



MMC North Africa

QUARTER 1 2024

A photograph of two men on a boat. The man in the foreground is wearing a white t-shirt and has his hand to his face, looking down with a somber expression. The man behind him is also in a white t-shirt, looking out at the sea with his hands clasped near his face. The background shows a vast blue sea under a clear sky.

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 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 and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

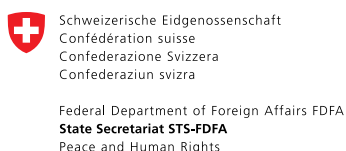
MMC's understanding of mixed migration

"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 migrants travelling along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly, and wholly or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

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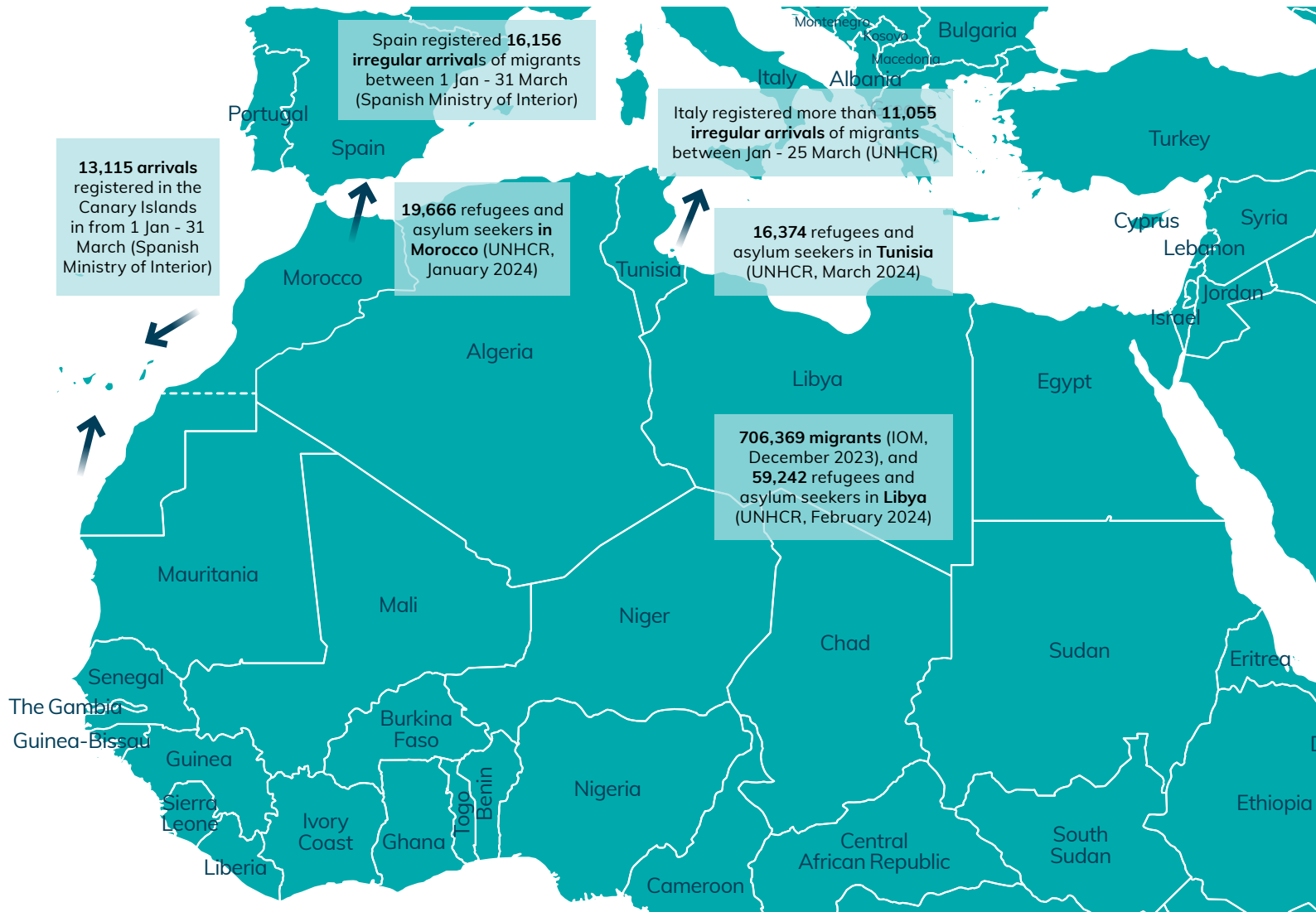
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa

Quarter 1 - 2024

Key Updates

- **Since the eruption of the Sudanese war in April 2023, new mobility patterns are emerging:** with a growing number of Sudanese refugees now heading to [Libya](#) and [Tunisia](#). For further details, refer to the Thematic Focus on page 14.
- **New investigation denounces Frontex for sharing the location of migrant boats with the Libyan armed group Tareq Bin Zayed (TBZ), despite awareness of human rights violations:** According to a new [investigation](#) by [Lighthouse Reports](#) and [Der Spiegel](#), Frontex shared approximately 2,200 times the location of migrant boats with Libyan coastguards over the past three years. Frontex reaffirmed its obligation to share migrant boat locations in Libyan waters with authorities.
- **Maritime irregular migration from Tunisia to Italy decreased:** with 11,055 [sea arrivals](#) in Italy, marking a 60% decrease compared to the same period last year. The decline might suggest a shift in migration patterns, with Libya now again the main departure point, instead of [Tunisia in 2023](#). It is worth noting that Libya saw a [slight increase](#) in overall departures this quarter, with [decreasing departures](#) from the East and increasing departures from the [West](#). The decrease of departures from Tunisia is [attributed](#) to intensified border security measures by Tunisia and adverse weather conditions, with further decreases [anticipated](#) throughout 2024. On 26 March, the Tunisian Interior Minister [met](#) the new Italian Ambassador to Tunisia. Both parties [discussed](#) efforts in combating irregular migration.
- **The European Commission's decision to disburse 150 million euros to Tunisia has stirred controversy:** The European Parliament passed a [resolution criticizing](#) the lack of transparency and expedited procedures, with MEPs questioning Tunisia's evaluation on key criteria such as human rights and democracy. MEPs are demanding written responses before the current mandate ends in April, just ahead of the June 2024 European Parliament elections. This development [hints](#) at obstacles in future EU-Tunisia negotiations and the disbursement of funds.
- **Morocco commended by Spain for its deployment of a permanent coastguard, contributing to a decrease in sea arrivals in Ceuta and Melilla:** amid a broader [increase](#) in arrivals to Spain. Nevertheless, concerns are growing over Moroccans attempting dangerous sea crossings into Ceuta by swimming. On the other hand, land arrivals to the enclaves have [surged](#), with over 1,100 [migrants](#) intercepted on New Year's Eve alone.
- **Algeria is collaborating with Tunisia and Libya to address irregular migration and cooperate on border security in North Africa:** The [inaugural meeting](#) of the Bilateral Commission for Common Border Development between Algeria and Tunisia focused on strengthening shared border areas against security threats, including irregular migration. Meanwhile, [trilateral discussions](#) among Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya aim to address economic and security interests, particularly regarding irregular migrants.

Regional Overview*



*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration 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)

Data from the [Spanish Ministry of Interior](#)¹ shows an increase in irregular arrivals in Spain in the first quarter of 2024 compared to 2023. Overall arrivals rose by more than 277%, with 16,156 migrants arriving in Spain between 1 January and 31 March 2024, compared to 4,287 arrivals during the same period last year. The Canary Islands saw the most significant increase, with a 502% rise in arrivals.² According to [Frontex](#), between January and February 2024, this route registered the largest increase (of all routes into the European Union), representing one-third of all detections at the EU's external border.

According to the Spanish Ministry's [data](#), however, sea arrivals to Ceuta and Melilla saw a decrease, although the numbers involved were very small. Ceuta recorded zero arrivals in 2024 compared to just 16 in 2023. Similarly, Melilla registered 1 arrival in 2024 compared to 32 in the previous year. However, land arrivals to the enclaves surged by 266%,³ although Ceuta is the only one that registered an increase. Melilla's registered 7 arrivals in 2024 (compared to 21 in 2023), while land arrivals to Ceuta increased from 199 in 2023 to 798 arrivals so far in 2024.

Whereas for the same period last year, arrivals were mainly through mainland and the Balearic Islands (the only route that registered an increase [last year](#)) and nationalities comprised primarily of Moroccan, Ivorian and Senegalese, this year we see a shift of [nationalities](#) with individuals from Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania comprising most arrivals to the Canary Islands.⁴ On the Western Mediterranean route in 2024, [arrivals](#) predominantly comprised Moroccans, Algerians, and Malians.

Central Mediterranean Route (arrivals to Italy)

As of 31 March, [UNHCR](#) reported that 11,055 migrants arrived in Italy by sea, marking a 60% decrease compared to the same period last year. In terms of arrivals to Italy by disembarkation site, Libya emerged as the primary point, with 7,421 individuals, contrasted with 3,600 from Tunisia.⁵ This diverges from [2023](#), where departures from Tunisia accounted for the largest share.⁶ According to [Frontex](#), between January and February 2024, the Central Mediterranean route (CMR), which experienced the highest volume of irregular crossings in 2023,⁷ continued its downward trajectory from recent months, showing a decline of 70% compared to the same period last year.

1 All data provided by the Spanish Ministry of Interior covers the period from 1 January to 31 March 2024. Therefore, any comparisons to 2023 from the same source refer to the same timeframe (1 January – 31 March, 2023).

2 13,115 in from 1 January until 31 March 2024 vs. 2,178 over the same period in 2023.

3 805 arrivals in 2024 vs. 220 in 2023

4 Main countries of nationalities in [2023](#) were Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal

5 It is worth noting that Libya saw a [slight increase](#) in departures, this quarter. Notably, departures from the Eastern part of the country have decreased, while there has been a [rise](#) in departures from the Western side.

6 UNHCR data from [January 2024](#) indicates that 52% of sea crossings originated from Tunisia, while 48 percent originated from Libya

7 During the [first quarter](#) of 2023, the CMR was the busiest migratory route into Europe, with around 12,000 irregular border crossings, signifying a 118% increase from the corresponding period in 2022.

According to [UNHCR](#), the most common countries of origin among arrivals to Italy were Bangladesh (26%), Syria (17%), Tunisia (15%), and Egypt (11%). Contrary to [previous quarters](#), in January 2024, no West African nationality was recorded to be in the top 5 countries of origin arriving in Italy via the CMR.

Dead or missing refugees and migrants⁸

On 6 March 2024, the IOM's [Missing Migrants Project](#) (MMP) reported that 2023 was the deadliest year on record with at least 29,311 migrants reported as dead or missing in the Mediterranean since 2014.⁹ 457 missing migrants were recorded for the sole period of 1 January to 25 March 2024. There were 36 along the Western Mediterranean Route, 49 incidents documented along the Eastern Mediterranean Route, and 372 along the Central Mediterranean Route. As the MMP acknowledges, these figures are likely a substantial underestimate. According to the IOM [deputy director general](#): "As we mark the MMP's ten years (2014-2024) ... these horrifying figures are a reminder that we must recommit to greater action [...] so that 10 years from now, people aren't having to risk their lives in search of a better one."

Mixed migration in Libya

Latest figures on refugees and migrants in Libya

According to the latest available estimates from the IOM [Displacement Tracking Matrix](#) (DTM), there were some 706,369 migrants in Libya as of December 2023. This represents an increase to the [previous quarter's](#) figure of 697,532 of migrants. The primary countries of nationality of migrants were Niger (26%), Egypt (22%), Sudan (18%), Chad (11%), and Nigeria (4%). Most migrants (56%) are in the West of the country, followed by the East (31%), and South (13%).

As of [February 2024](#), UNHCR reports 59,242 registered refugees and asylum-seekers in Libya. This represents an increase from the [previous quarter's](#) figure of 54,256 individuals. Sudanese nationals [make up](#) more than half of this population (58%), followed by those from the Syrian Arab Republic (19%) and Eritrea (15%). The number of Sudanese refugees in Libya rose from 30,132 in [November 2023](#) to 35,414 in [February 2024](#), which represents an increase of 18%. This increase can be explained by the [ongoing](#) war in Sudan which further [spread](#) to the Al Jazira region in December 2023.¹⁰

New investigation reveals details on Frontex collaboration with the TBZ armed group

Following the December 2023 [investigation](#) revealing European collaboration, especially of Frontex and the Maltese government, with the Libyan armed group Tareq Bin Zayed (TBZ), new information has surfaced in February 2024. [Lighthouse Reports](#) and [Der Spiegel](#) published findings indicating Frontex's continued

⁸ Numbers in this section are drawing on IOM's MMP and based on MMC calculations made accessing the website on 2 April 2024

⁹ The Mediterranean continues to be the most perilous route for migrants, witnessing a minimum of 3,129 deaths and disappearances in 2023, marking the highest death toll since 2017.

¹⁰ For a more detailed analysis of Sudanese refugees in Libya and Tunisia, see section "Thematic focus".

sharing of migrant boat locations with TBZ, despite knowledge of human rights violations. [Questioned](#) by the EU Committee on Civil Liberties, the Executive Director [confirmed](#) that Frontex shared the location of migrant boats with Libya's coastguard approximately 2,200 times in the last three years, despite human rights violations.

On 5 March, Frontex [announced](#) its continued obligation to share the migrant boats' locations in Libyan waters with the authorities, as required by law. This decision came after the NGO SOS Humanity [reported](#) interference from Libyan coastguards during a Search and Rescue Operation on 3 March, citing violence and fired shots at rescuers and migrants, with some forced onto Libya authority boats. On 7 March, the European Ombudsman [addressed](#) a letter to Frontex Executive Director, concluding that no further inquiries into Frontex's maritime emergency operations were warranted but recommending organizational reflection to uphold fundamental rights obligations. [Reacting](#) to the letter, the EU Home Affairs Commissioner [dismissed](#) the proposed need for reform of Frontex, expressing satisfaction with the agency's current operations.

New migration deal concluded between the UK and Libya

During a [visit](#) to Tripoli on 4 March, the UK's Home Office Minister and the Libyan Prime Minister of the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU) agreed on a new deal to curb migration via the Mediterranean. Representatives of the European Union, United Nations, France, Germany and Malta were also attending the visit to [discuss](#) migration matters. The agreement of euro 1,17 million [aims](#) at preventing migrants from leaving Libyan shores and assisting migrants to return to their countries of origin.¹¹ In the same week, the UK minister [signed](#) a new cooperation agreement with IOM to prevent human trafficking and increase the provision of humanitarian assistance along the migration routes passing through Libya.

Mixed Migration in Tunisia

Latest figures on refugees and migrants in Tunisia

According to UNHCR [data](#), as of 31 March, the total registered refugee population stood at 16,374 representing an 80% increase compared to the [first quarter](#) of 2023, and an 11% increase compared to the [last quarter](#). The primary nationalities include Sudan (41%),¹² Syrians (17%), and Côte d'Ivoire (10%). It is noteworthy that the numbers of Sudanese have increased tenfold between January 2023 and February 2024, constituting most new registrations, and contributing to the overall rise in the total population. For further details, please refer to the Thematic Focus section below.

Based on the available data, Medenine has registered the highest increase (more than 900%) of refugees and asylum seekers between the [first quarter](#) of 2023 and the current quarter¹³ and a 46% increase compared to the [last quarter](#). This increase is attributed to the arrival of refugees and migrants from Sudan (see thematic focus). Compared to the [last quarter](#), the number of registered Sudanese increased by 35%.

¹¹ No details regarding the way this assistance will be provided were disclosed.

¹² 6,344 Sudanese asylum seekers and 224 refugees.

¹³ As of April 2024, based on publicly available data, comparison between Medenine and Greater Tunis is not possible.

Conversely, Sfax registered a 26% decrease compared to the [last quarter](#).¹⁴ This decline could be attributed to rising anti-migrant violence in the governorate. Recent [MMC research](#) in Sousse highlighted the city as a critical destination for refugees and migrants seeking safety from escalating violence and discrimination, especially prevalent in Sfax.

Increased enforcement and decreased departures at Tunisian maritime borders

A decline in departures from Tunisia to Italy has [continued](#) into 2024, with 11,055 migrants [arriving](#) in Italy between January and March, representing a 60% decrease compared to the same period in 2023. This decline might signal a shift in migration dynamics throughout the year. Libya has (re)emerged as the primary departure point, whereas in [2023](#) Tunisia held the largest share.¹⁵ Migration experts, cited in [InfoMigrants](#), suggest that this decrease is not solely due to adverse weather conditions but also stems from intensified border security measures, resulting in a surge of interceptions at sea. According to the UNHCR, both departures and disembarkations in Tunisia decreased by 71% and 50% between January 2023 and February 2024.

Additionally, there has been an increase in the return of migrants to their countries of origin. In 2023, the IOM [facilitated](#) the return of 2,557 migrants from Tunisia, representing a 45% increase compared to 2022. This trend continued into 2024, with approximately 400 migrants [returning](#) to their countries of origin between 16 and 19 January alone.

The European Parliament at odds with Commission over disputed Tunisia funding

The European Commission's (EC) decision to disburse euro 150 million to Tunisia in early March has sparked [controversy](#). This fund is part of the [strategic partnership](#) signed in July 2023. While the Commission's President hailed it as a step forward, a 14 March resolution by the European Parliament questions the MoU.

The passed resolution [criticizes](#) the lack of transparency and the use of a special and expedited procedure for the disbursement. MEPs question the thoroughness of Tunisia's evaluation on human rights, [democracy](#), and the rule of law – key criteria for receiving funds. The Parliament is pressing for written responses by the end of the current mandate (scheduled for the [last plenary session](#) from 22 – 25 April 2024)¹⁶ to evaluate procedural adherence and disbursement terms.

More broadly, the EU's approach to migration cooperation across North Africa faces criticism.¹⁷ Refugee International's [assessment](#) of the EU-Tunisia cooperation, for instance, highlights concern over the prioritization of border control, failing to curb irregular migration and raising legal and ethical concerns

¹⁴ 0.5% decrease compared to the first quarter of 2023.

¹⁵ UNHCR [data](#) from January 2024 shows that 52% of sea crossings to Italy originated in Tunisia, 48% from Libya.

¹⁶ This emerges just two months ahead of the European Parliament elections, where [migration](#) is a [prominent](#) issue.

¹⁷ This episode extends beyond Tunisia. [Concerns](#) regarding the prioritization of migration control over human rights commitments are amplified by the haste and secrecy surrounding the disbursement. MEPs emphasize the need for robust financial oversight alongside guarantees on human rights.

about potential human rights abuses in Tunisia. Furthermore, recent developments in EU migration policies, highlighted by [StateWatch](#), involves direct capacity-building of national authorities to facilitate the return of non-Tunisian nationals to their countries of origin. This approach aligns with the objective outlined in the EU-Tunisia [MoU](#) of “the development of a system for the identification and return of irregular migrants already present in Tunisia.” Based on an obtained EU [action plan](#), StateWatch also [notes](#) preparations for new technical assistance aimed at bolstering the return system in the country.

Tunisia and Italy continued migration cooperation

On 4 March, Tunisia and Italy [signed](#) a protocol aimed at enhancing the mechanisms for regular migration between the two countries. The protocol allocates 12,000 non-seasonal permits over three years for Tunisian workers in Italy. Furthermore, Italian and Tunisian labor organizations will [collaborate](#) closely to assess the workforce needs in the Italian market and effectively match them with potential Tunisian candidates to meet labor demands. This comes after the two countries signed a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#)¹⁸ aimed at facilitating regular migration for Tunisian workers last October. Italy’s need for this collaboration stems from a persistent labor shortage. According to the [OECD](#), Italy’s 2023 quota for migrant workers increased to more than 82,700 workers from 69,700 in 2022 (and 31,000 in the previous five years), signaling a persistent labor shortage.¹⁹

On 26 March, the Tunisian Interior Minister [met](#) the new Italian Ambassador to Tunisia. Both parties [discussed](#) efforts in combating irregular migration, stressing the importance of collaborating with specialized UN agencies to enhance voluntary repatriation of irregular migrants arriving in both countries.

Migrants’ report of human rights abuses outside the UNHCR office

A group of refugees and migrants [protested](#) outside the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) office in Zarzis, southeast Tunisia, over the weekend of 27-28 January, expressing their concerns and demanding assistance. They held banners with pleas for UN protection and voiced opposition to the transfer of refugees to Libyan authorities.

The [protesters](#) highlighted the challenges they faced within Tunisia, including violent raids and theft by Tunisian security forces. They spoke of limited access to essentials such as water and food, which forced some migrants to resort to begging. Furthermore, some individuals recounted instances of encountering racism, hostility, and discrimination from locals, sometimes being denied service in shops. These on-the-ground experiences echoed the concerns raised by a coalition of Tunisian and regional NGOs in a recent [press statement](#). The statement addressed the humanitarian crisis at Algerian and Libyan borders, where migrants endure harsh conditions without access to humanitarian services. It further denounced racist incitement campaigns against migrants, highlighting that racism constitutes a criminal act.²⁰ The NGOs

18 This agreement established an annual quota of 4,000 workers who would have the opportunity to seek employment in Italy under non-seasonal contracts.

19 This allocation further delineated quotas for both seasonal and non-seasonal workers, for individuals from countries that have either signed or are currently negotiating migration agreements with Italy, like Tunisia.

20 In 2018, Tunisia became the first country in the MENA region to enact a law criminalizing racial discrimination. Among other points, this [legislation](#) allows victims of racism to seek redress for verbal or physical acts of racism.

called for immediate action to end hate speech, protect migrants from violence, investigate reported acts of violence, and ensure access to justice.

The arrest of the former president of a migrant association in Tunisia

A student migrant and former president of the Association of African Students and Interns in Tunisia (Association des Étudiants et Stagiaires Africains en Tunisie – AESAT) was reported missing on 19 March. According to the AESAT [statement](#), he was taken to the [criticized El Wardia](#) detention center in Tunis while attempting to retrieve his permanent residency card and has since then been relocated to a hotel. The director of the Human Rights Watch office in Tunis, cited by [RFI](#), expressed concerns that he may face renewed targeting by security forces and arbitrary detention once more. According to the FTDES [statement](#), this development underscores broader concerns regarding the protection of migrants' rights in Tunisia.

Mixed Migration in Morocco

Latest figures on refugees in Morocco

As of January 2024, [UNHCR](#) reported 19,666 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco, marking an 8.6% increase from January 2023 (18,102) and a 2.7% increase compared to the [last quarter](#). Most of these individuals are nationals from the Syrian Arab Republic (29.3%), Guinea (13.4%), Yemen (4.6%), and Cameroon (3.7%).

Germany-Morocco migration cooperation: advancements and implications

In January 2024, during a visit to Rabat, the German Development Minister and the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration, Minister of State, launched [projects](#) to facilitate the migration of skilled workers from Morocco to Germany. Germany is pioneering a pre-integration program, with Morocco as a pilot country, offering local migration advice, language training, and orientation programs before migration. Simultaneously, both countries are finalizing a [migration agreement](#) that aims to strengthen joint security measures to curb irregular migration and reinforce regular pathways into the German labor market. Germany's burgeoning cooperation with Morocco on migration coincides with a [stricter migration policy](#). The [German migration reform plan](#) that came into effect in November 2023 [includes](#) expedited asylum processing and deportations, reduced migrant benefits, and stricter border controls. Germany is also contemplating [offshore](#) asylum processing centers.

Spain-Morocco migration dynamics: complex realities amidst cooperation

During an [official visit](#) to Morocco in February 2024, the Spanish Prime Minister's acclaimed the "extraordinarily positive" cooperation with Morocco on migration. Nevertheless, the reality on the ground presents a complex picture. Irregular migration to Spain has seen an [overall increase](#). Land arrivals to Melilla as well as sea arrivals in Ceuta and Melilla decreased, albeit with very small numbers involved.²¹

Spain attributes the decline in sea arrivals to Morocco's deployment of a permanent coastguard, as stated by [ECRE](#). Concerns, however, are mounting regarding the arrival of Moroccans [swimming](#) into Ceuta, even [amidst](#) storms, hypothermia, and exhaustion, with a rising number of [minors](#) involved. In an interview with [InfoMigrants](#), a Moroccan professor emphasized the dangers of these sea crossings and attributed the increase in risky attempts to the militarization of the border, condemning EU-funded surveillance as "ineffective." On the other hand, land arrivals to the enclaves [surged](#) by 312%. Over 1,100 migrants tried to reach Spain's Ceuta and Melilla from Morocco on New Year's Eve alone but were [intercepted](#) by Moroccan authorities. In light of these developments, the Spain Prime Minister [announced](#) that Moroccan authorities have recently agreed to accept their nationals who entered Ceuta irregularly and had their asylum applications rejected.

Mixed Migration in Algeria

Latest figures on refugees in Algeria

The most recent [UNHCR](#) data, as of 28 March 2023, states that there are approximately 90,000 Sahrawi refugees residing in the five camps near Tindouf. Furthermore, there were 13,028 refugees and asylum-seekers reported in urban areas as of the same date. Syrian refugees constituted the primary nationality of refugees in Algeria, comprising 86% of registered refugees living in urban areas.

Criticism surrounding Algeria's designation as a safe country by Ireland

As of 31 January 2024, Ireland made the [decision](#) to designate Algeria as a [safe country](#) for the purpose of asylum claims.²² The decision has sparked criticism from Irish politicians, with one [politician](#) probing: "I'm wondering who Algeria is safe for?" This decision follows the backdrop of Algerians ranking [second](#) in asylum applications in Ireland (14.4%), just behind Georgia (16.7%) and ahead of Nigeria (10.6%). The total asylum seeker population in Ireland is 17,487 individuals as of mid-September 2023. Under a streamlined decision-making [process](#) initiated in November 2022, applications from designated safe countries are being processed in under 90 days, with a 38% [decline](#) in the number of applications.

21 For additional details and specific statistics, please refer to the "Western Mediterranean Route & Atlantic Route (arrivals to Spain)" section provided above.

22 The concept of "safe countries of origin" has long been [scrutinized](#) by migrants' rights organizations, arguing that no country can guarantee safety for all its citizens. They criticize the accelerated procedures and the inherent bias in presuming safety, which undermines equality before the law in asylum processes.

Algeria and Italy sign a new security agreement

Italy and Algeria [signed](#) a new security agreement on 1 February. According to the [Algerian Ministry of Interior](#), the agreement allows for a comprehensive review of an existing 1999 agreement, addressing “current” challenges such as drug trafficking, cybercrime, irregular migration, and human trafficking. This agreement will also enhance operational coordination between the national security forces and civil protection of both countries.

While the agreement seems to cover various issues, both ministers [underscored](#) the importance of working together in combating irregular migration, acknowledging the comparatively low numbers of departures from Algeria in contrast to its North African neighbors. According to [Agenzia Nova](#), the Italian Minister voiced concerns regarding recent developments in the Sahel region, especially in Mali,²³ highlighting its potential impact on mobility towards North Africa and Europe. The heightened regional tension has also prompted Algeria to [consider](#) further border militarization with Mali, potentially affecting cross-border populations accustomed to free movement and smuggling activities.

Algeria migration cooperation in North Africa

Algeria is actively collaborating with Tunisia and Libya to address irregular migration and bolster border security. The Bilateral Commission for Common Border Development between Algeria and Tunisia held its [inaugural meeting](#) in January 2024, after its [establishment](#) in October 2023. The Algerian Minister emphasized fortifying shared border areas against emerging security threats, especially irregular migration, while [concerns](#) persist about migrant rights violations at the Algeria-Tunisia border. Meanwhile, [trilateral meetings](#) among Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya were agreed upon to address economic and security interests, including migration-related issues. The operational details of both partnerships are not yet available due to their recent inception.

Continued expulsions from Algeria to Niger

According to [Alarme Phone Sahara](#) (APS), between 1 January and 31 March 2024, Algeria carried out the expulsions of 8,401 individuals,²⁴ to the Niger border. This increase in expulsions, documented by [APS](#), continues the trend observed in the [last years](#) with at least 26,031 expulsions from Algeria to Niger in [2023](#). The majority of those expelled are from sub-Saharan and West African countries. While some were [residing](#) in Algeria, others had been previously expelled from Tunisia, Libya, or Morocco. On 3 April, Niger summoned the Algerian ambassador to [express](#) its disagreement with the intensified violent expulsions. The Secretary General of the Nigerien Foreign Ministry called on the Algerian diplomat to ensure the respect of migrants’ dignity, as well as their “physical and moral integrity.”

23 Relations between Algeria and Mali have been [strained](#). In January 2024, Mali terminated a key peace accord brokered in Algiers in 2015, further escalating tensions. On its side, Algeria conducted a large-scale [tactical exercise](#) at the border with Mali on 27 February.

24 MMC calculations based on the following: 1,939 [expelled migrants](#) between 1 and 17 January, and 4,311 [expelled migrants](#) between 1 and 28 February 2024, and 901 [expelled migrants](#) in March 2024.

Despite Algeria's ongoing expulsions, population movements from Niger persist. According to the most recent [IOM data](#) available, in January 2024, outgoing cross-border movement from Niger to Algeria increased by 34%, compared to December 2023.

Thematic Focus: The Sudan war and the expanding Sudanese mobility toward Libya and Tunisia

Introduction

Since 15 April 2023, fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have led to an ongoing war, resulting in the world's [largest](#) ongoing displacement crisis. As of February 2024, the war has [claimed](#) over 13,000 lives and left at least 27,000 individuals injured. The challenges are [multifaceted](#), encompassing one of the world's [largest](#) hunger crises, hindered aid distribution due to damaged infrastructure and road closures, family separation and increased risks of trafficking and kidnapping among displaced populations. According to the [IOM](#), there are approximately 8.4 million individuals displaced both within²⁵ and outside the country's borders. An estimated [2 million](#) individuals have fled across borders to neighboring countries with the [majority](#) in Chad, Egypt, and South Sudan. New mobility patterns are [emerging](#), with increasing numbers of Sudanese refugees making their way to Libya and Tunisia. Before the eruption of the April war, there were [19,764](#) Sudanese refugees in Libya as of January 2023. By January 2024, this number had [surged](#) to 33,481, with at least [13,000](#) arriving in Tripoli on or after 15 April. In Tunisia, the number of Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers was [513](#) in January 2023. As of [March 2024](#), the number of had risen to 6,846.

This thematic focus is informed by desk research, news monitoring and ongoing on-the-ground observations by MMC. Two semi-structured interviews were also conducted with MMC enumerators stationed in Medenine²⁶ who have direct access to Sudanese refugees.

Dangerous routes: Sudanese refugee entry into Libya and Tunisia

According to a Sudanese MMC enumerator, there are two main departure routes from Sudan. The first involves passage through Egypt. The second route involves an overland journey starting from Al Malha locality in North Darfur, culminating in Kufra, southeastern Libya, with many refugees passing through Chad. Chad is increasingly becoming a mixed migration transit country, with individuals transiting across the country until [reaching](#) Al Qatrun and Sabha in southwestern Libya.

Two primary migration routes exist for entry into Egypt: overland and by air. According to MMC enumerators, land smuggling to Egypt entails a passage of three to four days across the desert;²⁷ however, the escalating

25 Within Sudan itself, around 6.5 million people have been displaced since April 2023.

26 During the [last quarter](#), the refugee population in Medenine has increased more than sevenfold, compared to the first quarter of 2023. MMC on-the-ground research has confirmed a growing arrival of Sudanese and South Sudanese in Medenine, accounting for this increase.

27 According to Sudanese refugees interviewed by [BBC](#), their journey across the desert took six days.

costs associated with this method have rendered it expensive. The new visa requirements introduced in [2023](#) have exacerbated the situation, resulting in further delays for individuals attempting to enter Egypt.²⁸ Applicants may face waiting periods of up to two [months](#). A local Sudanese [source](#) reports that in September, thousands remained stranded at the borders awaiting visas. Consequently, many of them, along with new arrivals, explored smuggling routes, with several [fatalities](#) reported in mid-January. Moreover, MMC interviews report that expensive flight fares coupled with [difficult living conditions](#) in [Egypt](#) dissuade many refugees from pursuing air travel and choosing Egypt as a destination. Furthermore, the sole operational airport in Sudan is presently in Port Sudan, as the Khartoum airport ceased operations as of 15 April 2023. Hence, cost isn't the sole consideration for migration; accessibility to the airport and its proximity are also important factors.

Another route involves traversing Chad, from where some refugees continue directly to Libya, while others take a longer route, traversing Chad, Niger, Algeria, and/or Libya before finally arriving in Tunisia.²⁹ According to [different sources](#), the primary entry points into Chad from Sudan are Tine and Adré. These routes have [long](#) served as smuggling paths even before the war erupted. More recently, in Adré,³⁰ [makeshift shelters](#) have proliferated,³¹ accommodating most Sudanese refugees.³² These refugees find themselves stranded in [dire](#) conditions. Additionally, the camps at Adré remains [threatened](#) by cross-border raids from Sudanese armed groups. Crossing from Sudan to Adré poses extreme [dangers](#) as armed groups frequently patrol the area, intercepting travelers along the way. Refugees interviewed by [The Guardian](#) recounted their experiences of crossing borders hidden in trucks. Furthermore, [previous reports](#) also noted that Sudanese crossing into Chad encounter demands for payment at the border despite the absence of official entry or visa fees. Despite the short distance from Sudan to Adré,³³ one refugee described encountering at least five armed checkpoints on the way, while another described witnessing violence and death during the journey.³⁴

Constraints on entry and residency in Egypt, along with the dangers of crossing into Chad and the ["overstretched humanitarian situation,"](#) may have prompted Sudanese refugees to seek alternative routes beyond these borders into Libya and Tunisia. According to MMC enumerators, these routes are largely the same; while some remain in Libya, others proceed onward to Tunisia. [IOM](#) finds that most Sudanese arrivals in Libya are coming directly from Sudan (88%), primarily through the Northern State and North Darfur regions. Some had transited by Chad (9%) or Egypt (2%) before crossing into Libya. As per [Al Jazeera](#), a Libyan official stated that Sudanese refugees enter from Egypt through Tobruk, and from Chad through Sabha and Al-Qatrun. Additionally, MMC interviews indicate that the primary entry point into Tunisia is Ras Ejdir, situated at the border with Libya.³⁵

28 Individuals seeking to obtain an Egyptian visa from Sudan have [two main options](#): Wadi Halfa in the north and Port Sudan in the East. Due to its proximity to the Argeen Port crossing from Sudan to Egypt, most applicants opt for Wadi Halfa, where an inadequate infrastructure leads to prolonged queues and extensive waiting periods for visa processing.

29 Interviews with MMC enumerators on 23 March 2024. No more information is currently available on this route.

30 Crossing through Adre, the main transit hub is Abeche, the eastern capital of Chad. GI-TOC [research](#) also states Abeche's historical importance as a gateway for arrivals from Sudan. The town serves as a logistical center for travelers heading to the northern goldfields in Chad and onwards to Libya.

31 Refugee camps in Adré have a longstanding history predating the current ongoing war. The recent arrivals compound an already existing refugee population. Consequently, makeshift shelters are becoming increasingly prevalent due to the strain on camp facilities and the [insufficiency](#) of humanitarian aid.

32 Chad, [ranked](#) 190th of 191 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), and one of the poorest countries in the world, currently hosts the [highest](#) number of refugees per capita in Africa.

33 According to the Guardian, for instance, it's just a 10-minute walk from Darfur to the nearest refugee camp in Adre, Chad. [MSF](#) states that the Adre camp is "barely 5 kilometers away from Sudan." According to Google maps, the travel distance between Al Junaynah, Capital of West Darfur, to Adre is 35 klm.

34 [The Guardian](#) reports that few men from Sudan manage to reach Chad, with many killed or disappearing. The refugee population in Adré is predominantly women and children (90%).

35 While some refugees have also entered through Algeria, on-ground observations from MMC and DRC indicate that most arrivals occur through the Libyan borders.

Sudanese Refugees in Libya

Amidst the ongoing war, Sudanese refugees have been steadily making their way to Libya. However, in 2024, there have been increasing arrivals, particularly in [Kufra](#) in southeastern Libya. A report by [Al Jazeera](#) published on 26 February stated that Libyan [officials](#) have noted a rise in the number of crossings into Kufra in recent weeks. Similarly, throughout the quarter, there has been a growing number of [reports](#) echoing the same trend.

According to [UNHCR Libya](#), the number of Sudanese refugees in Libya stood at 19,764 in January 2023. By January 2024, this figure had [surged](#) to 33,481 reflecting an approximate 70% increase over the span of a year. Out of a population of 59,242 registered refugees and asylum-seekers in Libya, Sudanese nationals constitute more than half (58%). UNHCR has registered over [13,000](#) Sudanese who arrived in Tripoli on or after 15 April 2023. As per the [IOM report](#) on Sudanese in Libya, the majority of Sudanese arriving after the conflict originate from the state of Khartoum (65%), with a minority coming from one of the five states of Darfur (33%).

The [IOM report](#) finds that the main difficulties they face include financial issues (78%), food or water insecurity (38%), and security concerns (36%). [Reports](#) from Kufra indicate that refugees are grappling with difficult humanitarian conditions, lacking adequate shelters and necessities. While grassroots [efforts](#) have provided some relief, they remain insufficient. Rental prices have [surged](#), while the cost of food and fuel continues to escalate amidst shortages. [Most refugees](#) have congregated in Kufra and Tripoli, with some resorting to [sleeping](#) outside the UNHCR headquarters in hopes of securing registration and assistance.

Sudanese Refugees in Tunisia

According to MMC enumerators, trend observations indicate an increase in arrivals in recent months. This corresponds with information provided by the President of the Tunisian Observatory for Human Rights during an [interview](#) on 27 February. He stated that over 1,500 Sudanese refugees entered Tunisia within a week. This has led to “Tunisia receiving in just a few weeks what it would normally receive in a year, a trend that has intensified since September.” According to UNHCR, the number of Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia has increased tenfold between January 2023 and March 2024.

By [January 2023](#), they ranked fourth in terms of primary nationalities, with 513 individuals out of a total of 9,078. By [March 2024](#), their number increased to 6,846 refugees and asylum seekers out of a total population of 16,374 representing more than 41% of the total refugee and asylum seeker population in Tunisia.³⁶

According to MMC enumerators, upon arrival into Tunisia, refugees face many protection challenges. The existing assistance infrastructure is insufficient, resulting in widespread homelessness. While some refugees are accommodated in temporary shelters, resources are not enough, leaving many stranded on the streets with a lack of access to necessities. Furthermore, the slow asylum/refugee registration processes further compound their challenges, prolonging their wait for assistance. Similarly, a Tunisian [report](#) sheds

³⁶ For reference, they accounted for 4%, 5%, and 5.7% in the first quarters of [2021](#), [2022](#), and [2023](#), respectively.

light on the harsh reality facing Sudanese and other migrants who had recently arrived in Tunisia. The living conditions are described as deplorable, with makeshift camps set up in the affluent neighborhood of Lac 1 in Tunis. Furthermore, a [hostile climate](#) towards Black migrants exacerbates their plight. With no prospects for local integration, the [report](#) finds, they find themselves compelled to risk their lives by attempting sea crossings in search of a better future. It is also worth noting that many arrive in Tunisia with the intention of transiting, hence, onward migration objectives also influence their decision to leave.

Mobility aspirations

The accounts gathered from MMC enumerators shed light on mobility aspirations of Sudanese refugees. Many express a desire to continue their journey beyond the southern regions of Tunisia, driven by the hope of reaching Europe. And indeed, UNHCR Italy [data](#) from December 2023 indicates an increase in Sudanese arrivals through Tunisia, with a rise of 456% compared to 2022. UNHCR Italy data from [January 2024](#), also shows that, while most departures from Tunisia remain Tunisians (61%), they were followed by Sudanese (11%). In Tunisia, according to MMC interviews, [Sfax](#) emerges as a common destination, with refugees awaiting the moment, often the summer months, to embark on sea crossings to Europe. The perception of easier smuggling operations from Sfax (compared to Zarzis, for example) adds to its appeal as a departure point. This situation is also closely followed in policy circles. According to the Italian Prime Minister, as reported by [Al Jazeera](#): “Sudanese refugees are no longer stopping in Egypt but are instead making their way to Libya, and from there, coming to us.”

Conclusion

Amidst ongoing war and a fluid situation in neighboring countries and in the wider region, Sudanese continue to seek paths to safety as the development in mobility patterns shows, with an increasing number moving towards Libya and Tunisia. Several factors may be contributing to this trend such as security concerns and mobility challenges in neighboring countries, such as [Chad](#) and Egypt. Additionally, the [surge](#) in departures from Tunisia over the past year may have influenced refugees’ perception that departing for [Europe](#) from Tunisia is relatively easier compared to other routes.³⁷ Family reunification and joining loved ones could also be a motivating factor, with a growing Sudanese population already established in Tunisia and Libya.

37 Interview with MMC enumerators on 23 March 2024

Highlighted New Research and Reports



[Illegality Without Borders – Pushback Report 2023](#)

The coalition of International Solidarity | February 2024

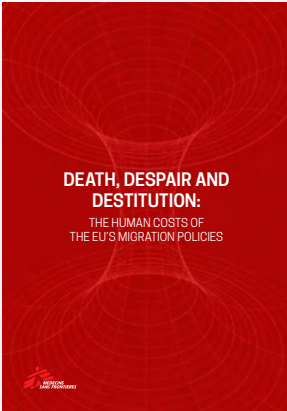
This report exposes the rise in migrant pushbacks by European authorities. With 346,004 pushbacks documented in 2023 (nearly 1,000 daily), the report warns of “unprecedented violence.” The report offers an examination of pushback practices across several countries, including Libya. While it is primarily the Libyan coast guard conducting pushbacks, the report highlights Italy’s and the EU’s extensive support in monitoring, coordination, funding, and training. This support, the report argues, makes the EU complicit in these pushbacks, which often return migrants to unsafe conditions in Libya. The report further criticizes the “outsourcing” of border control to third countries like Tunisia, raising concerns about potential human rights violations.



[Treading water in transit: understanding gendered stuckness and movement in Tunisia](#)

Ahlam Chemlali | February 2024

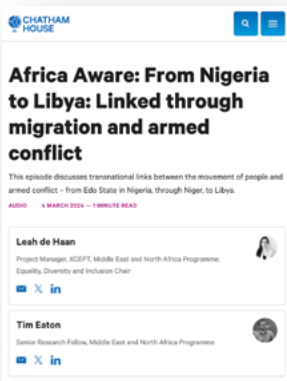
This article examines the experiences of Ivorian migrant women in Bhar Lazreg, a suburb of Tunis. The author argues that EU and Tunisian policies have created a new urban underclass among Black migrants on the city’s fringes. Chemlali’s research delves into how these women navigate their daily lives, often feeling isolated and overlooked. The term “bouger” is introduced to describe their constant yet unfruitful efforts to move forward, highlighting their sense of being perpetually stuck despite their continuous efforts to move forward. The article further explores the concept of “prison à ciel ouvert” (open-air prison). This captures the contradictory reality of feeling confined yet yearning for movement. Chemlali argues against simplistic views of migration, proposing that being stuck (immobility) and striving to move forward (mobility) are intertwined experiences for migrants.



[Death, Despair and Destitution: the Human Costs of the EU's Migration Policies](#)

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) | February 2024

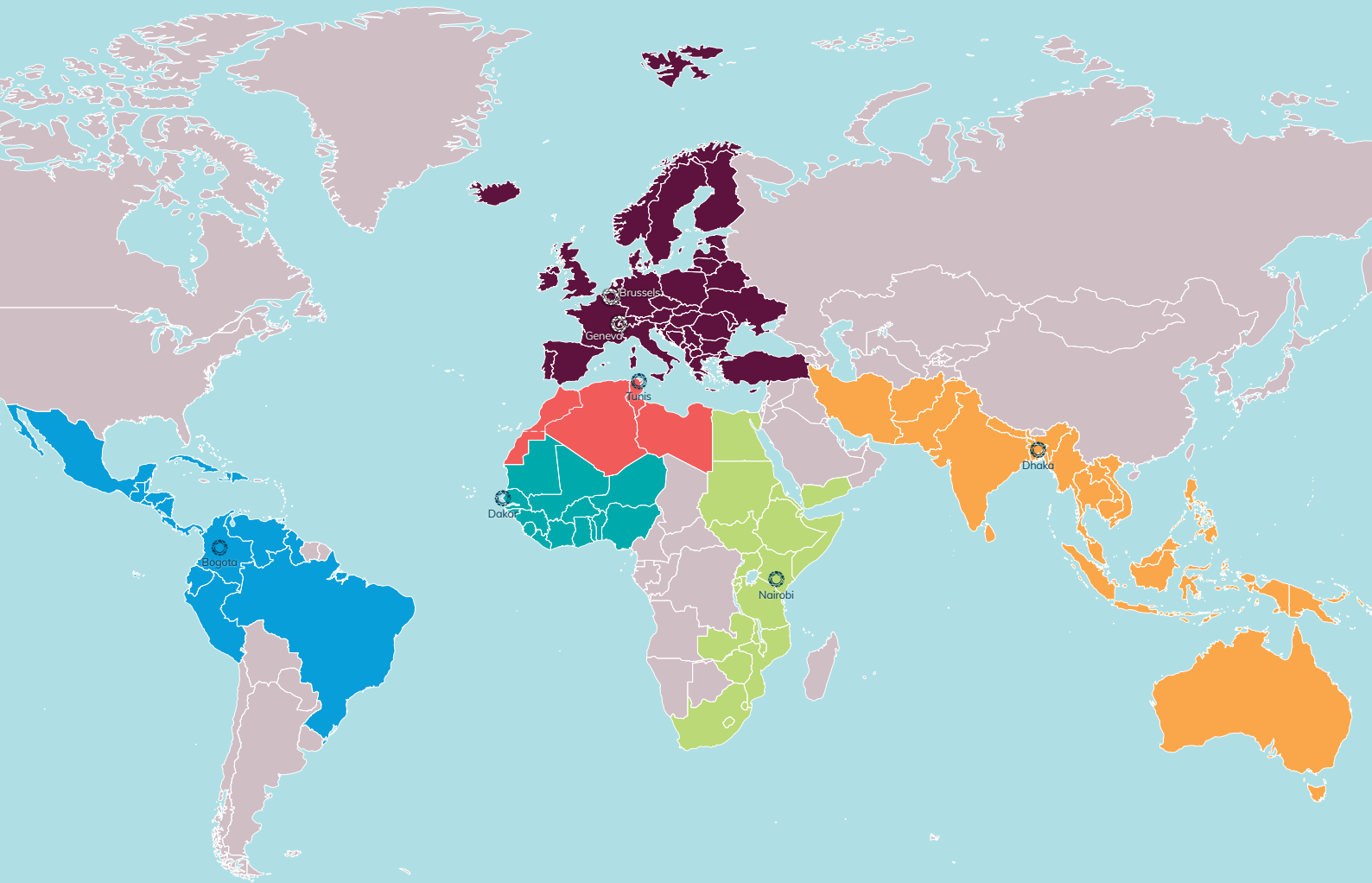
This report delves into the consequences of Europe's migration policies, covering 12 countries, including Libya and Tunisia, drawing from MSF's projects conducted between August 2021 and September 2023. It reveals a pattern of violence and coercion faced by individuals at each stage of their migration journey. Notably, the report details violence experienced by individuals blocked in Libya and Tunisia, including roundups, evictions, and raids by security forces. It raises concerns about the conduct of the Libyan coastguard during interceptions at sea, with reports of endangering the lives of people in distress. Similar issues are observed with the Tunisian coastguard, which forcibly returns a significant number of individuals, often resorting to violence. In this regard, it highlights the surge in forced returns to Libya and Tunisia facilitated by EU support.



[From Nigeria to Libya: Linked through migration and armed conflict](#)

Chatham House | March 2024

In this podcast, researchers delve into the connections between migration and armed conflict, tracing a transnational journey from Nigeria, through Niger, to Libya. Focusing on Edo State in South-west Nigeria, they explore the structural and direct forms of violence experienced by migrants along this route. It highlights how the movement of people has become a resource in Libya's conflict economy, particularly in the wake of the post-2011 conflict expansion of smuggling businesses. Structural violence, manifested through unemployment, gendered exclusion, and economic marginalization in Edo State, intertwines with more overt forms of violence encountered by migrants en route through Niger to Libya's conflict economy. By examining how these different forms of violence extend beyond borders, the episode illuminates a "continuum of violence" linking the three countries.



MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs 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 mixed migration 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 and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

