



MMC North Africa

QUARTER 1 2025



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.

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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.

Front cover photo credit:

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Between 200 to 300 Nigerian people arrived in the port of Misrata, Libya, April 2011, as they try and board an IOM chartered ferry transporting 3rd country nationals to Benghazi.

Libya remains a major—and perilous—transit point for migrants to this day.

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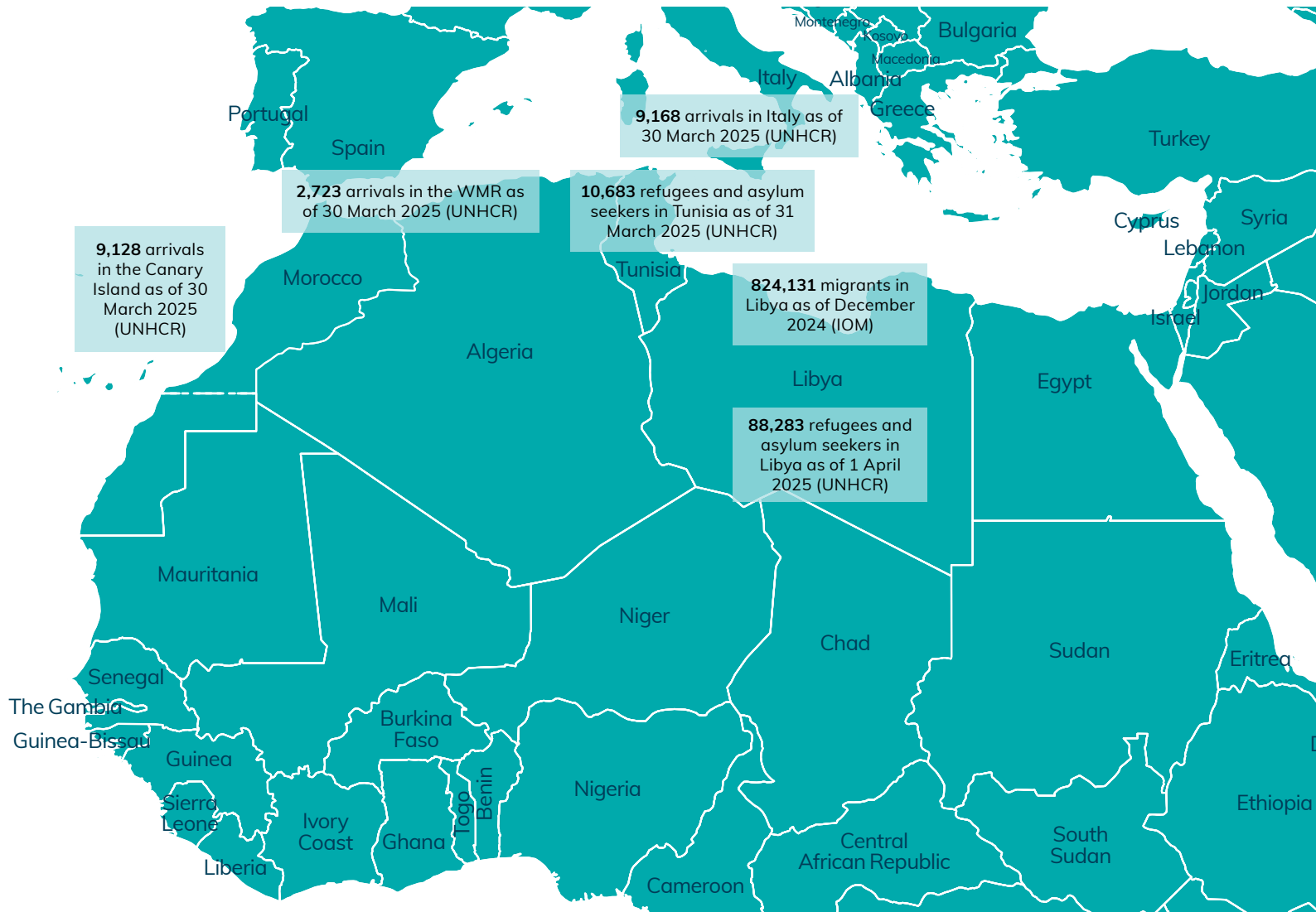
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa

Quarter 1 - 2025

Key Updates

- **Tunisia has dropped out of the top 10 nationalities arriving in Italy, despite ranking third last year and last quarter.** Departures from Tunisia to Italy [decreased](#) by 89% (from 3,438 to 372) compared to the previous quarter.
- **Out of the 9,168 irregular sea arrivals in Italy as of 30 March 2025, 93% departed from Libya.** Departures from Libya dropped by 25% compared to last quarter (from 11,341 to 8,502).
- **In March 2025, anti-migrant campaigns surged in Libya,** with the “No to Resettlement” [movement](#) staging protests to “protect” national identity.
- **In early 2025, the route from eastern Libya to Greece has continued to gain prominence as migrants increasingly resort to alternative routes.** By 30 March 2025, [UNHCR](#) reported a total of 2,168 arrivals in Crete, marking an increase from previous years.
- **The EU is reassessing its financial and political ties with Tunisia after a Guardian investigation exposed human rights abuses by EU-funded Tunisian security forces.** A new [report](#) presented to the European Parliament in early 2025 highlights the exploitation of sub-Saharan African migrants in Tunisia, detailing their expulsion and sale to armed groups in Libya.
- **The UK increases support for Tunisia to combat irregular migration,** announcing a new multi-million-pound funding package.
- **Morocco intensified interception and rescue operations in 2024,** reporting nearly 80,000 [thwarted](#) migration attempts, a 4.6% increase from the previous year. In January 2025, Spain [allocated](#) €2.5 million to further strengthen Morocco’s border control capabilities.

Regional Overview*



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

Overall, arrivals to Spain across various routes have decreased in early 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. According to [UNHCR](#), as of 30 March, Spain registered a total of 11,851 irregular arrivals in 2025. This represents a 28% decrease compared to the same period in 2024 and a 44% decrease compared to last [quarter](#) (21,237).

Arrivals on the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) [declined](#) by 16% compared to last year, totalling 2,723 as of 30 March 2025 (a 53% decrease compared to last [quarter's](#) figure of 5,128). The [main](#) countries of origin of migrants using this route continue to be Algeria (1,204) and Morocco (387), followed by Somalia (241) and Mali (146).

Overall arrivals to the Spanish peninsula and Balearic Islands continue to [decrease](#) this quarter by 3,5% reaching 2,181 as of 31 March 2025 compared to 2,259 over the same period in 2024. In terms of land arrivals to Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish Ministry of Interior data [reveals](#) a 53% decrease, from 805 in 2024 to 379, with most occurring in Ceuta.¹

Most arrivals are still recorded in the Canary Islands, via the Atlantic route. As of 30 March, they [reached](#) 9,128, representing a 31% decrease compared to last year and a 43% decrease compared to last [quarter](#) (16,109). As of March 2025, the [main](#) nationalities arriving to Spain via the Atlantic route are Mali (3,718), Senegal (1,488), Guinea (696), and Morocco (599). This general decline in arrivals to the Canary Islands may be linked to heightened restrictions in both [Mauritania](#) and [Senegal](#), where efforts to curb irregular migration appear to have [intensified](#) over the past year with support from Spain and the European Union (EU). Poor weather conditions, especially during the winter months, could have also deterred migrants from attempting the crossing due to heightened risks of shipwrecks and fatalities.

Central Mediterranean Route (arrivals to Italy)

As of 30 March, Italy [recorded](#) 9,168 irregular sea arrivals in 2025, a 17% decrease compared to the same period in 2024 (11,012) and a 43% decrease compared to the last quarter (16,166). Of those arriving in Italy by sea (9,168), the vast majority (93%, or 8,502 individuals) departed from Libya, with smaller numbers from Tunisia (4%, or 372) and Algeria (2%, or 164). Similar to last [quarter](#), departures from Libya decreased by 25% (from 11,341 to 8,502) while departures from Tunisia decreased by 89% (from 3,438 to 372).

¹ As of 31 March 2025, there [were](#) 3 sea arrivals in Ceuta and 1 sea arrival in Melilla, compared to 0 sea arrivals in Ceuta and 1 sea arrival in Melilla over the same period in 2024.

Restrictive migration policies in North Africa, coupled with [ongoing](#) EU-backed efforts to deter irregular migration, have contributed to a decline in departures, particularly from Tunisia, where [frequent](#) interceptions of migrant boats at sea have played a key role in this trend. This recent decline might be indicative of a short-term fluctuation rather than a long-term trend in use of the Central Mediterranean Route, as pointed out in a recent [MMC report](#).

The largest group of arrivals to Italy this quarter consisted of Bangladeshis (38%), followed by Pakistanis (18%), Syrians (10%), Egyptians (10%) and Eritreans (4%). This marks a shift from the previous quarter when the primary nationalities were Bangladeshis (21%), Syrians (19%), Tunisians (12%), Egyptians (7%) and Guineans (6%).

Despite previously ranking third, both last [year](#) and last [quarter](#), Tunisians now represent a mere 3% of arrivals in Italy, placing them seventh in terms of nationality. This decline may be linked to stricter migration controls in Tunisia, particularly interceptions. At least 66,000 migrants were intercepted and 1,400 boats were seized in [2024](#). The growing number of Bangladeshi and Pakistani arrivals in Italy aligns with earlier [reports](#) of these nationalities' increasing use of Libya as a transit point. Consistent with trends observed [throughout](#) 2024, the share of West African migrants among arrivals to Italy remains minimal, with no West African nationality [ranking](#) among the top 10 countries of origin. While fewer migrants are reaching Italy, Libya's migrant population is [growing](#), suggesting ongoing arrivals and potentially longer stays there.

Meanwhile, Algerians now represent 2% of arrivals, after being absent in both the [last](#) quarter and the [previous](#) year – consistent with last quarter's [observations](#) that migration from Algeria is on the rise. The share of Moroccan arrivals on the Central Mediterranean Route has also [increased](#) to 2%, potentially indicating departures from either Algeria, Libya or [Tunisia](#). As arrivals along the Western Mediterranean Route, where Algeria and Morocco are the leading countries of origin, decrease this quarter, this could signal a potential shift towards greater use of the Central Mediterranean Route as an alternative for these nationalities.

Dead or missing migrants²

According to the Missing Migrants Project ([MMP](#)), as of 30 March 2025, there were 225 recorded deaths or disappearances along the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy. On the Western Mediterranean Route, the IOM recorded 123 cases while 170 were recorded on the Atlantic Route to the Canary Islands. On 21 March 2025 the IOM's Missing Migrants Project (MMP) [reported](#) that 2024 was the deadliest year on record, with at least 8,938 migrants reported as dead or missing worldwide, of which, 2,452 were reported on the Mediterranean. As the MMP acknowledges, these figures are likely a [substantial underestimate](#).

2 Numbers in this section are drawing on IOM's MMP and based on MMC calculations made accessing the website on 3 April 2025.

Mixed migration in Libya

Latest figures on migrants and refugees in Libya

Despite the decrease of arrivals in Europe, especially in Italy, the number of migrants in Libya continues to increase. This indicates that migrants are still making their way to Libya and potentially remaining stranded there. According to the latest available estimates from the [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix](#), as of December 2024, there were 824,131 migrants in Libya. This represents an increase of 5% compared to the 787,326 reported [last quarter](#) and a 17% increase compared to the same period [last year](#) (706,369). The primary countries of origin are Sudan (29%), followed by Niger (23%), Egypt (20%), Chad (10%) and Nigeria (4%). Most migrants (53%) reside in the West of the country, followed by the East (34%) and South (13%).

As of 1 April 2025, there were 88,283 refugees and asylum seekers in [Libya](#). This represents a 12% increase compared to the figure reported last quarter ([79,019](#)) and a 49% increase compared to last year ([59,242](#)). Sudanese nationals represent the largest group, comprising 75% (66,716) of the total population of refugees and asylum seekers, indicating an 16% increase compared to last quarter ([57,648](#)) and a 114% increase compared to [last year](#) (31,103). The asylum seeker and refugee population is also composed of Eritreans (10%, or 8,995) and Syrians (8%, or 7,292).

The [Sudanese war](#) continues to drive the increase in the number of migrants and refugees in Libya. The 66,716 Sudanese registered as refugees do not represent the total number of Sudanese in Libya. As of 31 March 2025, the UNHCR [estimates](#) that 256,000 Sudanese have arrived in the country since April 2023, marking a 22% increase compared to December 2024 [figures](#). Alkufra [alone](#) has seen at least 198,000 arrivals, with 400–500 new individuals entering daily.

Growing anti-migrant sentiment and misinformation in Libya

In March 2025, anti-migrant [campaigns](#) gained momentum in Libya following [public speculation](#) around potential resettlement initiatives. Although [no](#) official plans regarding migrant resettlement in Libya were confirmed, public statements circulated widely online, sparking [significant](#) backlash. Led by Libyan citizens, the “no to resettlement” [movement](#), which began as a viral social media campaign, organised [demonstrations](#), emphasising the [protection of the nation's identity and social fabric](#).

These developments came amid a broader backdrop of political division around migration, with recent public statements reaffirming that Libya would not become a [destination](#) for migrant settlement and suggesting that the country might resort to [deportations](#) if external assistance remained insufficient.

In response to the growing tensions, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) expressed its concerns about the ongoing misinformation campaigns, [warning](#) that “misleading narratives only foster fear and hostility” towards migrants.

Rising migration from Eastern Libya to Greece

In early 2025, the route from eastern Libya to Greece has [continued](#) to gain prominence as migrants increasingly resort to alternative routes. By 30 March 2025, [UNHCR](#) reported a total of 2,168 arrivals in Crete, marking an increase from previous years. For [comparison](#), there were 1,961 arrivals between January and 16 June 2024, while only 750 [arrivals](#) were registered in 2023. In addition to the islands of Crete and Gavdos, there have been additional arrivals in [Chios](#) and [Tilos](#). In January alone, over 200 migrants [arrived](#) on the Greek islands of Crete and Gavdos within a single week. The migrants arriving are [mainly](#) from Bangladesh, [Pakistan](#), Egypt and Sudan, reporting that they [paid](#) US\$2,000 each for passage.

Mass graves in Libya expose deadly risks for migrants and spark EU funding criticism

In February, the discovery of two mass graves in Libya brought to light the [deadly risks](#) that migrants face during their journey. This follows a similar discovery last [year](#), when a mass grave containing the bodies of at least 65 migrants was found in south-west Libya. The graves discovered this quarter were found in [two](#) separate locations: Jakharrah, south of Benghazi, where 19 bodies were discovered, and the Alkufra desert in southeastern Libya, where up to 70 bodies may be buried. The graves were uncovered following a police raid on a human trafficking [operation](#), during which migrants were freed. While the exact cause of death and the victims' identities remain unclear, [IOM](#) confirmed that some bodies showed signs of gunshot wounds.

This discovery of the two mass graves has reignited civil society [criticism](#) of the EU's migration cooperation with Libya. Over 30 human rights organisations are urging the EU to reassess its funding, warning that support to security forces may contribute to the dangerous conditions faced by migrants. Similar concerns recently led to an EU review of funding in [Tunisia](#), and civil society actors in Libya are now [calling](#) for a comparable shift in their country – ending support for security forces and redirecting aid toward migrant protection.

Over 600 Nigerien migrants expelled from Libya

During one of the [largest](#) expulsions operations in Libya, more than 600 Nigerien nationals were expelled from the country in January 2025. Some of these migrants were [detained](#) across various regions in Libya, including Tripoli, Qatrone, Sabha and Misrata. This mirrors earlier incidents in [November](#) and [July](#) 2024, when Alarme Phone Sahara (APS) documented the expulsion of over 400 people to Dirkou in northern Niger. The organization has also previously highlighted that approximately [10,000](#) individuals are currently detained in Libya, facing imminent expulsion.

Observers have [linked](#) the expulsions to broader EU-Libya migration cooperation. As Libyan authorities have [not](#) issued any formal policy on these operations, reports [suggest](#) that expulsions are being carried out arbitrarily by local officials, raising concerns over the lack of oversight and legal safeguards. Similarly, APS has [condemned](#) the expulsions, calling for their immediate halt and urging respect for migrants' rights and freedom of movement. The organisation also [criticises](#) EU-Libya migration [agreements](#), arguing that they reinforce restrictive policies that [endanger](#) migrants rather than offering protection.

Mixed Migration in Tunisia

Latest figures on refugees in Tunisia

As of 31 March, 10,683 refugees and asylum seekers were [registered](#) with UNHCR in Tunisia, representing a 31% decrease compared to the 15,514 registered last quarter and a 35% decrease compared to the same [period](#) last year (16,374 as of 31 March 2024). UNHCR registration remains closed, with no new registrations since last year: only card renewals and newborn [registrations](#) are being processed. The primary countries of nationality [include](#) Sudan (47%), Syria (19%), Somalia (9%), Côte d'Ivoire (3%) and South Sudan (1%). Most refugees and asylum seekers are in Medenine (51%), followed by Greater Tunis (30%), Sfax (6%) and Sousse (2%).

Report highlights human trafficking allegations in Tunisia: migrants expelled and sold to groups in Libya

A recent report³ [presented](#) to the European Parliament in early 2025 sheds light on the exploitation of sub-Saharan African migrants in Tunisia. The [report](#) details the testimonies of 30 migrants who were forcibly expelled from Tunisia and sold to armed groups in Libya between June 2023 and November 2024.

The witnesses⁴ are primarily [from](#) Central and Western Africa, with one individual from Sudan. They describe a systematic process through which migrants are arrested by Tunisian authorities, transported to the border, and detained in camps before being sold to Libyan militias. Once in Libya, migrants are held in prisons until ransoms are paid for their release. Supported by [video](#) and [audio](#) testimonies, the accounts include details of violence and abuse, with some victims recounting sexual violence and physical torture.

The [report](#) challenges Tunisia's designation as a safe country for migrants and [contends](#) that these actions constitute grave violations of international law, including crimes against humanity, torture, enslavement and racial discrimination. Given Tunisia's role in EU-funded migration management, the [report](#) details and scrutinises the financial support provided by the EU and its member states, [raising](#) critical questions about the implications of this cooperation for migrants.

EU shifts stance on Tunisia amid human rights concerns

The EU is [reevaluating](#) its financial and political ties with Tunisia following a Guardian [investigation](#) that revealed [serious](#) human rights violations by EU-funded Tunisian security forces. This review also follows [criticism](#) from the EU Ombudsman, who had previously [highlighted](#) that the EU did not conduct a formal human rights impact assessment before allocating funds to Tunisia under the 2023 Memorandum of Understanding. Despite initially [rejecting](#) claims of misconduct, the EU now recognises the need for a revised strategy in its engagement with the North African country.

3 The [report](#) was prepared by Researchers X, an international research group operating under a collective pseudonym for safety reasons, with legal, mapping, and scientific support from [ASGI](#), [Border Forensics](#), and [On Borders](#).

4 According to the report, the interviewed migrants often defined themselves and their accounts using "witness/testimony."

According to [the Guardian](#), EU officials have confirmed that new arrangements are being prepared for the EU-Tunisia relationship over the coming years. A series of subcommittees will be established to ensure that human rights remain central to the partnership until 2027. How this reexamination of the partnership will play out remains to be seen, but it reflects [increasing](#) scrutiny of human rights concerns within EU-Tunisia relations.

Tunisia aims to increase voluntary returns of irregular migrants

The Tunisian Presidency has called for [increased](#) efforts to accelerate the voluntary return of irregular migrants, highlighting that 1,544 people who have been repatriated so far in 2025. The Presidency [urged](#) the IOM and other relevant organizations to increase their support, emphasising the need for greater humanitarian and legal action to address the issue. In 2024, 7,250 migrants were [returned](#) to their countries of origin from Tunisia, [reflecting](#) a 183% increase from 2023 and a 350% increase compared to 2022.

UK increases support for Tunisia to combat irregular migration

During a visit to Tunisia in January 2025, the UK Foreign Secretary announced a new multi-million-pound funding package designed to combat irregular migration and “[smash the \[human smuggling\] gangs](#)” that facilitate it. This support will see the allocation of up to £5 million to fund programs in Tunisia that aim to enhance the employability of Tunisians, based on the [flawed](#) assumption that this will [reduce](#) their likelihood of attempting sea crossings to Europe. An additional £1 million will support the IOM’s Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration program.

The UK has also [supplied](#) drones and night vision technology to assist Tunisian authorities in intercepting migrants. This announcement came just a week after reports that the EU was [reconsidering](#) its funding to Tunisia over security force abuses, yet the UK Foreign Secretary [praised](#) Tunisian authorities for their efforts in preventing sea crossings with UK-provided drones and night vision equipment.

Mixed Migration in Morocco

Morocco increases interception and rescue operations in 2024 amid greater Spanish support

In 2024, Morocco's Interior Ministry reported [intercepting](#) nearly 80,000 attempts to reach the European Union, a 4.6% increase from the previous year. The majority of those intercepted were migrants [from](#) West Africa, with 58% originating from the region, 12% from North Africa (including Morocco itself), and 9% from East and Central Africa. Additionally, Moroccan authorities [rescued](#) 18,645 migrants aboard boats, reflecting an 11% increase compared to 2023.

The increase in interceptions is partly attributed to the [strong cooperation](#) between Morocco and Spain on migration management. This partnership has [strengthened](#) maritime surveillance, using drones and radar

to detect vessels before they embark on the sea journey. Moroccan and Spanish coastguards also regularly [collaborate](#) to intercept migrants, aiming to prevent irregular departures.

In January 2025, Spain allocated €5 million to Morocco to enhance its border surveillance capabilities. The funding will be used to [purchase](#) vehicles such as motorcycles and buggies, with the aim of enhancing Morocco's ability to monitor and secure its borders. This latest funding [follows](#) the provision of 20 advanced surveillance systems worth €4.12 million in December 2024.

Moroccan administrative change threatens cross-border workers' permit renewals in Ceuta and Melilla

Recent administrative changes in Morocco are complicating the renewal and application process for cross-border work permits in Ceuta and Melilla, affecting [many](#) cross-border workers, the majority of whom are [women](#). These workers, who play a vital [role](#) in the local economies of the Spanish enclaves – particularly in commerce, hospitality and restaurants – are now struggling to maintain their legal employment status.

A new [directive](#) from the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior now [limits](#) the issuance of residency certificates – required for Spanish work permit applications – to cases involving the renewal or issuance of a Moroccan national identity card. Previously, these certificates could be issued [under](#) a general category, which facilitated the regularization process for cross-border workers.

The uncertainty surrounding these workers' legal status is exacerbated by the precarious nature of their employment. Many [receive](#) wages significantly lower than those of local residents and face [limited](#) job mobility. Local organisations have [raised](#) concerns, calling for urgent intervention from Spanish authorities. Proposed solutions [include](#) temporarily reopening the border to allow affected workers to regularise their status or ensuring that employers provide full severance compensation.

Mixed Migration in Algeria

France to reconsider 1968 migration agreement with Algeria

In February 2025, the French Prime Minister [announced](#) plans to “reexamine” the [1968 migration agreement](#), which grants Algerian nationals and their families preferential rights to live and work in France compared to other nationals.⁵ Migration remains a key point of friction between the two countries, with France accusing Algeria of [failing](#) to cooperate on the return of its citizens in France who had received an obligation to leave the French territory (*Obligation de Quitter le Territoire Français*) and arguing that such preferential treatment is no longer justified. In response, Algeria [reiterated](#) its firm rejection of any ultimatums, emphasising that its actions are driven solely by the responsibility to protect its nationals.

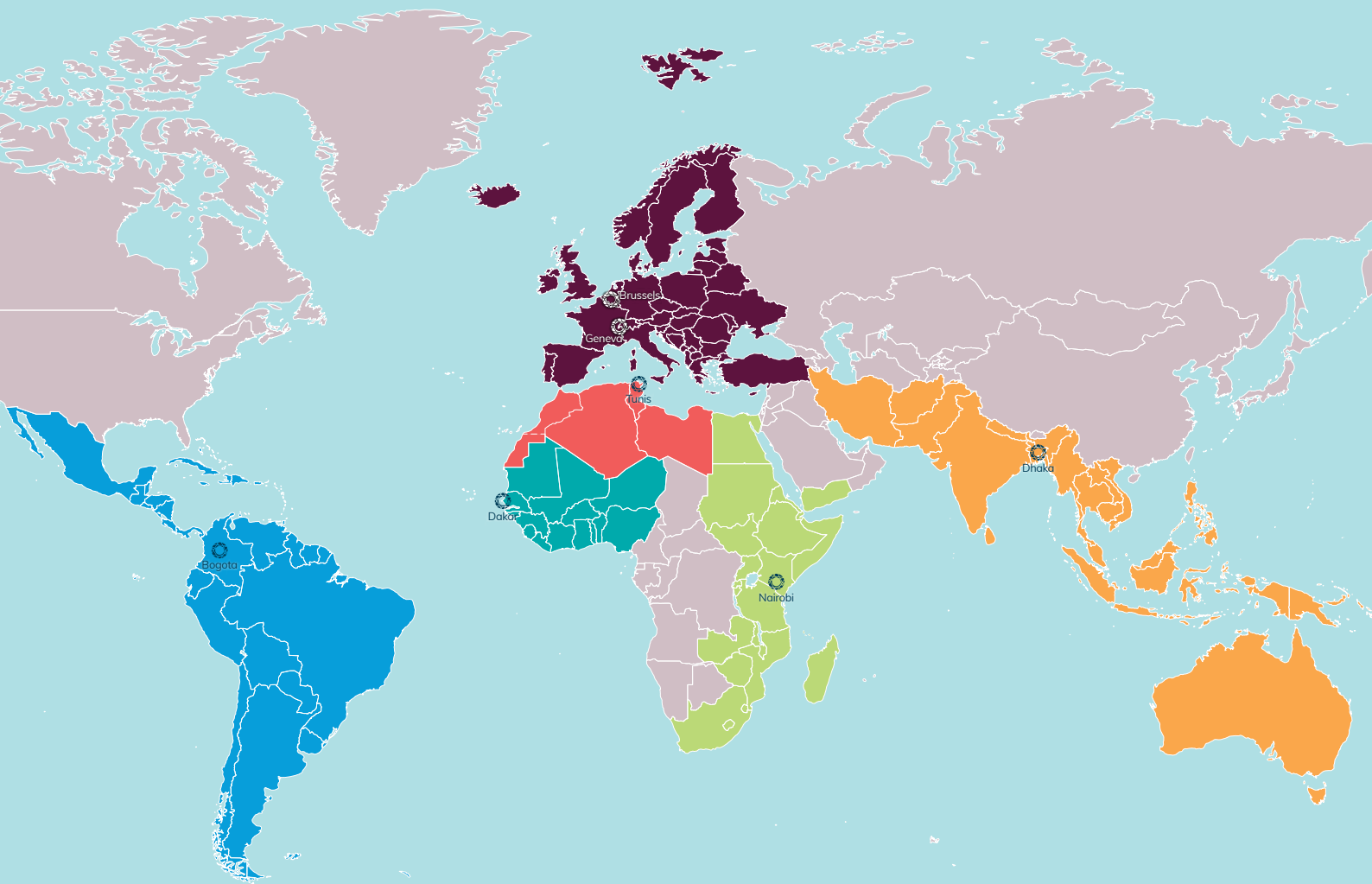
⁵ The agreement [offers](#) Algerians advantages over other foreign nationals, including faster access to a ten-year [residence](#) permit. For example, Algerian spouses of French citizens qualify after just one year of marriage, while other nationalities must wait three years.

This is not the first time the agreement has come under scrutiny, as a similar debate [arose](#) in 2023 amid a diplomatic dispute. While some in France portray the agreement as overly generous to Algerians, it was initially [intended](#) to manage migration rather than promote it. Negotiated at France's initiative, the agreement [aimed](#) to regulate Algerian immigration at a time when the country was looking to diversify its foreign labor force. Over time, its benefits have been significantly reduced, including with the [introduction](#) of a visa requirement for Algerian nationals in 1986.

Algeria, Tunisia and Libya deepen trilateral cooperation

Building on the trilateral consultations from [April](#) 2024, this quarter saw further developments as Algeria's president [announced](#) plans for a follow-up summit with Tunisia and Libya, scheduled for 2025 in Libya. While the date has yet to be confirmed, Libya's Presidential Council [reiterated](#) its commitment to holding these high-level meetings regularly.

This ongoing dialogue underscores the continued focus on border security and migration management, in addition to broader economic development projects. The [first](#) trilateral meeting took place in April 2024 in Tunis, with discussions covering regional economic integration but primarily focusing on border security and efforts to curb irregular migration. One [key](#) outcome was the decision to form joint teams dedicated to securing shared borders. Meanwhile, human rights organisations continue to document concerning developments along these borders, including [expulsions](#) of migrants from Tunisia to remote desert areas along the Algerian and Libyan borders. Between June 2023 and 28 November 2024, at least 12,010 people were [intercepted](#) at Tunisia's border, while 509 were expelled from Algeria into Libya.



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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