



MMC North Africa

QUARTER 2 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 forehead, looking distressed. The man behind him is also in a white t-shirt and has his hands clasped near his face, looking out at the sea. The background shows a vast blue ocean 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 the 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)

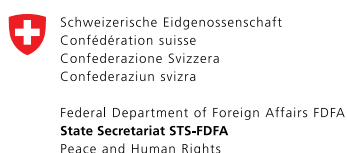
MMC's understanding of mixed migration

"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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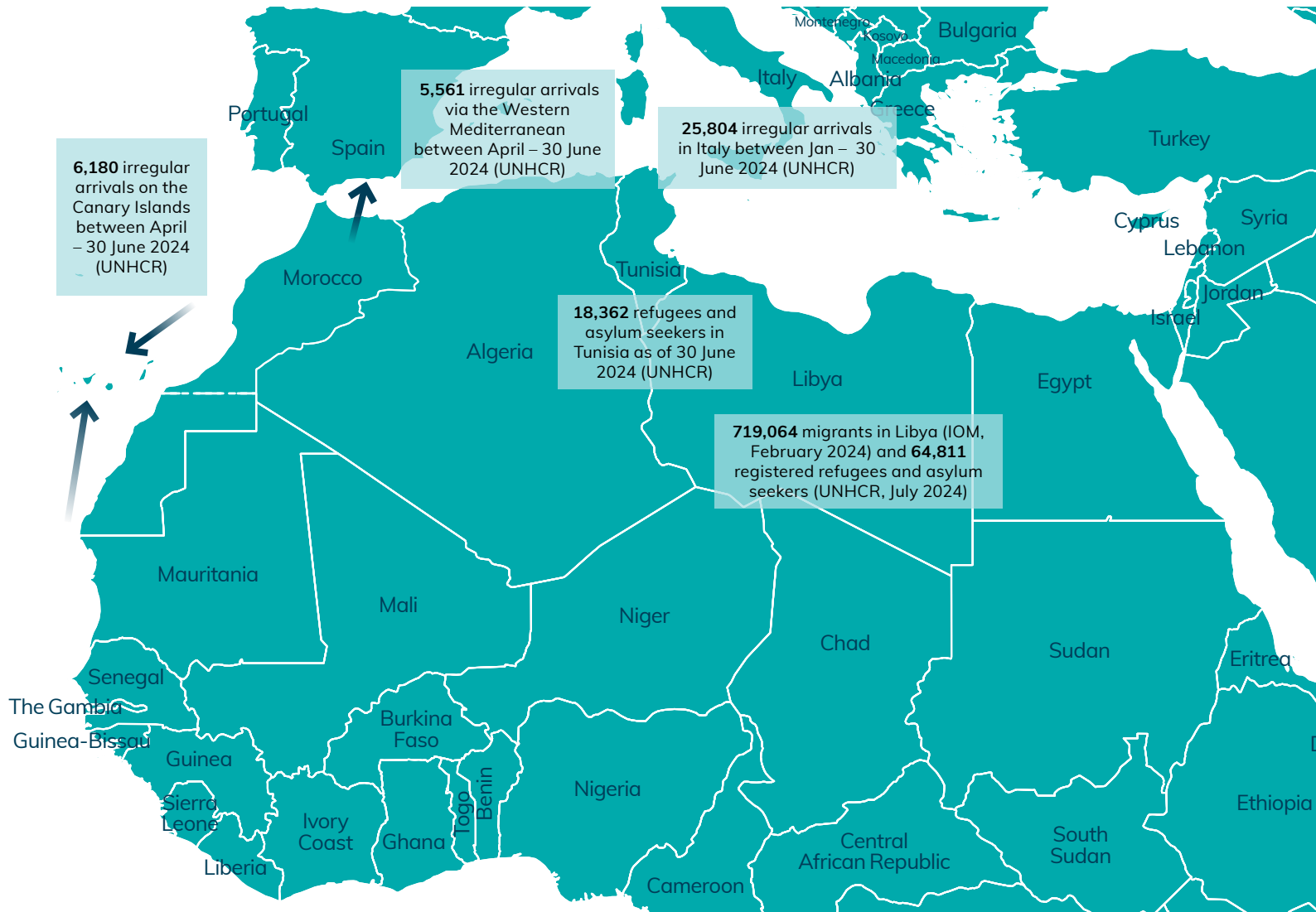
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa

Quarter 2 - 2024

Key Updates

- **Moroccans and Algerians lead increase in Western Mediterranean arrivals to Spain in 2024:** In 2023, Moroccans and Algerians were the most prominent nationalities among arrivals to Spain via the Western Mediterranean Route. This trend not only continued but also intensified in [2024](#), with 2,229 Moroccans and 1,877 Algerians making the journey (a 44% and 67% increase, respectively, compared to the same period last year, January – April).
- **Italian delegation emphasises migration cooperation with Libya:** On 7 May, an Italian delegation headed by the Prime Minister [visited](#) Libya. While [various areas](#) of cooperation were discussed, migration topped the agenda. During the visit, the Italian PM held discussions with various Libyan authorities emphasizing the need for continued collaboration between Italy and Libya to effectively manage irregular migration.
- **Tunisia establishes Sea Search and Rescue (SAR) zone:** On 19 June, Tunisia [formalised](#) its SAR zone to manage irregular migration in the central Mediterranean, a decision [long requested](#) by Italy. The SAR has drawn [concerns](#) from civil society organizations over Tunisia's status as a safe country for rescued individuals at sea.
- **Systematic targeting and expulsions of migrants in North Africa:** A recent investigation by [Lighthouse Reports](#) reveals that migrants have been systematically targeted based on their skin colour, forcibly removed from urban centres, and left abandoned without assistance in desert regions in Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia. The [investigation](#) also links the anti-migrant actions to EU migration management funding, suggesting that such funding is supporting these practices in the aforementioned countries.
- **Migration route from Eastern Libya to Greece gains prominence amid declining departures to Italy:** While departures from Eastern Libya to Italy have [continued](#) to decline this quarter, the route from [Eastern Libya to the Greek islands](#) has gained prominence. According to [IOM](#), around 817 people arrived in Greece between June and December 2023, all departing from Eastern Libya.

Regional Overview*



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

Mixed Migration Regional Updates

Mixed migration from North Africa to Europe

Western Mediterranean Route & Atlantic Route (arrivals to Spain)

As of 30 June, the [Spanish Ministry of Interior](#) reported 24,898 irregular arrivals to Spain this year. This figure represents an increase of 96% from the 12,704 arrivals recorded during the same period, 1 January to 30 June, 2023.

According to the [Ministry data](#), maritime arrivals to the Spanish Peninsula and Balearic Islands decreased by 8.5%, dropping from 4,865 registered between January and 30 June 2023, to 4,453 over the same period in 2024. However, according to [UNHCR data](#), 5,561 people arrived irregularly in Spain by sea along the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) as of 30 June 2024, an increase of 5% compared with the same period in 2023. The [main nationalities](#) arriving via the WMR were Moroccans (43%) and Algerians (36%).¹ According to a recent [GI-TOC](#) publication and MMC field observations in Morocco, stricter controls on foreigners' access to Northern Morocco and the relocations of migrants from coastal areas like Nador to interior cities such as Béni Mellal, Tiznit, and Azilal, have rendered the WMR more difficult for non-Northern Africans migrants, thus tilting the migrant demographic towards nationals of Morocco and Algeria, along this route. A recent Lighthouse investigation [indicates](#) that these operations predominantly target migrants based on their skin colour, irrespective of their legal status.

Arrivals to the Canary Islands during the first 6 months of the year (19,257) also registered an annual [increase](#) of 167% compared to the same period last year (7,213). However, as of 30 June, UNHCR [reported](#) 6,180 arrivals on the Canary Islands in the second quarter of 2024, which is 46% less than the 13,297 in the [first quarter](#). Regarding arrivals to Ceuta and Melilla, [ministry data](#) shows that while maritime arrivals to both enclaves decreased,² land arrivals to Ceuta increased by 151%. Conversely, Melilla registered a 66% decrease, though the numbers remain very small. Land arrivals to Melilla decreased from 53 in 2023 to 18 in 2024. On the other hand, land arrivals to Ceuta increased from 459 to 1,154.

Central Mediterranean Route (arrivals to Italy)

According to [UNHCR](#), as of 30 June, Italy registered 25,804 irregular sea arrivals, representing a 61% decrease compared to the same period last year (65,519 arrivals). Among [arrivals](#) in 2024, Bangladeshis constituted the largest group at 21%, followed by Syrians (15%), Tunisians (14%), Guineans (9%), and Egyptians (7%). According to [UNHCR](#) data, 56% of people reaching Italy via sea departed from Libya, followed by 40% from Tunisia, and less than 1 per cent from Algeria.

Based on the figures reported in the [second quarter](#) of 2023, over [half](#) of the arrivals in Italy originated from

¹ According to data from the [Frontex Migratory Map](#) accessed on 8 July 2024, out of a total of [5,186 arrivals](#), there were 2,229 Moroccans, 1,877 Algerians, 513 were of unknown nationality, 135 were Malians, and 118 Guineans.

² Arrivals by sea to Ceuta decreased from 33 in 2023 to 13 in 2024 and Melilla only registered 3 arrivals in 2024 compared to 81 in 2023.

Tunisia. Compared to this period, departures from Tunisia decreased by nearly 72% (9,601 compared to 33,860). The overall decline in departures from Tunisia can be partly attributed to increased interceptions at sea. According to [Tunisian authorities](#), 30,281 migrants were prevented from crossing from Tunisian shores between 31 January and May 2024, comparing to 21,252 in the same period in 2023 according to a different [source](#).³ [InfoMigrants](#), citing information from the former Tunisian Minister of Interior, suggest the number may be as high as 53,000.⁴

Dead or missing refugees and migrants⁵

As of 30 June, according to the IOM's [Missing Migrants Project](#) (MMP), there were 1,052 dead and missing migrants in the Mediterranean, 516 of which were recorded between April and 30 June. There were 111 along the Western Mediterranean Route, 64 along the Eastern Mediterranean Route, and 877 along the Central Mediterranean Route. As the MMP acknowledges, these figures are likely a substantial underestimate.

Mixed migration in Libya

Latest figures on migrants in Libya

According to the latest available estimates from the [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix](#) (DTM), as of February 2024, there were 719,064 migrants. This represents a slight 2% increase compared to [December 2023](#) figures. Similar to Q1 2024, the primary countries of nationality of migrants this quarter were Niger (25%), Egypt (22%), Sudan (19%), Chad (11%), and Nigeria (4%). Most migrants (56%) reside in the West of the country, followed by the East (31%), and South (13%).

As of 1 July 2024, UNHCR [reported](#) 64,811 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Libya. This represents a 9% increase from the previous quarter's figure and a 52% increase compared to [Q2 2023](#). Sudanese nationals make up more than half of this population (62%), followed by those from the Syrian Arab Republic (16%), and Eritrea (13%). The number of Sudanese refugees in Libya rose from 35,414 in February 2024 to 40,329 as of 1 July 2024 ([40,767](#) at the end of May 2024), which represents an increase of 14%. According to [UNHCR](#), Sudanese are still arriving in Libya due to the ongoing war in [Sudan](#). Nearly 20,000 of these refugees arrived in Libya after mid-April 2023.

Continued Italian – Libyan cooperation on migration management

During a [visit](#) to Libya in early May, the Italian Prime Minister held [discussions](#) with authorities in Tripoli and Benghazi, emphasizing the need for continued collaboration between Italy and Libya to effectively manage irregular migration. The Italian PM [invited](#) the Libyan authorities to engage in the "Rome Process," a working group aimed at addressing migration issues by tackling "root causes" such as conflict and economic instability.

3 MMC calculations based on the following sources: [Agenzia Nova](#) and [InfoMigrants](#)

4 While the minister referred to "individuals leaving the country," it is likely that authorities were referring to 'interceptions,' as reported by InfoMigrants.

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

The Italian PM also sought assurances from Libyan leaders to enhance control over migrant departures from Libyan shores. Praising the long-established cooperation with Libya on migration, the Italian PM emphasized the importance of [intensifying](#) efforts to combat human trafficking, both regionally and globally and [mentioned](#) plans to use Italy's G7 Presidency to further address this. On the day of the PM's visit to Libya, NGO [Mediterranea Saving Humans](#) criticized Italy and the EU for allegedly supporting Libyan militias involved in human rights abuses against migrants, via EU funding. The NGO condemned ongoing agreements between Italy and Libya, asserting they contribute to the suffering and exploitation of migrants detained in Libya.

More than 100 Somali migrants freed from captivity

In Kufra, Southeastern Libya, over 100 Somali migrants who had been held captive by non-State armed groups⁶ for up to seven months were recently freed. A spokesperson for the Libyan Criminal Investigation Department confirmed to [Reuters](#) that the migrants, some bearing marks of torture and bullet wounds, were discovered during a nighttime raid on a hideout. This operation was documented in an [unverified video](#) shared by Migrant Rescue Watch on social media, showing Libyan officials sweeping through the compound. This follows a [similar operation](#) in March, where 47 migrants, primarily from Sudan and Ethiopia, were also freed. The [United Nations](#), including the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya, has repeatedly raised concerns about the [severe protection risks](#) facing migrants in Libya, highlighting issues such as arbitrary detention, imprisonment, and forced expulsion under deplorable conditions by local authorities and non-state actors.

Mixed Migration in Tunisia

Latest figures on migrants in Tunisia

According to [UNHCR](#), as of 30 June, 18,362 refugees and asylum seekers were registered with UNHCR Tunisia, representing a 12% increase compared to [last quarter](#). The primary countries of nationality include Sudan (43%) Syrians (16%), Côte d'Ivoire (9%), Somalia (7%), and Cameroon (3%). Based on the available data, Medenine is hosting 45% of all refugees and asylum seekers, followed by Tunis and Ariana (37%), Sfax (9%), and Sousse (2%). Similar to the trends observed in Libya, arrivals of Sudanese refugees into Tunisia have continued, showing a 14% increase compared to the [previous quarter](#). This increase may explain why Medenine remains the primary host governorate, given its closeness to the Libya borders, a main crossing into Tunisia.

Tunisia operationalizes its own Search and Rescue zone (SAR) amidst concerns

On 19 June, Tunisia [formalized](#) a Sea Search and Rescue (SAR) Zone to manage irregular migration in the central Mediterranean, a decision [long requested](#) by Italy. A 5 April [Decree](#) in Tunisia establishes the

⁶ Information on the perpetrators and the reasons for their captivity is unclear and should be interpreted cautiously, as sources provide only limited details.

framework for organizing SAR operations for people in distress at sea, setting up a National Coordination Center and secondary centers responsible for managing SAR operations, and mandating continuous training, annual exercises, and cooperation with other countries to enhance SAR efficiency.

According to [AgenziaNova](#), the establishment of a SAR zone has political implications, strengthening the relationship between Italy and Tunisia, which have drawn [criticism](#) for the SAR's perceived negative repercussions on migrants, including the use of [force](#) during sea interceptions. This development has also drawn [criticism](#) from Tunisian civil society organizations due to its [operational](#) and humanitarian implications, including the blurred demarcation lines in international waters, as well as doubts about whether Tunisia can be considered a [safe country](#) for individuals rescued at sea. CSOs have [previously highlighted](#) Italy's involvement, including technical expertise, financial support, and logistical assistance, in developing and implementing Tunisia's SAR system. Moreover, an [article](#) by activist network also argues that establishing a Tunisian SAR region, accompanied by a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), has been an objective of the European Union and its member states.

Increasing anti-migrant sentiments in Tunisia

On 3 May, authorities [dismantled](#) informal migrant settlements outside the Tunis offices of UNHCR and IOM. There were also [multiple operations led by the army](#) to evacuate migrants from informal camps in olive groves around Sfax, particularly in Al Amra and Jebeniana. Details about the operation's objectives remain undisclosed although authorities [justified](#) the military operation by citing "numerous attacks [by migrants] against public and private properties" in El Amra and Jebeniana. Local discontent has particularly intensified in areas like Sfax, where tensions have escalated between residents and migrants. On 4 May, Sfax saw a [protest](#) demanding the removal of undocumented migrants from the country.

These measures were publicly acknowledged by the authorities on 6 May during a [National Security Council meeting](#). Authorities underscored that Tunisia would neither accommodate nor serve as a transit point for irregular migrants. They highlighted concerns about the arrival of irregular migrants into Tunisia. They noted that [400 migrants](#) were returned to Tunisia's Eastern borders (Libya), underscoring ongoing coordination with neighbouring countries. CSOs were also [criticized](#) for providing assistance to migrants, which also led to [arrests](#) of individuals working on migrants' rights in Tunisia on charges of [money laundering](#).

Reports highlight that the zones where migrants are usually evacuated to are located near the borders with [Libya](#) and [Algeria](#), a situation observed since the summer of 2023. A [new](#) year-long investigation by Lighthouse Reports revealed how migrants are systematically abandoned and expelled to remote desert areas, specifically in Algeria and Libya, within the Tunisian context. These expulsions have targeted both irregular and regular migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers. These [expulsions](#) were challenged by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), asserting that Tunisia's actions violate international law, specifically the principles of non-refoulement and the prohibition on collective expulsions. Others have also [reported](#) that these expulsions are not a long-term solution to curbing migration, as many migrants return because they have nowhere else to go.

Legislative developments

A [new bill](#) has been proposed to amend the [Law no. 68-7](#) on the status of foreigners in Tunisia. Among other points, the proposed [amendments](#) seek to strengthen penalties, including increasing the prison sentence for foreigners violating entry or exit laws from one month to one to three years. Fines for such violations would also see a significant increase, ranging from 300 to 5,000 Tunisian Dinars, up from six to 120 Tunisian Dinars. Additionally, the bill [imposes](#) penalties on individuals aiding in the irregular entry or stay of foreigners and includes provisions for temporary residency for expelled foreigners unable to leave Tunisia, requiring them to report regularly to local authorities.

European Parliament launches inquiry into human rights safeguards in EU-Tunisia MoU

The European Parliament has criticized the EU Commission's decision to disburse funds to Tunisia in [early March](#) under the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for its lack of transparency and expedited procedure. In response, the European Parliament has launched an [inquiry](#) into how the European Commission plans to ensure respect for human rights within the MoU's framework. The European Parliament has expressed concerns over the absence of a human rights impact assessment, particularly regarding the 'Migration and Mobility' pillar of the MoU, prior to its implementation. They have [asked](#) the Commission to provide clarifications on how it will monitor the human rights impact of actions conducted under the MoU and what measures are in place if violations are observed, including the potential suspension of EU funding.

Mixed Migration in Morocco

Latest figures on refugees in Morocco

As of June 2024, according to UNHCR, there was an [estimated](#)⁷ 24,500 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Morocco, making a 144% increase from [April 2023](#) and a 26% increase compared to [January 2024](#).

Border dynamics: temporary reopening and increased movement between Morocco and Algeria

In May 2024, the land borders between Morocco and Algeria were [opened temporarily](#) for the first time in 30 years for the repatriation of 15 Moroccan citizens imprisoned in Algeria for irregular migration. According to the « Groupe antiraciste d'accompagnement et de défense des étranger-e-s et migrant-e-s » (GADEM), these individuals had been serving sentences ranging from six months to two years and were [assisted](#) by the Moroccan Association for the assistance of migrants in vulnerable situations through the administrative procedures. According to [GADEM](#), 89 Moroccans remain in Algeria, awaiting deportation after completing their sentences.

⁷ UNHCR has not published a Morocco factsheet since January 2024 and estimates are based on the available data published on UNHCR's website, consulted 29 June.

According to a recently [published report](#) on Morocco by [Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime](#) (GI-TOC), there has been a slow increase in movement across the Morocco-Algeria border throughout 2023. More Algerians are arriving in Morocco with the intention to cross to the Spanish enclaves. On the other side, increasing numbers of Moroccans are also attempting to migrate from Algeria to Spain, driven by stricter migration control measures in Morocco and the cheaper costs of crossing from Algeria, compared to Morocco. According to the GI-TOC [report](#), Moroccans were reportedly charged around euro 6,000 in Algeria for sea crossing to Europe, compared to euro 9,000 – 10,000 for a similar service in Morocco.

New report finds evidence of systematic expulsions of migrants from North Africa with EU support

A recent investigation by the [Lighthouse Reports](#) and a consortium of international media outlets reveals that migrants have systematically been abandoned in desert regions in Mauritania, Tunisia, and Morocco.

In Morocco, the findings [reveal](#) a systematic pattern where Moroccan paramilitary forces, notably the Auxiliary Forces, engage in targeted arrests based on skin colour, primarily in urban centres like Rabat, Tanger, Nador, and Fes. In May, [Alarmphone](#) also reported an increase in harassment of individuals based on their skin colour in Tangier, where students and travellers alike are being arrested and deported to southern regions. This approach, as documented in [visual evidence](#) captured by ENASS, involves detaining individuals in local government facilities before transporting them to remote, often inhospitable areas, where they are left without support. In [Tunisia](#), migrants apprehended at sea or on land report being expelled to desert areas near the Algerian and Libyan borders, with Algerian police redirecting them back to Tunisia and those expelled to Libya ending up in areas controlled by the Tripoli government and armed groups.

The [investigation](#) further implicates the EU, which has allocated substantial funds—exceeding euro 400 million through the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF)—to Tunisia, Mauritania, and Morocco for migration management. According to the [investigation](#), besides financial support, the EU and its member states are involved through training and logistical support. This involves Moroccan authorities using vans, purchased with financial support from the EUTF, to conduct collective arrest campaigns during which the abusive use of force against migrants has been [documented](#).

Morocco and Belgium renew their migration cooperation

In a recent [visit by a Belgian delegation](#) to Morocco in April 2024, the two countries renewed their commitment to cooperating in various sectors, including the fight against irregular migration. This year, deportations of undocumented Moroccan migrants from Belgium have doubled compared to the same period last year. According to [InfoMigrants](#), the Belgian Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration noted the effectiveness of renewed cooperation with Morocco, with 119 returns reported from January to May 2024, up from 55 the same period last year. The Moroccan community is the largest non-EU migrant community in Belgium. Priority for expulsions will be given to those who have committed crimes, completed prison sentences, caused disturbances, or have been arrested during police operations. According to [InfoMigrants](#), 674 irregular Moroccan migrants currently incarcerated in Belgium are set for deportation upon release. This cooperation is [key](#) to Belgium's goal of increasing the returns of migrants in irregular situations.

Mixed Migration in Algeria

Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya strengthen their cooperation on migration

The [first consultative meeting](#) among the Presidents of Tunisia, Algeria, and the Libyan Presidential Council [concluded](#) in Tunis on 22 April. While regional economic integration was discussed, the [focus](#) remained on border security and combating irregular migration. The three countries were also present in [Rome](#) in May to meet with the Italian Minister of the Interior and discuss enhanced cooperation on migration issues. The Italian Minister emphasized the need for a regional approach to reduce irregular migration, moving beyond bilateral efforts.

Key [outcomes](#) of the consultative meeting included forming joint teams to protect common borders from threats like irregular migration and organized crime. Each country will appoint focal points to monitor the implementation of these agreements. Even before the trilateral meetings were agreed upon [last quarter](#), there has been a concerning increase in expulsions from Tunisia towards the Algerian and Libyan borders since summer 2023. The formalization of these meetings and the agreements reached could further systematize and intensify these operations.

Continued expulsions from Algeria to Niger

Continuing the developments of the previous years, Algeria continues to systematically expel migrants to the desert zone at the Nigerien border. According to [Alarmphone Sahara \(APS\)](#), in May alone, Algeria carried out the expulsion of at least 4,428 individuals to the Niger border. This brings the total number of expulsions to at least 14,328 during the first five months of the year. According to [APS](#), the expulsions frequently occur under harsh conditions, leading to injuries, trauma, and even death with 8 people dying between 9 and 13 May alone. Some of the expelled migrants had previously been [expelled from Tunisia](#) to the Algerian borders in similar conditions, with no adequate access to food and water.

As reported in the [first quarter](#) of 2024, diplomatic tensions between Algeria and Niger have heightened due to these expulsions. On 3 April, Niger summoned the Algerian ambassador to express its disagreement with what it described as deportations "[with violent nature](#)", and [blamed](#) Algeria for contributing to heightening the humanitarian, financial, and security challenges for Niger through these expulsions. In a reciprocal move, Algeria [summoned](#) the Nigerien ambassador on 6 April. While Algeria's coordination on migration issues with its Eastern neighbours, Tunisia and Libya, is increasing, its cooperation with southern states, Mali and Niger, remains stalled, highlighting [Algeria's growing isolation](#) in the region.

Thematic Focus:

An alternative route gains prominence: Eastern Libya to the Greek islands

Introduction

A new route from Eastern Libya to Greece, particularly the islands of Gavdos and Crete, is gaining prominence. This trend is accompanied by a decrease in departures from the same region towards Italy. The emergence of this route appears to be a response to heightened restrictions on other migration routes, influenced by the European Union's migration cooperation with countries such as Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia. Despite these constraints, irregular migration persists as individuals continue to seek alternative paths to Europe. The lack of accessible regular pathways compels many to embark on perilous journeys in pursuit of safety and better opportunities.

Increasing arrivals on Greek islands

According to [UNHCR data](#), as of 16 June, the island of Crete registered the arrival of 1,961 migrants, with at least 1,000 arriving in the [first two months](#) alone, more than the [total number](#) for all of 2023 (750). [IOM](#) data states that around 817 persons arrived in Greece between June and December 2023, all of which had departed from Eastern Libya. These numbers reflect an increase in arrivals on the Greek islands of Crete and Gavdos, from Eastern Libya, peaking at 397 in December alone and exceeding 1,100 in the first few months of 2024. In comparison, according to [local Greek sources](#), only 30 migrants made the journey from Tobruk in Eastern Libya to Gavdos and Crete's Southern coast in September 2023. The [main nationalities](#) taking this route are [Afghans, Egyptians, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis](#). [These nationalities are also among the main nationalities arriving to Greece via other](#) routes. For instance, as of 31 March 2024, individuals from Afghanistan and Egypt [constitute](#) 44% and 13%, respectively, of all sea arrivals to Greece.

The increase in arrivals in Greece from Libya coincides with a [continued](#) decline in departures from Eastern Libya to Italy this quarter. Only 203 migrants arrived in Italy from the Eastern city of Benghazi, a [decrease](#) compared to early 2023, when the region saw high migrant departures towards Italy. This decline in departures from Eastern Libya toward Italy appears to be influenced by the new route linking [Eastern Libya to Greece](#).

Before it gained prominence in late 2023 and 2024, the route to Greece was [seen](#) as offering less opportunities for movements to Europe and appeared to be more expensive. For example, the cost of the journey from Eastern Libya to Greece is [reported](#) to be between euro 2,000 to 5,000, whereas the journey to Italy from Tobruk [costs](#) between euros 600 to 3,000. According to [GI-TOC](#), previously, migrants departing from Tobruk rarely travelled to Greece, despite being a closer destination than Italy, due to the risks of becoming stranded on Greek islands, which reduces the possibility of continuing their onward movement.

Potential factors behind the new route

This route might have gained prominence for two reasons linked to increased migration cooperation between European actors and North Africa: the Eastern Libyan government [rapprochement](#) with Italy, and the recent [partnership package](#) between the EU and Egypt.

One potential [explanation](#) for this development is the growing cooperation between the Italian government and the Libyan National Army (LNA), as highlighted by the Italian Prime Minister's visit to Libya in [May 2024](#). This cooperation has likely led to more interceptions of boats heading to Italy, thereby prompting a shift in routes towards Greece. In addition to [financial](#) and logistical [support](#) provided by the EU and Italy to Libya, there appears to be direct cooperation between Frontex and local militias. As reported [last quarter](#) and during the [fourth quarter of 2023](#), [Lighthouse Investigations](#) has identified direct coordination between Frontex and the Tareq Bin Zeyad (TBZ) armed group with connections to the LNA. Since May 2023, this group has intercepted and returned over 1,000 people to Libya from the Central Mediterranean. These operations can be [viewed](#) as a strategy by the East-based authorities to gain legitimacy and financial support from European authorities, positioning themselves as a European migration partner, with informal agreements potentially already in place with Italy or Malta facilitating these operations.

Another potential explanation is the recent EU-Egypt "[Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership](#)" signed on 17 March. The EU's cooperation with Egypt, a major host country for migrants at Europe's southern borders and one of the top [origin countries](#) for irregular arrivals to Greece and Italy, has become even [more critical](#) due to ongoing wars in neighbouring Sudan and Palestine. Increased [restrictions on mobility](#), due to the new strategic partnership signed, out of Egypt likely contributed to the emergence of the new route from the Eastern coasts of Libya to Greece. Prior to this route's development (East Libya to Greece), from December 2023 to mid-March 2024, over 1,500 people arrived by sea from [Egypt](#) to Gavdos. A local police officer from Gavdos, interviewed by [the Guardian](#), reported frequent arrivals from Egypt until the EU sealed the euro 7.4 billion deal in March.

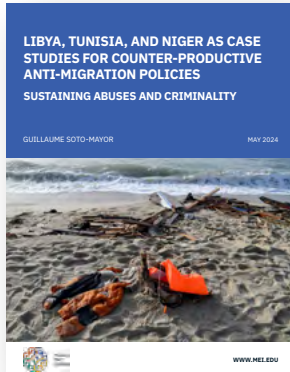
Challenges upon arrival

According to the NGO [Open Cultural Center](#) upon arrival in Gavdos, Greece, migrants face challenges due to the island's geographical isolation and inadequate reception conditions. The local authorities struggle to provide care and temporary accommodation, as supply deliveries by boat are heavily dependent on weather conditions. Migrants transported to [Heraklion](#), [Chania](#), or [Akrotiri](#) in Crete and Santorini often stay in [inadequate facilities](#) due to a lack of official infrastructure, leading to inconsistent reception and identification processes. Local organizations [lack access](#) to these spaces, causing uncertainty about migrants' rights. Migrants are then [moved](#) to mainland facilities by commercial ships for registration, with some sent to Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) while [others](#), particularly those from countries not typically recognized for refugee profiles like Egypt, are sent to pre-removal detention centres. Inconsistent transfer procedures further hinder the dissemination of information to newcomers.

Conclusion

The emergence of a new migration route from Eastern Libya to Greece has increased pressure on the islands of Gavdos and Crete. This shift reflects multiple geopolitical dynamics, including cooperation between Italian and Libyan authorities, the strategic importance of Eastern Libya in managing migration, and growing agreements with Mediterranean countries, like Egypt, to contain irregular migration. Given the ongoing war in Sudan, along with the search for better economic opportunities and instability in key countries of origin of the migrants taking this new route – such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh – migration is unlikely to decrease.

Highlighted New Research and Reports



[Libya, Tunisia, and Niger as Case Studies for Counter-Productive Anti-Migration Policies: Sustaining Abuses and Criminality](#)

Middle East Institute | May 2024

This article critiques the European Union's outsourcing of border controls to Libya, Tunisia, and Niger, highlighting resultant human rights abuses, strengthened criminal networks, and failure to reduce migration as intended. The narrative of "stabilization" promoted by international aid, intended to justify anti-migration policies, has proven ineffective at addressing migration issues, as evidenced by political instability and violence in the region. The author argues that the EU security-focused initiatives have increased migrant deaths and abuses along migration routes, often benefiting authoritarian regimes and criminal networks. The author stresses the need for clear accountability measures for regional states and calls on UN agencies to uphold international standards. He also calls on European donors to confront abuses within partner countries and rectify policy failures to mitigate harm to vulnerable migrants.



[The Nador-Melilla Border Trap](#)

Border Forensics, in collaboration with Irídia-Centre for the Defense of Human Rights and AMDH-Moroccan Association for Human Rights | June 2024

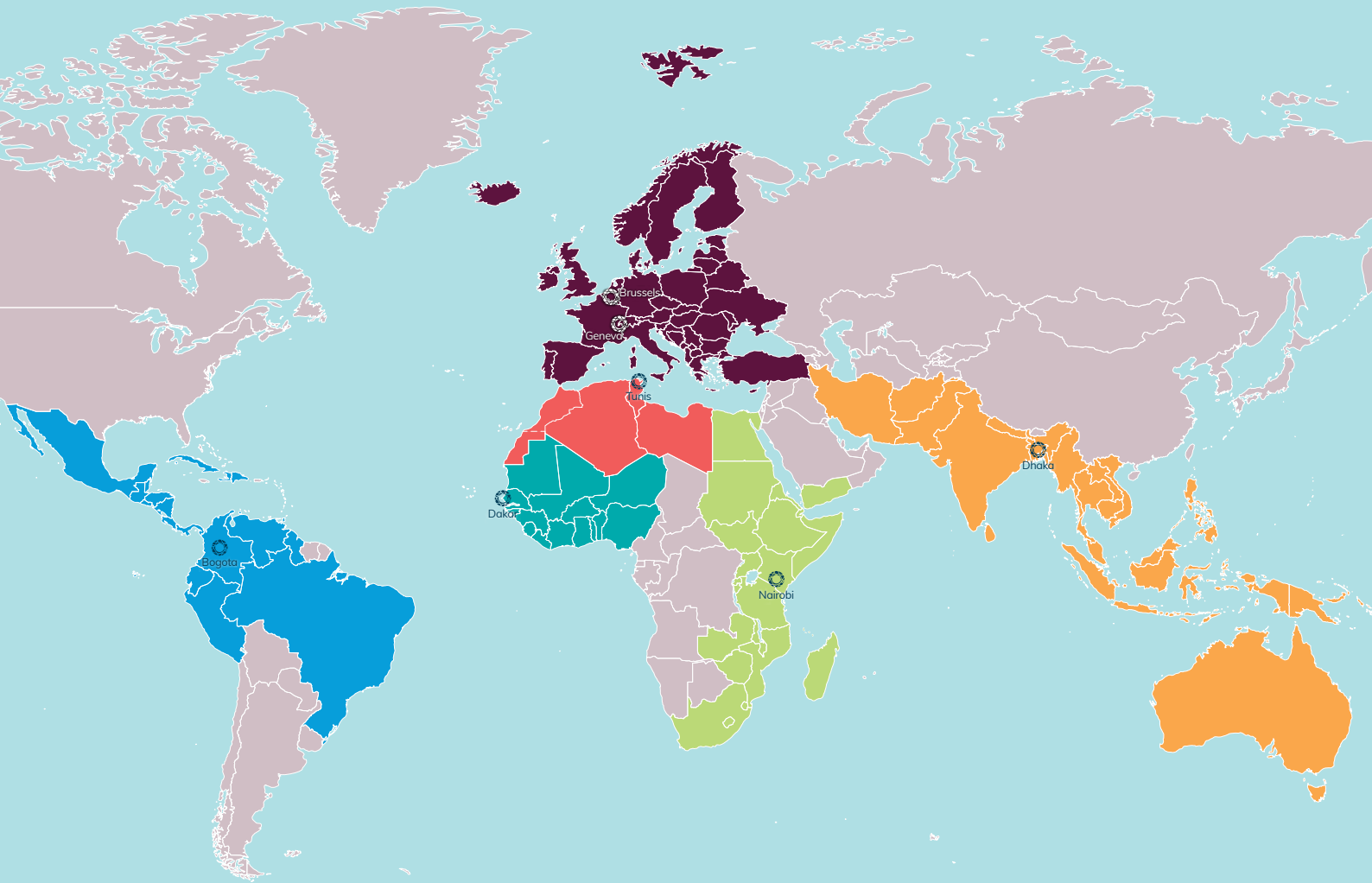
This investigation focuses on the tragic events of 24 June 2022 at the Barrio Chino border crossing between Nador and Melilla, where approximately two thousand migrants faced a violent crackdown by Moroccan and Spanish law enforcement. It seeks to identify responsible parties and analyzes the structural and political factors that enabled such extreme violence. Highlighting ongoing issues like victim identification failures, accountability gaps, and continued migrant mistreatment, the investigation challenges official narratives. The findings point to accountability gaps for Moroccan and Spanish authorities, as well as implications for the European Union's political and financial support. It exposes broader issues such as anti-Black racism and longstanding EU policies on externalized migration control. The investigation demands transparency, justice for victims, and an end to racist border policies perpetuating violence. It calls for policy changes to halt externalized border control and asymmetrical relations with the global South. It argues that addressing anti-Black racism and dismantling racial boundaries in Europe and North Africa is crucial for achieving justice and upholding human dignity.



Moroccans drive an increase in migration through the Western Mediterranean Route

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) | June 2024

This new GI-TOC report underscores Morocco's role as a departure point for both local and foreign migrants attempting irregular sea crossings to Europe. In 2023, specific migration routes experienced notable shifts, including an increase in Moroccan and Algerian arrivals through the WMR. The report attributes their demographic predominance to heightened restrictions on sub-Saharan African migrants' movement within Morocco, prompting intensified operations shifting migrants from northern coastal areas to interior cities. The report also details ongoing cross-border movements between Morocco and Algeria, with Algerians targeting sea crossings to Spanish enclaves and Moroccans heading towards Algeria's northwest coast. In the Canary Islands, overall arrivals surged, driven by migrants from Mauritania and Senegal, contrasting with a modest increase in departures from Morocco due to perceived risks and rising costs. Overall, Morocco's counter-migration policies led to intensified enforcement, mobility restrictions, and adaptations among smuggling networks and migrants alike, shaping migration patterns.



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).

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