



MMC West Africa

QUARTER 2 2025

Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa



This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the West Africa (WA) region. The core countries of focus for this region are Senegal, Mauritania, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and the coastal countries. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any 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.

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The environment in Diffa, Niger, 2023.

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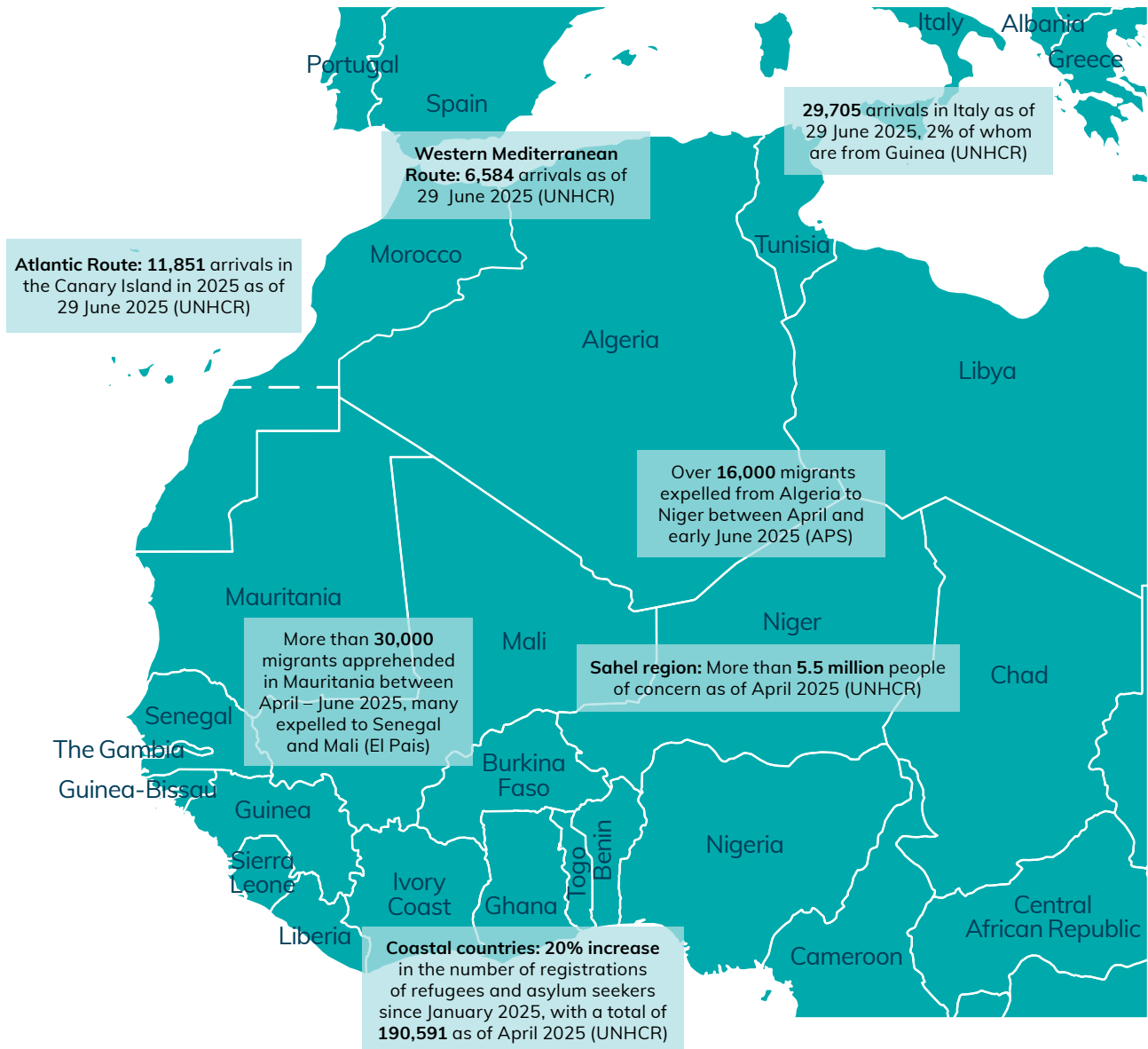
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: West Africa

Quarter 2 - 2025

Key Updates

- Arrivals to the Canary Islands **dropped** by 41% in the first half of 2025 (as of 29 June), compared to the same period last year, largely due to tighter migration controls in Mauritania, Senegal, and Morocco. On the other hand, arrivals to Spain via the Western Mediterranean Route **increased** by 15% in the same period.
- Mauritania **reportedly** apprehended over 30,000 irregular migrants in raids and interceptions between January and April 2025, with many being expelled to Mali and Senegal.
- Mauritania intensifies bilateral migration diplomacy with **Mali** and **Senegal**, focusing on enhancing cooperation on irregular migration control.
- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) validated its **Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan (LMSAP)** to promote safe and regular migration; protect migrant workers' rights; enhance regional migration governance; and advance gender equality and social inclusion.
- In May and June, torrential rains triggered flooding in parts of **Nigeria** and **Ghana**, leaving dozens dead and displacing thousands. As of 1 July, floods have **displaced** 21,000 people in Nigeria and 3,000 in Ghana.
- The United States has **enacted** a travel ban imposing full and partial restrictions on countries such as **Togo** and **Sierra Leone**, and is considering **expanding** it to nearly 40 African states – including Senegal, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Mauritania, and Niger – which may face full or partial restrictions.
- Between April and early June 2025, Algeria **expelled** over 16,000 migrants to Niger. In response, the Nigerien government has **launched** a repatriation plan, supported by IOM, to return over 4,000 migrants to their countries of origin by July 2025.
- Ghana's authorities arrested over 2,200 migrants from **neighbouring** countries, such as Burkina Faso, Togo, Niger, and Nigeria, citing rising street begging and irregular migration.

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

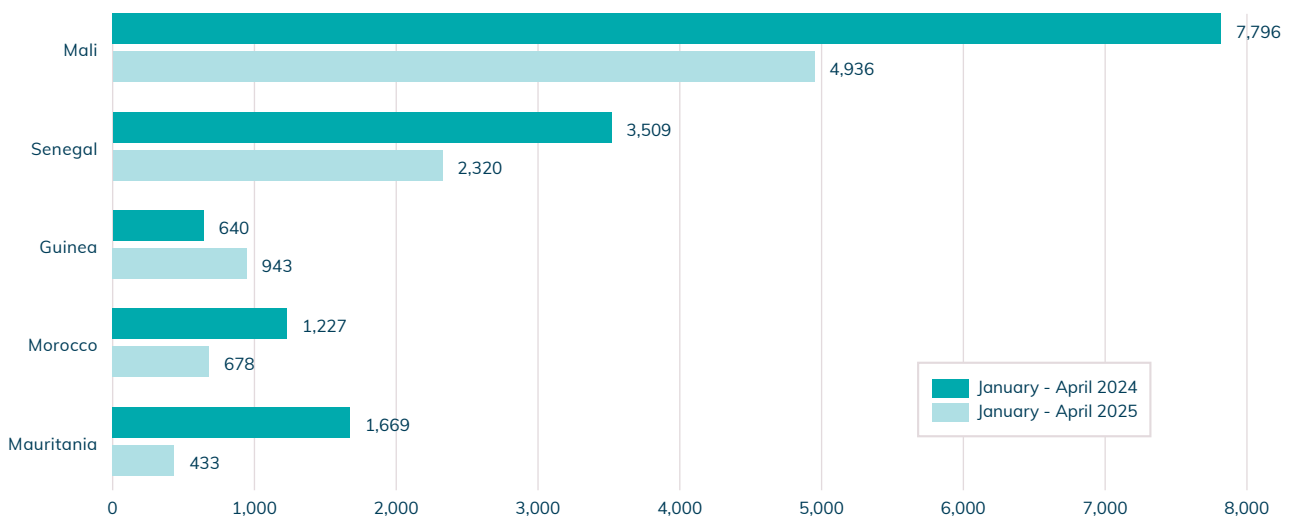
Northbound mixed migration

Atlantic and Western Mediterranean Route

While arrivals to Spain via the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) increased, arrivals to the Canary Islands in Spain have decreased in 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) of 29 June, Spain registered a total of 18,022 irregular arrivals in 2025. This represents a 28% decrease compared to the same period in 2024 and a 48% decrease compared to last quarter (11,851). While arrivals to the Canary Islands declined this quarter, they remain Spain's primary entry point, with 11,438 recorded arrivals as of 29 June. This marks a 41% decrease compared to the same period last year and a 75% drop from the previous quarter (9,128).

As of April 2025, there has been a general decline in irregular arrivals to the Canary Islands among most West African nationalities, with Mauritanian arrivals [decreasing](#) by 74%, Moroccan by 45%, Malian by 37%, and Senegalese by 34%. In contrast, arrivals of Guinean nationals increased by 47%. Guineans now rank as the third most common nationality arriving in Spain via the Atlantic route, up from fifth place during the same period last year (Figure 1). While Mauritania, Senegal, and Morocco were the [main](#) embarkation zones along the Atlantic route to Spain in 2024, increasing enforcement measures and migration control efforts in these countries have contributed to the observed decline in departures in early 2025. These variations may be reflective of short-term fluctuations, rather than longer-term shifts in migration routes.

Figure 1. Arrivals in the Canary Islands via the Atlantic Route: Top five nationalities, January – April 2024 and January – April 2025¹



¹ Figures sourced from Frontex's Migratory Map: ['Detections of Illegal Border-Crossings'](#) statistics.

Arrivals on the WMR² [increased](#) by 15% compared to the same period last year, totalling 6,584 as of 29 June (a 42% increase compared to last quarter's figure of (2,723). Between 1 January and 30 June 2025, 2,980 migrants [arrived](#) in the Balearic Islands, more than three and a half times the number recorded during the same period in 2024. As of May 2025, the [main](#) countries of origin of migrants using this route continue to be Algeria (42%) Morocco (16%), Somalia (7%), and Mali (6%). In terms of land³ arrivals to Ceuta and Melilla, however, the Spanish Ministry of Interior data [reveals](#) a 10% decrease from 1,172 in 2024 to 1,059 as of 30 June 2025, with most occurring in Ceuta (978).

Central Mediterranean Route (arrivals to Italy)

As of 29 June, Italy [recorded](#) 29,705 irregular sea arrivals in 2025, a 17% increase compared to the same period in 2024 (23,316) and a 124% increase compared to the [last quarter](#) (9,168). Of those arriving in Italy by sea (29,705), the vast majority (91% or 26,893 individuals) departed from Libya, with smaller numbers from Tunisia (6% or 1,888) and Algeria (2% or 439). Unlike [last quarter](#), departures from Libya increased this quarter by 116% (from 8,502 to 18,391) while departures from Tunisia increased by 308% (from 372 to 1,516).

West African representation [remains](#) limited, with only Guineans (at just 2%) appearing in the top 10 nationalities of arrivals in Italy, consistent with patterns seen throughout 2024.⁴ The limited presence of most West African nationalities among arrivals may reflect the growing lack of viable migration options out of North Africa for this group, particularly from Tunisia. In the face of increasingly restrictive policies and a hostile environment, many West Africans find themselves unable to remain in Tunisia but also unable to safely continue toward Europe. This has left some stranded in precarious conditions, while others are turning to assisted voluntary return programmes.

Dead or missing refugees and migrants⁵

According to the [Missing Migrants Project](#) (MMP), as of 30 June 2025, there were 199 recorded migrant deaths or disappearances on the Atlantic Route to the Canary Islands. On the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded 150 cases while 550 were recorded along the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) to Italy. As the MMP acknowledges, these figures are likely a [substantial underestimate](#). According to [Caminando Fronteras](#), for example, 1,482 migrants were reported missing or disappeared along the Canary Islands route in the first five months of 2025.

In his [report](#) to the UN General Assembly published on 28 April 2025, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants point to the phenomenon of migrants going missing or being subjected to enforced disappearance as linked to restrictive migration policies, externalised border controls, and inadequate rescue systems that push migrants onto dangerous routes.

² The Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) refers to routes that migrants take through West and North Africa towards sea crossing in the western area of the Mediterranean, departing from Morocco or Algeria, towards Spain.

³ The number of sea arrivals to Ceuta and Melilla [remains](#) minimal, with 10 arrivals in 2025 as of 30 June and 16 arrivals over the same period in 2024.

⁴ The largest group of arrivals consisted of Bangladeshis (37%), followed by Eritreans and Pakistanis (11%), Egyptians (10%), and Syrians (6%).

⁵ Numbers in this section are drawing on IOM's MMP and based on MMC calculations, accessing the website on 9 July 2025

Mixed migration within and to the West Africa region

As of April 2025, according to UNHCR [data](#), there were more than 5.5 million people of concern in the Sahel.⁶ Among these, 3,174,024 were internally displaced persons (IDPs), reflecting almost no change since [January](#) 2025. The overall refugee and asylum seeker population increased by 9% compared to [January](#) 2025 (2,202,426), reaching 2,403,160. Worsening economic conditions and growing insecurity in [Mali](#), [Niger](#), and [Burkina Faso](#) are pushing more people to flee their homes in search of safety.

Refugees and asylum seekers in coastal countries

The overall refugee and asylum seeker population in coastal countries has seen an increase, largely driven by a rise in registrations, especially in Ghana, which has granted [prima facie](#) refugee status to displaced Burkinabes since February 2025.

According to UNHCR [data](#) there was an estimated total of 190,591 refugees and asylum seekers registered in the coastal countries of Côte d'Ivoire (76,888), Ghana (25,743), Togo (60,106), and Benin (27,854) as of April 2025. This compares to 158,852 recorded refugees and asylum seekers as of [January](#) 2025, representing a 20% increase over a three-month period. Between January and April 2025, Ghana recorded the highest increase at 47%, followed by Togo (23%), Benin (20%), and Côte d'Ivoire (11%). Since February 2025, Ghana has granted prima facie refugee status to displaced Burkinabes.

Mauritania: continued expulsions raise alarms over rights violations

Between January and April 2025, Mauritanian authorities [reportedly](#) apprehended over 30,000 irregular migrants in widespread raids and interceptions. Migrants were [rounded](#) up from homes, streets, workplaces, and at sea before being detained in temporary holding facilities and expelled across land borders into Mali and Senegal. The nationalities most affected include Malians, Senegalese, Guineans, Gambians, and Ivorians. Numerous reports describe degrading treatment and lack of due process. Migrants were [stripped](#) of belongings, including phones, and subjected to abuse in detention.

In Rosso, a border town between Mauritania and Senegal, migrants [remain](#) stranded without identity documents, unable to return or move onward. Local aid workers [report](#) at least two buses per day arriving with dozens of deportees, overwhelming the region's limited shelter infrastructure. Rights organisations have [condemned](#) the expulsions.

These developments follow the 2024 migration partnership [signed](#) between Mauritania and the European Union, aimed at curbing irregular migration to Europe. Since the agreement, Mauritania has [stepped up](#) border enforcement and deportations, as part of broader efforts to [combat](#) smuggling and uphold national sovereignty. In May, a Mauritanian member of parliament [denounced](#) the agreement as "suspicious" and called for its cancellation, warning that it risks turning Mauritania into a detention ground for Europe and

⁶ The figures reported reflect the number of IDPs in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger, as well as refugees dispersed throughout the Sahel region. They also include the number of refugees from the Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) and in the neighbouring coastal countries of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo.

citing abuses against both migrants and Mauritanian citizens. In parallel, the [number](#) of IOM-facilitated voluntary returns from Mauritania also doubled in 2025 compared to 2024.

Mali–Mauritania dialogue highlights security-driven migration cooperation

On 11 April 2025, Mauritania's Foreign Minister [concluded](#) a high-level visit to Mali. The visit centered on intensifying joint efforts to combat irregular migration toward Europe. This comes as Mauritania is the [primary](#) departure point to Spain, with Malians continuing to represent the most common nationality arriving irregularly in Spain.

Beyond border control, the discussions also [touched](#) on the treatment of Malian nationals residing in Mauritania. The Malian government has called on Nouakchott to show greater compassion toward its citizens, whether in regular or irregular status, amid mounting concerns over arbitrary arrests and expulsions. This follows the expulsions by Mauritania that began [last quarter](#), during which Malian nationals were among the primary targets. In response, the Malian government [dispatched](#) a delegation to the Kayes region (bordering with Mauritania) to support over 700 nationals expelled from Mauritania.

According to MMC key informants, there were local reports of tensions in Bamako, where Mauritanian nationals were allegedly subject to retaliatory sentiment following the expulsions. Last quarter, [threats](#) of forced closures of Mauritanian-owned shops in Bamako raised [fears](#) of diplomatic fallout, but relations have since stabilised with the [ongoing](#) bilateral cooperation.

Senegal and Mauritania sign migration agreement to regulate movement and prevent irregular migration

On 2 June, the foreign ministers of Senegal and Mauritania [signed](#) two new migration agreements. The first agreement focuses on facilitating residency conditions for nationals, while the second strengthens joint efforts to curb irregular migration. These agreements build on diplomatic momentum established [last quarter](#), when the Senegalese prime minister visited Mauritania to strengthen bilateral ties.⁷

The updated residency framework [replaces](#) a decades-old accord from 1972 and introduces more flexible conditions for obtaining a residence permit. Under the new terms, nationals of both countries must apply for a residence card if they intend to stay for more than three months. This card may now be [issued](#) for one year even without a work contract or proof of income, with such documentation only required upon renewal. The second agreement [covers](#) cooperation against irregular migration, migrant smuggling, and human trafficking. Mauritania's foreign minister emphasised that the aim is to end the exploitation of vulnerable people while reinforcing local capacities to combat transnational crime.

⁷ During that visit, both countries underscored their shared commitment to addressing irregular migration and transnational crime, agreeing to activate regular meetings between border and security forces. They also pledged to facilitate free movement and ease residency requirements for each other's nationals.

The agreements come in the wake of growing tensions linked to Mauritania's recent expulsion campaigns, which drew strong criticism from Dakar. In February 2025, Senegalese Foreign Minister condemned the expulsions, describing them as “[inhumane](#).”

Interception off Guinea-Bissau highlights dynamic secondary departure points along the Atlantic Route

On 1 June, authorities in Guinea-Bissau [intercepted](#) 56 migrants – primarily from Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, and Guinea Conakry – off the coast in the country's north. This follows another incident in May when 26 migrants [reportedly](#) died in a shipwreck off the coast of Senegal after departing from Guinea-Conakry. While Mauritania, Senegal, and Morocco remain the primary points of departure along the Atlantic route, increased enforcement in these countries appears to be contributing to the dynamism of departure points, with smugglers adapting by starting journeys from a broader range of coastal locations. This [includes](#) Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry, where analysts and migrants alike [point](#) to worsening political instability, economic hardship, and personal insecurity as key drivers of departures.

ECOWAS validates labour migration strategy

On 15 May, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) formally validated its [Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan](#) (LMSAP)⁸ for 2025–2035 at a regional [workshop](#) held in Accra, Ghana. The LMSAP sets out [five](#) strategic objectives: promoting safe and regular migration; protecting migrant workers' rights; maximizing migration's development potential; enhancing regional governance; and advancing gender equality and social inclusion.

To implement the strategy, ECOWAS will [establish](#) a Technical Coordination Committee and a Labour Migration Technical Working Group to guide action and monitor progress. Member States have committed to aligning their national frameworks with LMSAP priorities. The Strategy is also designed to align with broader continental efforts, including the AU Free Movement Protocol and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). As implementation begins, ECOWAS and its partners have [pledged](#) sustained technical support and funding mobilisation to ensure labour migration across the region is safe, dignified, and beneficial for both migrants and host communities.

While the LMSAP acknowledges the need to harmonize national policies and establish regional labour market information systems, questions remain about the political [will](#) and capacities of Member States to implement the strategy effectively.

⁸ Developed in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), IOM, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) under the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP).

Flooding in West Africa highlights climate and infrastructure vulnerabilities

On 29 May, torrential rains triggered flooding in Mokwa, western Nigeria, leaving at least [161](#) people dead and over 3,000 [displaced](#). Displaced individuals [took](#) shelter with relatives or moved back into damaged homes once the floodwaters began to subside. Critical infrastructure – bridges, roads, schools, and power lines – has been damaged or washed away, complicating rescue efforts and disrupting access to basic services. There are [growing](#) concerns over water contamination, disease outbreaks, and rising reports of gender-based violence linked to overcrowded shelters. This latest flood underscores Nigeria's climate vulnerability. In 2024 [alone](#), floods affected 34 of 36 states, displacing nearly 900,000 people and damaging over 1.3 million hectares of farmland.

In [May](#) and [June](#) 2025, heavy rains also triggered flooding in several parts of Ghana, including the capital Accra and communities in the Ada East District. The floods submerged houses, destroyed property, and displaced residents. While climate change is often cited as a driver of such extreme weather, some [argue](#) that Ghana's flooding crisis is [linked](#) to poor infrastructure, inadequate drainage systems, and uncoordinated land use planning.

As of 1 July 2025, Ghana and Nigeria are [among](#) several countries in West and Central Africa – including the Central African Republic (CAR), the Republic of Congo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – where floods have [affected](#) a combined 129,000 people, with 21,000 people displaced in Nigeria and 3,000 in Ghana.

U.S. travel bans targets African countries, with wider expansion under consideration

On 9 June, the U.S. imposed [partial](#) travel restrictions on Sierra Leone and Togo. The move suspended entry for nationals applying under immigrant and select non-immigrant visa categories (such as tourism, student, and exchange visas),⁹ due to high visa overstay rates and limited cooperation in accepting deported nationals. The same presidential order also [enacted](#) a broader travel ban affecting 12 countries, including several African states like Chad, Sudan, Libya, Eritrea, the Republic of Congo, and Somalia. The ban is grounded in [concerns](#) over terrorism, weak passport security, and non-compliance with deportation procedures.

The U.S. administration is now considering an [expansion](#) of the ban, potentially affecting up to 36 additional countries – around 25 of them in Africa. If implemented, nearly 40 African states could face full or partial travel restrictions. Countries [mentioned](#) in a leaked policy memo include Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. The affected foreign governments must demonstrate full cooperation in accepting the return of their citizens and third-country nationals.

The leaked memo explicitly [states](#) that even in cases where the US has serious concerns – such as weak governance or potential security threats – these concerns may be “[mitigated](#)” if the country shows willingness

⁹ Other visas may still be granted but with shorter validity.

to accept deportees, particularly individuals who cannot be returned to their country of origin. This approach reflects a broader effort to use travel bans as leverage to [enforce](#) cooperation on deportations. Critics have [condemned](#) the policy as discriminatory and racially motivated, citing inconsistencies in its application. They argue that the ban selectively targets African countries while sparing others facing similar challenges.

In parallel with expanded travel restrictions, the US administration has also proposed a new federal [tax](#) on remittances sent abroad by non-citizens. The measure would introduce a 3.5% levy on outbound money transfers by immigrants, on top of existing remittance fees. If adopted, the policy could affect African economies that [rely](#) heavily on remittances by increasing the financial burden on senders. In 2024, the US [remained](#) one of the largest sources of remittances to Sub-Saharan Africa, sending nearly \$10 billion to the region. Nigeria alone accounts for around 38% of Africa's total remittance receipts, with the US as its top sender in 2024, while 66% of Liberia's remittances also originated from the US.

UK to introduce visa restrictions for nationals of high asylum-origin countries

In a new policy aimed at reducing migration, the UK government is [preparing](#) to roll out targeted visa restrictions for nationals of countries with high asylum application, including Nigeria. According to the latest UK Home Office [figures](#), 2,841 Nigerian nationals claimed asylum in the UK in 2024, alongside 2,862 Sri Lankan nationals and 10,542 Pakistani nationals. Nigerian applicants have already faced [tighter](#) restrictions in recent years, including limits on dependents and post-study work.

The new policy is rooted in recent government [data](#) showing that a high number of asylum seekers entered the UK on student visas, with an estimated 16,000 of the 108,000 asylum claims filed in 2024 involving people who initially arrived under study-related permits. UK immigration authorities will [begin](#) screening visa applications – especially student and work visa categories – based on profiles linked to higher risks of asylum claims. Individuals identified as likely to seek asylum after arrival may face automatic rejection. Financial documents submitted during visa applications, such as bank statements, could later be also used to restrict eligibility for public support if the applicant files for asylum after entry.

Ghana conducts arrests of undocumented migrants amid growing security and humanitarian concerns

On 16 May, Ghana's immigration services arrested over 2,200 undocumented migrants – [primarily](#) women and children – from [neighbouring](#) Burkina Faso, Togo, as well as Niger and Nigeria. Authorities cited organised street begging and the increase in the number of irregular migrants in Ghana as the primary justifications for the operation. The Interior Minister announced plans to expand similar operations to other [cities](#), including Kumasi and Tamale. The arrests come amid heightened [concern](#) over irregular entries through Ghana's northern borders, driven in part by instability and violence in the Central Sahel. The operation has sparked [criticism](#), particularly over the detention of children and the potential forced return of individuals in need of international protection.

Return migration

Niger and IOM launch repatriation plan amid increasing expulsions from Algeria

Between April and early June 2025, Nigerien authorities [reported](#) the expulsion of over 16,000 migrants from Algeria – more than half the total recorded deportations for all of 2024. Rights groups have [condemned](#) these expulsions, calling for their immediate halt and urging greater protection of migrants' rights, particularly in light of escalating humanitarian risks along the Algeria–Niger border. In the border town of Assamaka, transit centres have become overcrowded due to the continued arrival of expelled migrants.

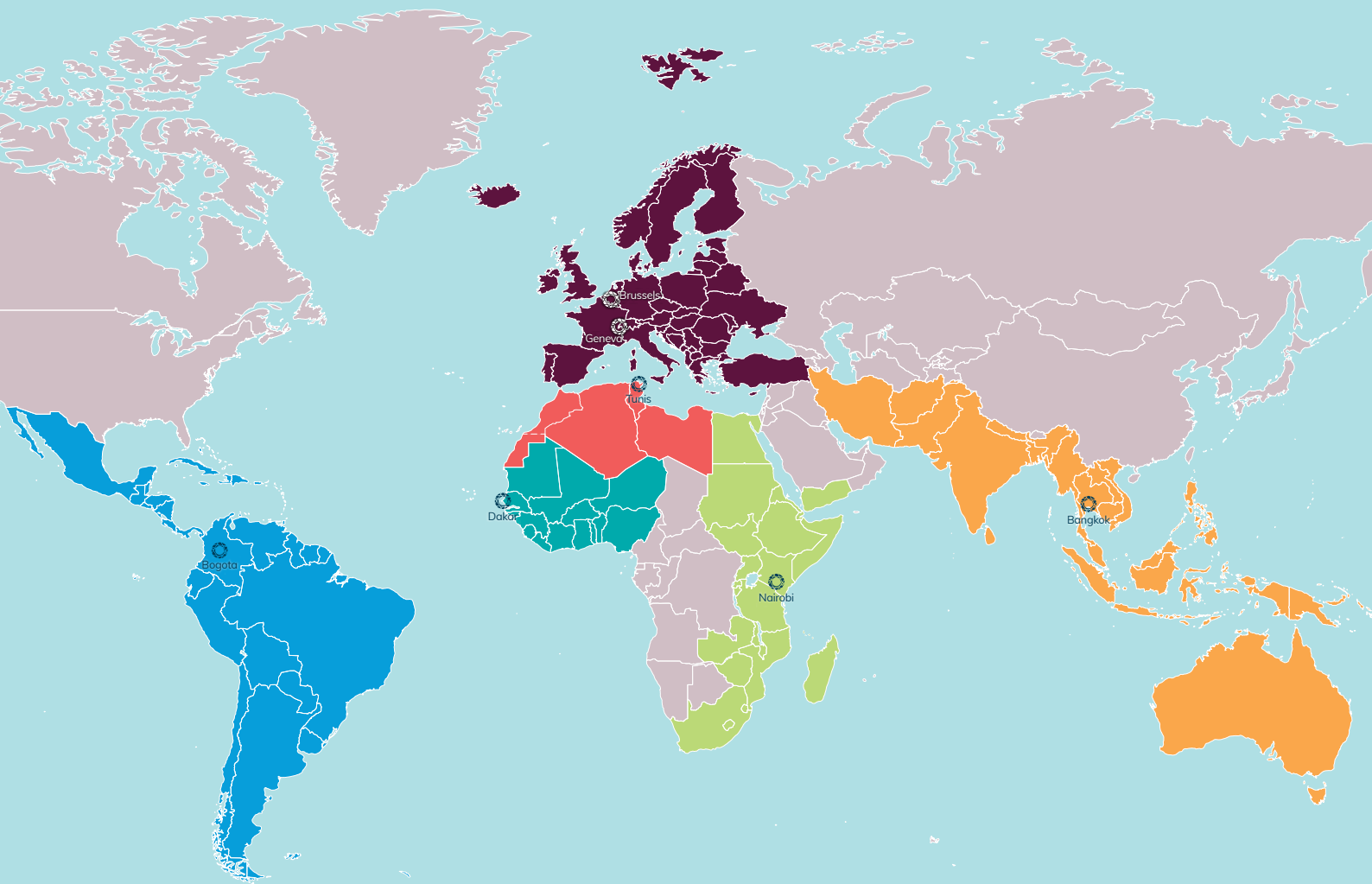
In response to the growing crisis, the Nigerien government, in partnership with IOM, has [launched](#) an emergency repatriation plan. The initiative aims to facilitate the voluntary return of more than 4,000 migrants to their countries of origin by July 2025.

Nigerien Interior Minister has [voiced](#) concern over the security and logistical challenges posed by the situation. He urged IOM and UNHCR to coordinate return operations, warning that further delays could severely strain local capacities and jeopardise regional stability.

Tightening US deportation measures affect Senegalese nationals

Since April 2025, the US has escalated deportations of Senegalese nationals residing irregularly on its territory. These operations, [reportedly](#) conducted without public announcement, involve the discreet removal of small groups on commercial carriers. Individuals [reportedly](#) lack time to collect personal belongings and are sometimes handcuffed during the journey. These conditions have sparked concern within Senegal's diaspora, particularly in states such as Illinois, California, New York, and Ohio, where multiple arrests and removals have been reported.

Senegalese authorities have [reiterated](#) their commitment to bilateral cooperation, while the US Embassy in Dakar [publicly](#) expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its support. The Embassy also promoted the [CBP One](#) application as a humanitarian tool to facilitate voluntary return, allowing undocumented migrants to signal their intent to leave, arrange travel, and potentially receive financial support, while avoiding detention. However, some rights groups [view](#) the initiative as part of a broader effort to externalize US migration control. This uptick comes amid a wider trend of restrictive migration policies in the US.



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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