minutes later; they didn’t arrest the assailants but instead handcuffed us and took us to their headquarters.”**

## Spontaneous and organized solidarity

Amid the violence faced by sub-Saharan refugees and migrants, some Tunisians and members of Tunisian civil society have engaged in acts of solidarity. Several sources, including [InfoMigrants](#) and [RFI](#), reported on Tunisian volunteers mediating with landlords to allow refugees and migrants to remain in their homes, delivering groceries to those who were too scared to leave their houses, and setting up donation pages to collect funds.

On 25 February, [hundreds of people](#), including civil society organizations, protested what they perceived as “racist rhetoric”. The Tunisian Forum for Social and Economic Rights (FTDES) along with more than 30 Tunisian Civil Society Organizations [issued a solidarity statement](#), emphasizing the importance of building a Tunisia based on solidarity, peace, justice, and respect for liberties and rights. The statement also called for an end to all forms of harassment targeting acts of solidarity with refugees and migrants in Tunisia, irrespective of their legal status. Furthermore, some sub-Saharan Africans have been [camping outside](#) of the premises of the [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM) and [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR) in Tunis for weeks, demanding a resolution to their current situation, including evacuation, repatriation, resettlement, and heightened protection.

## International response

Several African states [denounced](#) the situation and the development of events in Tunisia. [Mali](#), [Côte d'Ivoire](#), [Guinea](#), Gabon and [Burkina Faso](#) organized repatriation flights for their citizens, with more than 1,300<sup>3</sup> individuals repatriated by 24 March. Across African countries, there have been calls for the [boycott](#) of Tunisian products and goods.

The African Union issued [a letter](#) reminding “all countries, especially the Union Member States, that they must honour their obligations under international law and relevant AU instruments, namely, to treat all migrants with dignity, regardless of their origin, to refrain from any hate speech with a racist character that may harm people, and to prioritize their security and fundamental rights.” The European Parliament issued a [resolution](#) on 16 March, calling on the Tunisian authorities to adhere to both national and international regulations, particularly the [Law 50 of 2018](#) which prohibits all acts of racial discrimination. On 31 March, the [UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) (CERD) called upon Tunisia's highest authorities to publicly denounce and distance themselves from racist hate speech and combat all forms of racial discrimination and violence against Black Africans, especially refugees and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and Black Tunisian citizens.

On 8 March, IOM also issued [a statement](#), echoing the UN Secretary-General's call for the “protection of the dignity and rights of migrants, regardless of their migratory status, nationality, race, or gender.” [France 24 reported](#) that the World Bank decided to halt “all future engagements” with Tunisia until further notice following the “racially motivated harassment.” The Bank's outgoing president, cited on [Africa News](#), declared that “given the situation, management has decided to pause the Country Partnership Framework and withdraw it from Board review.”

## Response by Tunisian authorities

During his working visit to Geneva from 27 February to 3 March, the Tunisian Foreign Minister met with IOM and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Foreign Minister, as reported by [L'Echo Tunisien](#), called for “greater solidarity in the fight against irregular migration, emphasizing the need to intensify international cooperation to address its root causes.”

On 5 March, the Tunisian Presidency issued a [statement](#) rejecting allegations of racism and highlighting Tunisia's African identity as a founding member of the African Union. The same [statement](#) introduced new measures in support of students and migrants from sub-Saharan African countries. Among other points, the new measures included: issuing one-year residency permits to students from African countries; the extension of residency permits from three to six months; facilitating voluntary return procedures for those who wish to leave Tunisia; the exemption from paying overdue fines imposed on migrants who have exceeded the allowed period of stay; and creating a hotline to allow residents of various African countries to report any violations against them to allow residents of various African countries to report any violations against them.

<sup>3</sup> This number is based on MMC calculations drawing on the following sources: Jeune Afrique [3 March](#), Africa News [16 March](#), Info Migrants [20 March](#), Africa News [24 March](#).



## Potential ramifications

Despite the new measures, incidents of aggression and harassment against sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants [reportedly persist](#). Recent events combined with the economic crisis in Tunisia are expected to have implications for migration dynamics from, to and across Tunisia. It is essential to note that these implications are only potential outcomes. To fully understand the ramifications, ongoing assessments will be necessary.

Tunisia has long been a country of transit and destination for people on the move from across the African continent and has generally been viewed as relatively safe. However, recent developments threaten to undermine this reputation. According to the [director](#) of ESPRIT university, the recent violence was “catastrophic for Tunisia, which had always been a welcoming place.” Tunisia may continue to witness increased independent and assisted [returns](#) of migrants back to countries of origin. As previously mentioned, sub-Saharan African embassies in Tunisia have responded to their citizens’ demands by organizing repatriation flights. The previously cited [FTDES solidarity statement](#) expressed concern over the “criminalization” of solidarity with refugees and migrants, which could deter Tunisians from supporting and aiding refugees and migrants, creating further division between various populations. In addition to the increased returns and repatriation, future migration to Tunisia could be discouraged if migrants perceive Tunisia as an unsafe destination. This could impact the economy in Tunisia, particularly sectors such as [construction, agriculture, domestic care](#), where migrants play an [important role](#).

The recent crackdown on refugees and migrants may play a role in Tunisia [recently surpassing Libya](#) in the number of refugees and migrants departing from its coast toward Italy. According to local Tunisian [news](#), between March 22nd and 24th alone, the Tunisian coast guards intercepted around 3,000 individuals attempting to cross the sea. The same source indicates that only nine of the intercepted individuals were Tunisian nationals. An Ivorian migrant, quoted by [InfoMigrants](#), stated that: “more and more Ivorians are hoping to leave Tunisia, first because of the weak economy, and then because of the President’s speech.” These figures are being closely [monitored](#) by the EU, which [could increase](#) its technical and financial cooperation with Tunisia. Aside from migrants currently in Tunisia who may be more likely to attempt a Mediterranean crossing, it is plausible that Tunisia continues to serve as a vital transit point, especially given the difficulties facing migrants passing through neighboring countries such as [Libya](#).

It is evident that the European Union’s overall concern about the situation is much broader than the discrimination and violence against the sub-Saharan African population, and is primarily centered on addressing economic instability in Tunisia, which it considers could lead to an increase in outward migration. Tunisia is one of the EU’s “[southern partners](#)” and has engaged in [longstanding cooperation](#) on migration management. During a Foreign Council Meeting on 20 March, three days before the European Summit in Brussels, the [EU High Representative](#) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy emphasized the need to pay attention to the current events in Tunisia, stating that “the situation in Tunisia is very, very dangerous. If Tunisia collapses economically or socially, then we will be in a situation where new flows of migrants will come to Europe. We must avoid this situation.” Before the EU Summit in Brussels, the European Commission President [voiced](#) the EU’s readiness to allocate an extra € 110 million to North Africa “to keep people from risking their lives by taking boats toward Europe.” During the European Summit, both the [French President and Italian Prime Minister](#) underscored the need to support Tunisia, including in securing an agreement with the IMF, to effectively manage [potential migration pressures](#) that the country’s challenges could pose to Europe.

# Highlighted New Research and Reports



## [The Walled City](#)

### **NPR | January 2023**

This podcast features reporting on the experiences of migrants in Nador, Morocco, the region just outside the walls of the Spanish enclave of Melilla. The podcast examines the relationship between the Moroccan government and the European Union, looking at the way migration control can serve as a bargaining chip for Morocco vis-à-vis the EU. It also highlights the difficulties of obtaining asylum that can only be applied for once in Europe – after someone has managed to access Melilla. The podcast demonstrates the way in which Nador is a bottleneck for refugees and migrants, who face many difficulties due to harassment, prohibitions on renting rooms, and the destruction of camps.



## [“They only give us the really hard jobs” – the exploitation of migrant labour in transit and destination countries around the Western Mediterranean](#)

### **Alarm Phone | January 2023**

The report sheds light on the exploitation of migrant workers across Morocco, Algeria, and Spain, arguing that similar conditions and mechanisms of exploitation are present on both sides of the Mediterranean. Migrant workers typically receive lower wages (30-60% less than locals) in physically demanding sectors, with inadequate legal protections. Additionally, the report finds that women and other marginalized groups often experience specific forms of exploitation, including a higher risk of sexual harassment or violence. The research discusses the issue of race and the impact of being racialized as Black in Morocco and Algeria, and its potential impact on people's access to formal employment and residency, highlighting the paradoxical and parallel coexistence of labor demand and policies that discriminate against individuals from certain racial or ethnic backgrounds.

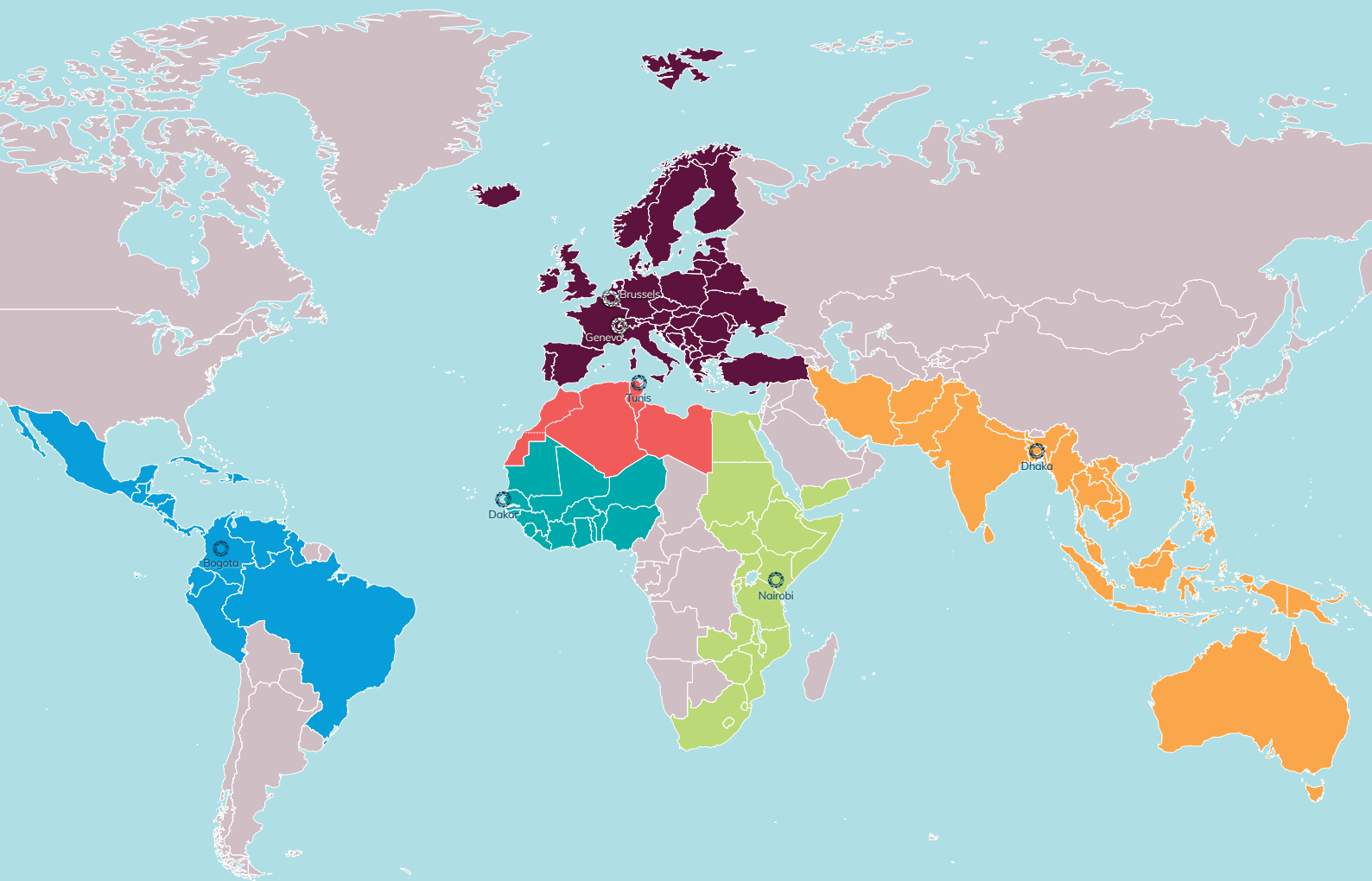


## Libya — Egyptian Migrant Workers in Libya: General Overview and Opportunities for the Future

### **DTM Libya | February 2023**

The report offers insights into the socioeconomic characteristics of Egyptian migrant workers in Libya. The research is based on IOM's "Flow Monitoring Survey" (FMS) data from 2020 to 2022 and qualitative interviews with Egyptian migrant workers. The findings reveal that most Egyptian migrants entered Libya through irregular channels and are predominantly employed in manual labor. Although their situation is relatively better compared to other nationalities,

the majority of them work informally without contracts, with 71% lacking a work permit. Although many Egyptian migrants send remittances and express their intention to stay in Libya, mobility intentions vary and have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The research concludes that the regularization of entry and status of these migrants is important to ensuring their protection as well as the contributions they make to Libyan public finances through their taxes.



MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs hosted in Danish Refugee Council regional offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels.

MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

MMC is part of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

For more information visit:

[mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and follow us at [@Mixed\\_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

