

# MIGRATION IN NORTH AFRICA

**An Uncomfortable Position between  
Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe?**

*Edited by Hassen Boubakri*

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# FOREWORD

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Migration is a historical phenomenon that has shaped the Mediterranean region for centuries and has been particularly present in European discourse in past decades. With the increase in sea crossings across the Mediterranean in recent times, as well as the peculiar situations in many migration and deportation centers in North Africa, media and public attention to the migration debate in the Mediterranean is at a constant high. In the latest KAS-PoDiMed survey, almost half of respondents aged 18-29 in Tunisia (47 percent) considered migrating to another country, and even one-third in Morocco (31 percent) and more than one-fifth each in Algeria (23 percent) and Libya (21 percent) hold this view. The majority of whom cited economic reasons for considering emigration, usually with higher levels of education and typically with Europe as their primary destination. In the face of a global pandemic that is wreaking havoc on the already struggling economies of North Africa, this number is unlikely to diminish. Aside from the dangers of crossing the Mediterranean in often unfit nutshells that have already cost too many lives at sea, the sheer amount of human capital and brain drain lost to the countries of North Africa is a challenge in itself.

To shed light on local developments and perceptions on the topic of migration, this study brings together experts from the region to reveal the role migration plays in North Africa today. After all, the countries have been destination, transit and origin countries for centuries and will continue to be so in the future. The renowned experts who made the realization of this study possible contextualize the often one-sided narrative on migration and shed light on its relevance from a historical and socio-cultural perspective, while underscoring where priorities lie on the ground today and what the way forward may look like. We would like to thank the authors and especially the editor, Hassen Boubakri, for their invaluable contributions and dedication in making this study a reality. We believe that this publication will provide a new and informative perspective on migration in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and the region as a whole.

In this context, the Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS PoDiMed) undertakes its activities to promote greater understanding for cross-national and cross-regional developments in the Mediterranean region. KAS PoDiMed cooperates closely with local partners to pursue a shared vision for human development, economic progress, and political and social stability. Our commitment to this vision of freer and more prosperous development in the wider Mediterranean will continue to be a source of inspiration for our activities in the future.

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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

*Hassen Boubakri*

# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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North Africa<sup>2</sup> is a region characterized by its geographical unity because it is located, as its name indicates, on the northern fringe of the continent and because it is bordered by the southern shore of the Mediterranean. These two geographic indicators help shape the overall migration pattern of the region, even though the migration profiles of each of the countries in the region are different, and sometimes profoundly different. The three central Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) have very similar profiles. They have always been, and remain, countries of departure, but have become countries of transit and destination since the beginning of the new millennium. Libya's migration profile is totally different. For 50 years (1970-2020), it has been a country of immigration: on the eve of the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, Libya had 2 to 2.5 million immigrants, mostly sub-Saharan. However, Libya has also become a country of transit to Europe. The factors that differentiate these migration profiles are numerous.

Historical civilizations and empires (Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Andalusians, Ottomans, Iberians...) or more contemporary ones (French, English, Italians) that have reigned in the Mediterranean have strongly contributed to the establishment of traditions of exchange and human mobility between its three shores (Braudel, 2009).

Closer to home, the European colonization of North African countries in the 19th and 20th centuries gave rise to two types of migratory movements that are crucial to understanding the history of migration in Europe.

The French colonization of three countries in the region (Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco)<sup>3</sup> paved the way for a colonization that benefited not only the French settlers, but also the Spanish, Italians, and Maltese.

On the eve of Algeria's independence in 1962, approximately one million foreigners were living in the country, 95% of whom were French colonists. In 1956, the foreign population

settled in Tunisia had reached 243,000 people<sup>4</sup>, or 9% of the resident population of Tunisia, which at the time had 2.7 million inhabitants (Simon, G. 1979). In Morocco, the French population numbered 350,000 in 1955, the year before independence (Pellegrini, C. 2016). The Spanish population living in the Spanish-dominated areas numbered 85,000 in 1950 (Miège, J.L. 1955). On the eve of World War II, the number of Italian settlers in Libya was estimated at an average of 15,000 to 20,000 people (Cresti, F. 2013).

Following the independence of these countries, two large communities left the region, the settlers and the North African Jews. The Suez crisis in 1956 and the Six Day War in June 1967 between Israel and the Arab countries pushed Jewish communities, which had been settled for centuries, to leave the countries of the region for France, Israel, and Canada.

These independences also generated a new post-colonial migratory wave of nationals from the three central Maghreb countries towards the former metropolis, France. In the context of European post-war reconstruction, known as the "Thirty glorious years" ("Trente glorieuses") (1945-1974),<sup>5</sup> French, German, Belgian, and Dutch employers sent missions to the Moroccan and Tunisian countryside to recruit cheap rural labor forces on a massive scale. The Evian Accords, which provided the framework for Algeria's independence, clearly stipulated that Algerians would continue to have free access to France, especially since Algeria was classified as French territory until 1962. The borders of the industrial countries were open, and the companies directly recruited migrants freshly arrived from the former French colonies. Germany and the Benelux countries also took advantage of this favorable environment for North African immigration to Europe, while simultaneously expanding their recruitment pools to include immigrants from Turkey and the Balkans.

When the oil-producing countries resumed control over resources in 1973, nationalizations and tripling of the price of oil marked the end of the glorious years and the onset of the first major economic crisis of the post-war period. One of the consequences of this crisis was the cessation of immigration in 1974, the first decision on the scale of European countries to control migratory flows and reduce their volume.

Since then, European decisions on migration have followed the same course: ever more restrictive migration policies despite the multiplication of multilateral cooperation frameworks such as the Euro-Arab dialogue of the 1970s, the Barcelona Declaration in 1994, the association agreements between Europe and the Maghreb countries, the wave of readmission agreements between 1990-2000, the creation of the European Union, the neighborhood policies (with the southern Mediterranean countries), or the 5+5 Mediterranean dialogues in various fields, including migration.

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<sup>2</sup> North Africa is understood in this note to be the region that includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. These countries are also members, with Mauritania, of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). Egypt, being part of the North Africa region, is not covered by this note.

<sup>3</sup> France occupied Algeria for 130 years (1830-1962), Tunisia for 75 years (1881-1956), and Morocco for 44 years (1912-1956). Spain also occupied Western Sahara between 1884 and 1975. Spain also occupied Western Sahara between 1884 and 1975. It withdrew from the territory in 1975 without holding the referendum of the Saharawi people for which it was mandated by the UN. Western Sahara is today a Non-Self-Governing Territory according to the United Nations. (<https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/fr/nsgt/>). In 1990, the General Assembly reaffirmed that "the question of Western Sahara is one of decolonization, a process which the people of Western Sahara have not yet completed" ([https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/fr/nsgt#\\_edn2](https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/fr/nsgt#_edn2)). This territory is claimed by the Kingdom of Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. Italy invaded and then occupied Libya from 1911 until the Second World War. Between the end of the war and independence, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were under British occupation while Fezzan was under French occupation. Libya gained its independence in 1951.

<sup>4</sup> 180,000 French, 57,000 Italians, and 6,000 Maltese.

<sup>5</sup> The funds allocated by the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe gave a boost to the construction, industry, and agriculture sectors. Due to the lack of sufficient manpower in the European labor markets, employers massively recruited in former colonies and in the countries of Mediterranean Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Former Yugoslav Federation, Greece, Turkey).

However, the most important decision in this context was, without a doubt, the establishment of the Common European Space and the establishment of the Schengen system in 1985, followed by the strengthening of external borders and the classification of North African countries as “third countries”, like many others in the world.

One of the major consequences of this reorganization of person’s mobility in Europe was the triggering of irregular migration towards the continent, precisely from these third countries.

Indeed, while legal migration developed in a context of opening European borders and a strong demand for labor on European labor markets during the 1950s and 1960s, irregular migration is the result of the cessation of immigration and the tightening of entry and residence conditions for foreigners in immigration countries, whether to the north or south of the Mediterranean.

The major turning point was the period from 1985, when the Schengen Agreement was signed and implemented in a first group of traditional Western European immigration countries (France, Germany, Benelux), to 1993, when the system was extended to countries on the external borders of the common space, i.e., Spain and Italy, with regard to migration from Maghreb countries.

Since the mid-1980s, Spain and Italy have emerged as new massive immigration poles of North African nationals to Europe.

At first, these two countries became immigration zones by default. It is because France, Germany, and the Benelux countries formally stopped immigration as early as 1974, and then became part of the first core of Schengen member countries as early as 1986, that most North African migrants in particular shifted their focus to Spain and Italy, which only joined the Schengen system a few years later, in 1993. The “technique” of successive and massive regularizations of foreigners<sup>6</sup> in an irregular situation has been strongly exploited by the Italian and Spanish authorities in particular to fight against illegal residence, informal and/or undeclared work.

This explains the accelerated increase in the number of legal foreign residents in both countries, which has made these countries among the leading immigration countries in the European Union. At the beginning of the new millennium, each country was home to an average of 5 million foreigners. In 2006, the number of Moroccans in Spain rose to 800,000, and 400,000 in Italy. The number of Tunisians exceeded 200,000 on the same date. 90% of these migrants entered irregularly and then benefited from massive regularization operations in each of the countries over a period of 20 years (1985-2006). Sub-Saharan migrants have joined their Maghrebi peers and have in turn been implicated in migrant smuggling networks that take new candidates from their countries and areas of origin to the Italian and Spanish coasts. Civil wars and ethnic conflicts in Africa, poverty, and population explosions have been the main reasons for these migrations.

<sup>6</sup> Since 1986, Italy has carried out nine regularization operations.

The growth of irregular migration is therefore the result of entry restrictions and the closure of legal and orderly migration channels.

The enlargement of the European Union to include new member states in the Mediterranean (Malta, Cyprus) and the strengthening of the external borders close to the Maghreb countries<sup>7</sup> have triggered a new framework for managing flows and indirectly controlling the borders of third countries: “the outsourcing of borders control”.

In fact, readmission agreements were signed in 1998 between Italy, on the one hand, and Tunisia and Morocco on the other. Other agreements will likely follow between other countries of origin (Libya, Algeria) and other countries of destination, for example France, Spain, or Germany.

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, North African countries have tightened their legislation to fight terrorism, organized crime, and irregular migration. Morocco (in 2003) and Tunisia (in 2004) passed laws toughening sanctions against smuggling networks and also against irregular migrants themselves. The concern of both Italy and the EU to involve Libya in the fight against irregular migration<sup>8</sup> led them to use all their weight to have the embargo imposed on Libya by the Security Council in 2003 lifted. The result was not long in coming. As early as 2004, Libya was considered by the EU as “a strategic ally in the fight against irregular migration” in the Mediterranean (Boubakri, 2013c). Between 2004 and 2010, Libya fully cooperated with this European policy. Alitalia planes and Italian ships were used for mass repatriations to Libya, where the migrants who were turned back were placed in detention centers and then expelled in equal numbers to their countries of origin south of the Sahara or in North Africa (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco) (Idem).

Old and new bilateral cooperation agreements between EU member states and third countries in North Africa have contributed to a decrease in the number of crossings from African coasts to Italy, Spain, and the Canary Islands.

In 2009, the number of detections of illegal entries through the Western Mediterranean did not exceed 6,600 (FRONTEX, 2011). Between 2004 and 2010, the number of irregular arrivals on the Italian coasts steadily decreased to less than 5,000 arrivals in 2010 (Idem).

Thus, on the eve of the Arab uprisings, the European Union and its partners in North Africa were under the impression that they had the Mediterranean crossings to the Italian and Spanish coasts well under control.

In 2011, the central Mediterranean corridor saw two waves of irregular migration from Tunisia through Libya, following the fall of the regime in Tunisia and the civil war in Libya

<sup>7</sup> The maps of these borders clearly show their immediate proximity to third countries in the region: the Italian island of Lampedusa is only 80 miles from the Tunisian coast, and the width of the Sicilian Channel between Tunisia and Italy is only 125 miles, while the Strait of Gibraltar does not exceed 14 km ...

<sup>8</sup> At that time, Libyan authorities turned a blind eye to irregular crossings from Libyan ports in western Tripolitania (such as Zuwara, Sabratha...etc.) to the Italian and Maltese coasts and used these flows as a means to pressure Italy and the EU to lift the embargo imposed on Libya since 1992. The number of annual landings varied between 25,000 and 35,000 on average (FRONTEX and Italian Ministry of the Interior).

(Boubakri, 2013 a,b,c). 60,000 landings were recorded in this year, half of which were Tunisians. The other half were mostly sub-Saharan workers and refugees who had fled the war in Libya. Relatively unaffected by the effects of the Arab revolts, Algeria and Morocco have not experienced the massive departures that Tunisia and Libya have. Thus, in the western Mediterranean, the number of landings remained moderate: 8,448 in 2011 and 6,400 in 2012 (Frontex, 2013).

According to FRONTEX<sup>9</sup>, within five years (2015-2019), 97,127 nationals from the three Maghreb countries were detected entering illegally at European borders. 52,611 were Moroccan (54.1%), 27,639 were Algerian (28.4%), and 16,877 were Tunisian (17.3%).

As early as 2011, the EU and its Member States affected by these waves of migration approached third countries in the region to revise their respective approaches to the management of migration flows and renew the agreements signed in the 1990s and 2000s<sup>10</sup>.

However, the most publicized initiative has been the proposal for “Partnerships for Mobility” (PfM), designed to offer a “package” to third countries in the EU’s southern and eastern regions, consisting of four components: (i). Mobility, regular migration, and integration; (ii) The fight against irregular migration and human trafficking, readmission of migrants, security of identity and travel documents, and border management; (iii) Asylum and international protection, and; (iv) Migration and development<sup>11</sup>.

Algeria has refused to commit to the negotiations, while Morocco (in 2013) and Tunisia (in 2014) signed the political declaration of this partnership but have not signed its implementation protocols. The latter two countries reject the terms of the partnership relating to visa facilitation, which they consider not inclusive enough of categories of their citizens other than the elites. Both countries also reject the readmission of third country nationals who have illegally emigrated from their respective territories, considering that they are also victims of this irregular migration. Negotiations have been stalled for at least five years.

In the meantime, the Mediterranean migratory scene has undergone major upheavals, fundamentally linked to the fallout from the civil wars and conflicts in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq. 2.5 million European sea and land border crossings were recorded in 13 years (2008-2020) (Frontex, 2009...2020), 80% of which, or 2 million, occurred between 2014 and 2020 (Idem). The eastern Mediterranean region (i.e. transit through Turkey to the Balkans and through Lebanon to Cyprus) accounts for 60% of the flows recorded in 13 years (2008-2020)<sup>12</sup>. The two Mediterranean regions directly concerned with crossings from the four countries in this study account for the remaining 40%<sup>13</sup>:

6.5%<sup>14</sup> from the western Mediterranean region (i.e., departures from Morocco and Algeria to Spain and very rarely to Sardinia) and 33.5%<sup>15</sup> from the central Mediterranean (departures from Libya and Tunisia to Lampedusa, Sicily, and very rarely to Malta) (FRONTEX, Idem). These flows have constituted the most acute migratory crisis (some call it the crisis of reception) since the end of the Second World War.

The European Union and its member states have reacted by signing agreements to stem the flow with the primary third countries concerned by these departures, Turkey and Libya.

In the central Maghreb region, readmission agreements signed or renewed since the late 1990s (and until 2020 for Tunisia), have allowed the expulsion<sup>16</sup>, in nine years (2011-2019), of 118,845 nationals from the three central Maghreb countries: 58,168 Moroccans (49%), 33,945 Tunisians (28.6%), and 26,741 Algerians (22.5%) (Frontex, 2010...2020).

North Africans give the impression that they do not prefer voluntary returns.

In five years (2015-2019), 86,028 returns of nationals from these three countries were registered. 74,018 were forced returns, or 86%, compared to only 12,000 voluntary returns, or 14% (Frontex, 2016...2020).

The effects of the war in Libya (disintegration of state authority, resumption of civil war in 2014 and 2019, and the reign of militias and armed groups) have spread to the Sahel countries, which have been destabilized by the return of fighters who were involved in the Libyan conflict, and by the transfer of huge quantities of Libyan weapons. Criminal migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks have transferred hundreds of thousands of African migrants mainly to Libya, and then to Europe, during the past decade. In addition to the direct effects of the conflict in Libya itself, terrorist attacks and growing insecurity in Sahelian countries, as well as their destabilizing effects on the security and survival of local communities, are additional variables that fuel migration flows to North African countries and then to Europe.

The situation of migrants and refugees in Libya, victims of violence and abuse of various kinds, has prompted international Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)<sup>17</sup>, as well as the United Nations (UN) and even European Union (EU) member states, to sound the alarm on the risks faced by these migrants.

In 2017, Italy and Libya signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in an effort to control departures from Libya, which represented 90% of crossings in the central Mediterranean between 2014 and 2018. However, it did not have the expected results due to the interference of the war economy in the expected objectives of this agreement. In fact, in a country still dominated by militias, traffickers and armed groups,

<sup>9</sup> European Border and Coast Guard Agency

<sup>10</sup> On April 5, 2011, Italy and Tunisia signed a new agreement to stem the wave of departures in the first quarter of 2011 (Boubakri, 2013c)

<sup>11</sup> Joint Declaration for the Mobility Partnership between Tunisia, the European Union and its participating Member States. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/e-library/documents/policies/international-affairs/general/docs/declaration\\_conjointe\\_tunisia\\_eu\\_mobility\\_fr.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/e-library/documents/policies/international-affairs/general/docs/declaration_conjointe_tunisia_eu_mobility_fr.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> 1.5 million landings

<sup>13</sup> 984,000 landings

<sup>14</sup> 157,000 landings

<sup>15</sup> 827,000 landings

<sup>16</sup> FRONTEX uses the term “Forced Returns” in its quarterly and annual reports.

<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Watch (2019), Doctors Without Borders (June 21, 2019).

migrants are trapped in this war economy from which there is not even an escape from detention centers, although they are supposedly in the hands of government forces.

This migration context in North Africa and in its Euro-Mediterranean and sub-Saharan neighbors explains the multiplication of initiatives and frameworks for bilateral and multilateral negotiations and cooperation: The Africa-Europe Summit in Malta and the Valletta Declaration in 2015, and in Abidjan in 2018, the European Agenda on Migration in 2015 and the new one of 2020, the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, both adopted by the United Nations in 2018. The Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (ETFA), ratified in 2014 in Valletta, initially amounted to €1.5 billion. Since then, it has steadily increased until it exceeded €3.3 billion in 2019. Many voices, especially from CSOs, criticize the EU and its member states for spending too much money (up to two-thirds of the fund)<sup>18</sup> on programs and projects focused on border controls and the fight against irregular migration in Africa, in the Mediterranean, and in EU member states located on the EU's external borders.

This study welcomes the contributions of four Maghrebi authors who have written chapters dedicated to the four North African countries concerned by this study: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.

The four chapters were drafted according to a common structure organized around the following topics:

- The historical dimension of migration in each country;
- Migration flows that affect the country at departure, transit, and arrival (volumes, migration routes, factors, origins and destinations, etc.);
- The migration policies or the flow management modes adopted by each country and how countries and societies are affected by these methods;
- The principles and references that guide each country in their relations with their neighbors concerned by the flows, namely in this case: sub-Saharan Africa and the European Union, especially its Mediterranean member states;
- Finally, each of the authors ends by outlining future prospects for the evolution of the local migration situation in order to explore the horizons that would make it possible to turn migration into an opportunity for development and cooperation between partners at the level of relations between States or at the level of interactions and social and human exchanges between North African societies, or with European and Sub-Saharan societies.

In addition to this common structure, each of the authors has been free to focus on one or

<sup>18</sup> Budget allocations to the Fund's North Africa Window between November 2015 and August 2019 totaled €544.2 million. 55% of the amount (€299.2 million) was allocated to the "Migration Management" division, while 44% (€239.8 million) was allocated to Development Cooperation. 1% (€5.2 million) was reserved for research (OXFAM, 2020). Libya is the second largest recipient of Fund financing, after Somalia. In two years (July 2017-August 2019), Libya has benefited from the release of more than €150 million under the Trust Fund to "train, equip, and support the capacity of the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept migrants at sea and on land" and to "improve the detention conditions of these returnees" (Idem).

another aspect of migration that differentiates or distinguishes the country concerned from the other countries of the region. The objective is to identify the country's migration profile.

Thus, **Marwa Mohamed's** chapter on Libya is organized around what might be called the migratory "personality" of this oil-rich country, which has always been fundamentally a destination country and a major labor market for migrants from other North African countries, sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and even Europe. Stabilization and then reconstruction open up broad horizons for south-south migration from the North African (Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, and even Morocco) and sub-Saharan regions, which may reduce flows to Europe.

For their part, the three other countries, even if they remain countries of departure, follow different migration trajectories.

**Mehdi Lahlou** demonstrates that by hosting the Marrakech Conference for the signing of the Global Compact on Migration in 2018 and by hosting the headquarters of the African Migration Observatory, Morocco is cultivating the African and global dimensions that characterize the migration flows which affect it.

**Saïb Musette** emphasizes the singular positions of the Algerian state when dealing with the various frameworks for dialogue and cooperation developed around migration issues: reservations on the Global Compact, on the African Treaty for the free movement of people, rejection or reluctance towards proposals for more advanced cooperation with the EU and its member states in terms of flow management and border control for example.

**Hassen Boubakri** emphasizes, for his part, the challenges and difficulties faced by Tunisia since 2011 due to the disenchantment of a large segment of public opinion and youth as well as the failure of the political class to meet the conditions for the realization of hopes and expectations, born with the 2011 revolution.

The explosion in the number of irregular Tunisian migrants (12,806 in 2020)<sup>19</sup> (ONM & OIM, 2021) who crossed the Mediterranean on the eve of the 10th anniversary of this revolution, as well as the scale of the exile of skills (100,000 in ten years) (La Presse, 2020), unquestionably illustrate the magnitude of the crisis and demonstrate the way in which migration crystallises the logics and forces that work in Tunisian society

On the western flank of North Africa, the double diplomatic<sup>20</sup> and migration<sup>21</sup> crisis, that broke out in May 2021 between Morocco, on the one hand, and Spain, Germany and the European Union, on the other, demonstrated the extreme sensitivity of the geopolitical and security dimension of the migration issue in the Euro-Maghreb neighbourhood.

<sup>19</sup> This represents 87.2% of the whole number (14,685) of migrants (of all nationalities) from Tunisia, registered in 2020. However, in addition to these arrivals, emphasis should also be placed on the 13,466 migrants intercepted by the Tunisian coastguard and navy during the same year 2020, in 1,096 interception operations, before reaching Italian soil (ONM, OIM, 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Spain received for hospitalisation a Saharawi leader of the Polisario Front, considered by Morocco as an enemy (Le Monde, 2021). Morocco has recalled its ambassador to Berlin, accusing Germany of harbouring a "destructive attitude on the Moroccan Sahara issue" (The Guardian, 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Illegal entry in one day (17 May 2021) of over 8000 people from Morocco into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta (Ibid.).





Chapter I.  
**MOROCCO, A COUNTRY OF  
DEPARTURE, TRANSIT, AND  
MIGRANT SETTLEMENTS:  
REGIONAL CONTEXT AND  
POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

*Mehdi Lahlou*

## Chapter I.

# MOROCCO, A COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE, TRANSIT, AND MIGRANT SETTLEMENTS: REGIONAL CONTEXT AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Mehdi Lahlou <sup>22</sup>

## Introduction

Colonized by France from 1912-1956 and Spain from 1912-1959, from which it is separated only by 14 km, south of the Strait of Gibraltar, and by less than 80 km from the Canary Islands, Morocco has become one of the main points of emigration to Europe since the 1960s, due in particular to the multiple economic and human links maintained with its former colonial powers. Later, towards the end of the twentieth century, it became one of the major migration corridors between Africa and the European Union, if not the most important between the years 1998 and 2010, and more recently between 2018 and 2019.

This will make it an important link in Euro-African relations in terms of public policies implemented to manage migration flows in and out of its borders, as well as in terms of the reception of foreign migrants and refugees - especially of sub-Saharan origin - in its territory.

However, if this country, the second most populous in the Maghreb with 35 million inhabitants in 2020, has appeared, since the beginning of the century and for some years, as the main gateway from Africa to Europe, it is in reality a gateway that has, until now, been mainly used by Moroccans themselves. Indeed, more than three million Moroccans currently live in EU countries such as France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands, whereas citizens of other nationalities entering Europe via Morocco have rarely exceeded 20,000 per year and were no more than 7,300 in 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Professor of Economics at the National Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (INSEA) in Rabat, Morocco, and an associated professor at University Mohammed V (Rabat).

Additionally, while Morocco represents a relatively important country of departure for its nationals, it is only a small host and transit country for foreign migrants seeking better living conditions outside their regions of origin.

This configuration has been the basis of recent Moroccan migration policy, especially given the special economic, financial, and political relationship between Morocco and the European Union.

## 1. Morocco's historical role as a country of origin and transit

In the beginning of the 1960s, Morocco became a country of emigration, first because of the historical ties it had with France and Spain, the two powers that occupied it, as already mentioned, for more than half a century. The second reason is because of the convergence that appeared at the time between the major labor needs expressed by certain European countries (France<sup>23</sup> and Belgium<sup>24</sup> in particular) and its own economic and social policies.

Initially, until the mid-1990s, there was no methodical monitoring of, and therefore no accurate statistics on, emigration from Morocco to Europe, which until then had been the main, if not the only, destination for Moroccan migrants. However, according to estimates provided by the World Bank, the number of Moroccans born in Morocco and living abroad was around 650,000 in the 1960s, rising to almost 800,000 in the following decade before reaching just over 1.5 million in 2000 and 3 million in 2010, representing almost 9 percent of the total population in that year.<sup>25</sup> The observation that emerges from the evolution of this data is that of a very strong acceleration of the migration of Moroccans from the beginning of the 21st century, since 150,000 Moroccans would have left Morocco annually between 2000 and 2010.

## 2. Migration flows: Departure, transit, and immigration

### Morocco, a country of emigration

The High Commission for Planning (HCP), in charge of collecting statistics in Morocco, claims that there were 3.3 million Moroccans residing abroad (MRA), and this occurred in 2006, 10% more than the World Bank estimate for that year.

<sup>23</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO). Labor agreement between France and Morocco of June 1, 1963. [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_lang=fr&p\\_isn=39618](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=fr&p_isn=39618)

<sup>24</sup> February 17, 1964, signing of the first Belgian-Moroccan labor agreement "for importing workers". [https://www.rtf.be/info/societe/detail\\_17-fevrier-1964-signature-de-la-convention-de-travail-belgo-marocaine?id=8193088](https://www.rtf.be/info/societe/detail_17-fevrier-1964-signature-de-la-convention-de-travail-belgo-marocaine?id=8193088)

<sup>25</sup> Cited in "Interactions between public policies, migration and development in Morocco". OECD - 2017.



it possible to approach human movements of the same nature from Algeria as well as in the whole Mediterranean. This route includes crossings between northern Morocco and southern Spain, as well as the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and the maritime routes between western Algeria and the cities of Almeria or Alicante.

According to Frontex, as shown in Table 1 below, this western Mediterranean route remained marginal in Mediterranean migration until 2016. That was the year of the EU/Turkey agreement on the control of migration flows from this country. After the departures from Turkey started to dry up, followed by the strengthening of controls by the Italian navy on the Italian and Libyan coastguards between 2016 and 2017, a double evolution was noted: on the one hand, there was a very sharp decline in the number of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean after the historic peak of 1.822 million recorded in 2015 (a peak/record that was then described as a "migration crisis"), and on the other, there was a displacement of migration routes to the west, again with another peak of 56,245 in 2018 (more than one-third of the total irregular migrants recorded that year in the Mediterranean).

All these variations confirm a recurring hypothesis according to which, in matters concerning migration, nothing is ever taken for granted, and each time one migration route closes, another opens. This is for the simple reason that the basic motivations behind the departure of young Africans - in particular - to other continents have remained unchanged for the last few decades, and have even tended, in some countries, to worsen, particularly in relation to the accentuation of the security problem in the Sahel and, recently, the health crisis initiated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Irregular movements of migrants on the West Mediterranean route in relation to all similar migrations in the Mediterranean - 2008-2018 <sup>30</sup>

Years	Total Migrants (all routes)	West Mediterranean route	(%)
2008	151,135	6,500	4.3
2010	104,120	5,000	4.8
2012	73,160	6,400	7.7
2013	101,800	6,800	6.7
2014	283,175	7,840	2.7
2015	1,822,337	7,164	0.4
2016	374,638	10,231	2.7
2017	184,410	23,143	12.5
2018	149,117	56,245	37.7
2019	141,846	23,969	16.9

In this regard, another element deserves to be pointed out, which does not, however, invalidate the hypothesis mentioned above. Indeed, returning to the table above, of the 56,245 migrants who were reported in 2018 as irregular between Morocco, Algeria and Spain, 24,390 were Syrians and 8,020 were Moroccans, i.e. 57.6% of the total. In the following year, of the nearly 24,000 irregular crossings recorded on the same route, 6,336 were Moroccans and 4,014 were Algerians, representing 43.2% of the total relevant flows.

There are two reasons for this configuration, in which migrants from south of the Sahara seem to have become a minority. The first is that these migrants - for many reasons, including the tightening of maritime controls in the Strait of Gibraltar and at the borders of Ceuta and Melilla and the depletion of South-North African migration routes to the central Mediterranean - now tend to migrate through Tunisia or Libya (see the chapters on these two countries), or through the Atlantic corridors to the Canary Islands.

The second reason could be the migrant integration measures agreed upon as part of the migration policy pursued by the Moroccan authorities since the beginning of 2014, a policy that has changed its approach to managing migration through its territory by acknowledging the fact that Morocco has also become a host country.

### 3. Moroccan migration policy, from security postulate to integration will

Before acknowledging the presence of irregular migrants among its population, and even before accepting that irregular migration through its territory was a real issue and a serious political challenge, Morocco had gone through a phase of no migration policy at all between the early 1990s and 2002/2003.

In particular, this period was marked by the rise of transit migration, mostly irregular, to Spain and other European Union countries, to which the Moroccan government had previously shown relative indifference, partly because it considered the new form of migration not to be of great concern or likely to last for long, and also, perhaps, because it believed that Spain - its immediate European neighbor - was a good place to live and was deriving some benefit from the migration flows, some of which were irregular.

However, with the increase in the number of migrants year after year - as already indicated - and the link made after 2001 between migration and terrorism (particularly in connection with the September 11 attacks on American soil), Morocco's attitude has changed, also as a result of the change in European doctrine on the subject<sup>31</sup>.

Within this global framework, Morocco's first major act at the beginning of the current century, was legislative. This was the unanimous adoption<sup>32</sup> by the Moroccan parliament in 2003 of a law on "irregular emigration and immigration in Morocco", which

<sup>30</sup> Compiled by M. Lahlou. From <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/migratory-routes-map/> 2016 and "Risk Analysis" for 2016 & 2018. March 2016 and February 2018. + Risk Analysis 2020. [https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Risk\\_Analysis/Annual\\_Risk\\_Analysis\\_2020.pdf](https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2020.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> See: L. Barros, M. Lahlou & all, "L'immigration irrégulière subsaharienne à travers et vers le Maroc". ILO, Geneva. 54F. 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Following the terrorist attacks that killed 45 people in Casablanca on May 16 of the same year.

will be known as Law 02-03<sup>33</sup>. In the wake of this law, the Moroccan authorities adopted a set of institutional and operational measures that they believed would support their new approach to migration and best serve the interests of Morocco's "privileged partnership" with the EU as well as its special relationship with Spain.

At the institutional level, the "Directorate of Migration and Border Surveillance" and the "Migration Observatory"<sup>34</sup> were set up in November 2003 to rationalize the working methods, to refine the tools of analysis, to optimize the deployment of operational surveillance units at the points of infiltration for illegal immigrants, and to federate the reasoning of all parts concerned with the migratory problem<sup>35</sup>.

In the wake of the creation of these bodies, Europe showed full agreement with decisions that were in line with its objectives, giving the indication that it is particularly attentive to everything that happens on the Moroccan side in terms of migration.

At the same time, on the operational level, the new "Moroccan strategy to combat illegal migration" will give priority to a "proximity and prevention" approach through intelligence work, in particular to dismantling human trafficking networks. This approach has been reinforced by a significant human and material deployment and through the establishment of a general and permanent taskforce composed of more than 7,000 members of the security forces, 4,000 of whom specially dedicated to coastal surveillance<sup>36</sup>.

The combination of this system, the largest ever established, to control Morocco's Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts (spanning a distance of nearly 3,500 km), the "integrated [Spanish] system of external vigilance" set up in 2002 in southern Spain and then off the Canary Islands, as well as the intervention of the European border guard and coast guard agency (Frontex), which was created in 2004, has made crossing the territorial waters between the two countries particularly risky.

Since the end of 2013, Morocco has begun to experience a kind of "migration peace" with less than 0.4% of trans-Mediterranean migration transiting through its territory and maritime space in 2015<sup>37</sup> (and that of Algeria, see Table 1 above). Therefore, the country adopted a "New Migration Policy", described as "more humane" and based on

the regularization of certain categories of migrants and on a National Migration Strategy, called "integration of migrants and refugees".

Thus, in 2014, a first operation to regularize migrants allowed 18,000 people living in an irregular situation to obtain a residence permit to remain legally on Moroccan soil. In 2017, a second regularization operation allowed the granting of a residence permit to 21,000 irregular migrants composing 113 nationalities, mostly sub-Saharan. In 2018, the total number of migrants who have been regularized since the beginning of the process, reached 50,000<sup>38</sup>.

This "New Migration Policy" has been organized around 4 fields:

- (1) An exceptional operation to regularize immigrants, carried out in 2014. This initiative was to benefit nearly 45,000 migrants;
- (2) An expanded authority for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees to grant asylum to a greater number of asylum seekers in Morocco;
- (3) A stronger fight against human trafficking and traffickers;
- (4) The adoption of new laws allowing a better integration of migrants and asylum seekers in Moroccan social life.

Regarding this last field, the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration<sup>39</sup> has developed a "National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum - SNIA"<sup>40</sup>. Such a strategy, adopted by a Government Council held in December 2014, aimed to ensure better integration of immigrants and more efficient management of migration flows in the "framework of a coherent, comprehensive, humanistic, and responsible policy."

To conclude this review of the evolution of Moroccan migration policy, two remarks are in order:

- The important role of parapublic institutions, national and international NGOs, and private companies in various projects aimed at the integration of migrants.
- The effect of these land regularizations remains limited. Indeed, most of the migrants present in Morocco, even those who have been regularized, are still trying to leave to go to Europe, their original destination. As a result, migration flows have not dried up in recent years. On the contrary: the Moroccan security services have stopped 74,000 attempts of irregular immigration to Spain (compared to 89,000 in 2018), reducing the

<sup>33</sup> Dahir n° 1-03-196 of Ramadan 16, 1424 (November 11, 2003) promulgating law n° 02-03 relating to the entry and stay of foreigners in the Kingdom of Morocco, to illegal emigration and immigration Official Bulletin n° 5162 of Thursday, November 20, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> Its main mission was "the implementation of the national strategy in the fight against human trafficking networks and border surveillance".

<sup>35</sup> See: M. Lahlou, "Un schéma migratoire reconfiguré, dans les faits et dans l'approche politique". Composed of representatives of certain ministerial departments (Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Finance and Employment) and all the security forces of the country (but no academic body), this observatory's mission was the "elaboration of the national strategy in the field of migration". In particular, it aimed to centralize all information related to migration, to update a database of statistics on migration at the national level, and to propose concrete measures in the field of migration to the public authorities. Notes from the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), January 2011, Program "The Maghreb in its regional and international environment". <https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/notes-de-ifri/un-schema-migratoire-reconfigure-faits-lapproche-politique>.

<sup>36</sup> Id.

<sup>37</sup> According to the Director of Immigration and Border Surveillance at the Ministry of Interior in an interview with the weekly "Tel Quel" of September 27, 2018, "For a decade, Morocco has managed to dry up the flows on the migration route to the Spanish coast. We went from 2004 to mid-2015 to - 93%". [https://telquel.ma/2018/09/27/le-maroc-appelle-leurope-a-sassocier-a-ses-efforts-contre-le-traffic-de-migrants\\_1611997](https://telquel.ma/2018/09/27/le-maroc-appelle-leurope-a-sassocier-a-ses-efforts-contre-le-traffic-de-migrants_1611997)

<sup>38</sup> Same source.

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Residing Abroad

<sup>40</sup> National Immigration and Asylum Strategy - SNIA [www.mre.gov.ma](http://www.mre.gov.ma)

number of irregular entries to Spanish territories (Andalusian coasts, Ceuta and Melilla, and the Canary Islands) by about 60%<sup>41</sup>.

In addition, Morocco continues to maintain, through the voice of its Minister of Foreign Affairs, that the European Union should “get out of the logic of the teacher and the pupil in its relationship with the southern region”, and that it “should not take decisions that affect the southern Mediterranean shore without prior consultation”. In a tone not very common in Moroccan diplomacy, the minister continues by stating that, “The easy solution is to put everything on the backs of transit countries because solving the problem at the origin seems difficult and because, in the host countries, there is such a political pressure that no one wants to take on a serene and lucid discussion on the migration phenomenon. Therefore, excessive guilt-tripping of transit countries is a bad idea.” The same minister also stressed that, “Morocco assumes its responsibilities, but will never play the policeman because it is not its vocation, its conviction.” He said that, “the migration phenomenon is exaggerated for political reasons rather than objective ones”, and that “any approach that seeks to find the culprits rather than the solutions is a bad idea”<sup>42</sup>.

In reality, the Moroccan experience in the conduct of migration policies has shown that security (and only security), as it has been the case for many years in Europe (and is still the case in some countries), only produces a diversionary effect, transferring the migration flows from one corridor to another. It has shown that an integration approach can only succeed if it is carried out within a global partnership framework involving measures to care for migrants, the fight against mafia human trafficking networks, and the economic and social development of the regions of departure. In the case of the Maghreb in particular, such an approach can only succeed within the framework of a triple partnership. First, between the Maghreb countries, secondly, between them and Europe, and third, between these two entities and sub-Saharan Africa. This places the search for real solutions between the role of a policeman - a simple protector of borders - and the position that refuses any international agreement of any kind, under the pretext that it would limit the sovereignty of states in the management of migratory flows, which would be a matter of national prerogatives.

## 4. What are the key developments for the future?

Algeria was among the states that refused to adhere to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, also known as the Marrakech Pact<sup>43</sup>, on the grounds that such a pact would lead to a “transfer of sovereignty to international institutions on issues of national security”, that it is “a very controversial declaration that is not unanimously supported by the international community”, and that “it is up to the State to define the legal concepts of regular and labor migration”<sup>44</sup>.

While such a position is not far from those of the United States of America (at a time when the U.S. administration was disengaging from all international agreements and conventions), Brazil, Austria, Italy (of the former far-right president of the Italian Council), and Israel,<sup>45</sup> it is a clear indication that cooperation in the Maghreb region on the subject of migration (as in many other sectors) remains uncertain. This is despite the fact that both Morocco and Tunisia gave their support to this pact, while Germany and Morocco chaired the Global Migration and Development Forum, held in Marrakech in December 2018, during which the text was endorsed.

Taking all of these elements into account, it is possible to put forward some proposals for measures and certain lines of action that could constitute a consensual platform for intervention, both for the Maghreb States and for the EU, as well as for the African Union and the United Nations system.

## 5. Recommendations

Among the measures of a national and/or regional nature to be applied are the following:

- Continue to encourage the enrollment of foreign students from sub-Saharan countries. Morocco can accommodate between 15,000 and 20,000 students and trainees annually, which is barely more than 2% of the total number of students<sup>46</sup> enrolled in universities and training centers.
- Reorganization and strengthening of the role of the Moroccan Migration Observatory. Currently under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior, this observatory would benefit from acquiring its autonomy and becoming a public body, open to society, universities, research

<sup>43</sup> The Marrakech Pact is a global pact of the United Nations aiming to “cover all dimensions of international migration”. It was formally adopted on December 19, 2018 by the United Nations General Assembly. Belonging to the category of “soft law”, it is not legally binding. <https://www.un.org/fr/conf/migration/global-compact-for-safe-orderly-regular-migration.shtml>

<sup>44</sup> In a statement by the Central Director at the Algerian Ministry of the Interior in charge of the migration file, to the daily *Le Soir d'Algérie*, on December 16, 2018. <https://fr.sputniknews.com/international/201812171039334563-alger-reserves-pacte-migrations-onu-marrakech/>

<sup>45</sup> According to the French newspaper *Libération*, “It is often the forces of the right, the far right, conservatives, sovereignists, or nationalists who have succeeded, either by being in power or as parliamentary opposition, in setting countries back. They recurrently mobilize the arguments of loss of sovereignty, insecurity, and national preference.” This even if the “Marrakech pact” is not legally binding. [https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2018/12/06/quels-pays-se-sont-retires-du-pacte-de-marrakech-et-pourquoi\\_1696342/](https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2018/12/06/quels-pays-se-sont-retires-du-pacte-de-marrakech-et-pourquoi_1696342/)

<sup>46</sup> *Aujourd'hui le Maroc (Hebdomadaire)*, February 11, 2020. <https://aujourd'hui.ma/emploi/formation/pres-de-914-000-etudiants-dans-les-universites-en-2019-2020#:~:text=Pr%C3%A8s%20de%20914.000%20%C3%A9tudiants%20dans,2020%20%7C%20Aujourd'hui%20le%20Maroc>

<sup>41</sup> Statement by Mr. Khalid Zerouali, former executive in the national airline, *Royale Air Maroc*, and Director of Immigration and Border Surveillance at the Ministry of the Interior. He adds: “Our security action is not aimed at the migrant because we consider him to be a victim. Our action is mainly aimed at human trafficking networks that do not hesitate to take advantage of the vulnerability of these migrants. They exploit them and ask their families for more and more money.” Source: *Tel Quel (Revue de Casablanca)* - February 3, 2020. [https://telquel.ma/2020/02/03/khalid-zerouali-74-000-tentatives-dimmigration-clandestine-avorte-es-en-2019\\_1667617](https://telquel.ma/2020/02/03/khalid-zerouali-74-000-tentatives-dimmigration-clandestine-avorte-es-en-2019_1667617)

<sup>42</sup> See: *Agence Europe. Bulletin Quotidien Europe N° 12664 of February 24, 2021.* <https://agenceurope.eu/fr/bulletin/article/12664/2>

centers, and civil society organizations, and capable of providing decision-makers with the necessary data and advice. The installation of the African Migration Observatory in Rabat in December 2018<sup>47</sup> can only strengthen and reinforce the role of the Moroccan Observatory.

- Establishment of a regional partnership framework and review of past actions with countries south of the Sahara by involving new countries and adopting approaches that are continuously adapted to the realities and evolution of situations on the ground.

At another level, the following is necessary to proceed:

- The strengthening of decentralized cooperation, especially the role of municipalities, in the management of migration in order to facilitate the integration of immigrants in cities and to open the way for the participation of diasporas in the development of their communities of origin.

- Strengthening the role of development NGOs and their intervention capacities.

- Supporting projects through training and the dissemination of experiences and successful projects at the local and regional levels.

- Promoting the role and contribution of women and youth. Women must be considered as essential agents of change and development, and young people are also important because it is a question of creating in them the will to succeed and earn a living other than by thinking only of this “flight to the future” that migration represents.

- The harmonization of development and resource mobilization interventions between the different categories of actors from the local to the international level, including the regional and central levels.

On a more global level:


- Strengthen the Maghreb/EU programmatic and operational partnership and prioritize economic and social projects targeting migration that have a crosscutting impact on the Maghreb scale, such as infrastructure projects like trans-Maghreb highways and railroads, afforestation of semi-arid or arid areas of the Maghreb, and the implementation of water conservation programs to avoid any worsening of water stress, which can become a determining factor in migration.

- Rationalize the intervention of UN organizations according to their fields (UNDP, ILO, UNFPA, WHO, FAO) in order to strengthen the capacities of Maghreb countries to correct the structural factors of migration from this region, such as unemployment, precarious work, poverty, etc.

- On the other hand, the programs and actions of the various stakeholders must be built in close consultation and with the involvement of local actors (local authorities and CSOs) at the regional and central levels.

In addition to all these considerations and proposals, the reduction of irregular migration from Morocco and the Maghreb as a whole, as well as from the rest of Africa, can only be achieved by encouraging and implementing economic and social policies that produce wealth and create jobs in the areas of departure and in the migration corridors.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.diplomatie.ma/fr/inauguration-de-l%E2%80%99observatoire-africain-des-migrations-%C3%A0-rabat>



Chapter II.  
**ALGERIA IN  
INTERNATIONAL  
MIGRATION**

*Saïb Musette*



# Chapter II.

## ALGERIA IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Saïb Musette <sup>48</sup>

### Introduction

Migration movements are currently experiencing a slowdown in mobility, imposed by the global health crisis. A way out of this crisis is expected with the availability of COVID vaccines. In the meantime, preparations for a Global Compact on Migration (GCM) forum in 2022 are being organized by UN agencies in all regions of the world. The place and role of Algeria in this forum is taking shape, although it has expressed reservations about the GCM text.

This analysis is based on a documentary review conducted over 20 years of reflection, investigation, and analysis of migration movements in Algeria and the Maghreb region.

The reflection begins by posing the problem of international migration, then proceeds by identifying the main actors, thus giving a configuration of the mode of governance. A documented report on migratory movements indicates the depth and recent dynamics of stocks and flows. Priority issues are then raised, and perspectives are established.

From this analysis, three main orientations are outlined in conclusion: the first concerns the implementation of objective No. 1 of the GCM at the national level. Algeria is preparing to implement a permanent observation mechanism for migratory flows. The second is to maintain dialogue at the regional level, according to three geographical areas: the Maghreb, the Mediterranean, and Africa. Algeria is called upon to break with its "wait and see" position. The last one is based on migration diplomacy with a progressive inclusion of Algeria in the preparations of the next forum on international migration.

### 1. Historical aspects of migration in Algeria

Algeria is reputed to be mainly a country of departure. However, its history shows that it was mainly a country of reception during the colonial period. French colonization lasted 130 years (1930-1962) with the installation of more than one million settlers in

the country<sup>49</sup>. From only 160,000 in 1836, the European population reached 750,000 in 1911. According to the 1948 census, the French population was around 932,000, of which 485,000 were women. French settlers made up 95% of the foreign population. The remaining 5% were made up of other Europeans (Spanish, Italians, Maltese, etc.) or others. The war of national liberation and Algerian independence in 1962 pushed almost all the colonists to leave Algeria.

Paradoxically, Algerian emigration experienced a resurgence during the same period, only to gradually fade away during the 1970s, following the French decision to halt immigration. This in turn led to the Algerian decision to end emigration in 1974 and to organize the return of Algerian emigrants settled in France. Nonetheless, Algerian emigration has not ceased. It continues in the form of family reunification and student mobility, which for the most part usually results in settling down in the host country once the student's studies are completed.

On the other hand, since the beginning of the 21st century, Algeria has become a country of transit for sub-Saharan migrants. Faced with the restrictions imposed on movement by both Maghreb countries and European Union member states, some migrants settle in Algeria by default. During this same period, Algeria introduced slight changes by allowing the importation of foreign workers, in this case Chinese, (in 2003) from Chinese companies that had won large building and public works (Construction sector) during the reign of the former Algerian president Bouteflika.

### 2. Findings on migratory movements

National data on migrants are used exclusively for the administrative management of flows and stocks in and out and are not disseminated. Movements can be observed on two tracks (regular and irregular) through international data, adjusted to national data.

- **The estimated number of Algerian migrants abroad** - According to Algerian data (MAE, 2018), more than 2.3 million Algerian nationals are registered with consulates abroad, a rate of 0.7% of the Algerian population in 2019. A high concentration is observed in Europe with 87%, most of which is in France. Other destinations are mainly the Gulf Arab countries or even North America, according to the United Nations data (UNDESA, 2019).

Student migration is a particular component of migration flows. The number of Algerian students abroad has increased from 20,000 in 2014 to nearly 30,000 in 2018 (UIS/UNESCO, 2020), distributed across more than 40 countries, with a concentration of 83% in France.

<sup>48</sup> Sociologist, Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD), Algiers

<sup>49</sup> Cf. General Government of Algeria. Vol II. Non-Muslim population. Civil status and professional activity. Statistical results of the population census, carried out on 10.31.1948. General Statistics Service. General Directorate of Finance. Undated edition. Algiers, 1950.

- **Algerian migrants in irregular situations** abroad are identified more in Europe. Eurostat data (2019) mentions an annual average of 18,600 Algerians in illegal residence in EU countries during the last ten years (2008-2017), with almost 25,000 in 2017.

- **Foreigners in Algeria:** Administrative data on residence permits for foreigners in Algeria are neither accessible nor disseminated by the Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities. Nevertheless, we have an idea of the number of foreigners in Algeria, estimated globally from UNDESA data (2019). Estimates put the number of foreigners at 249,000, or 0.6% of the Algerian population. People from the disputed territories of Western Sahara, the Occupied Palestinian Territories or from Syria represent 83% of foreigners in Algeria.

Most foreign workers come from China (MTESS, 2017), while employers come from neighboring countries, namely Morocco and Tunisia (NRC, 2019). A section of the foreign population is also composed of students (UNESCO, 2019). A significant proportion are refugees and asylum seekers in need of international protection (i.e., people from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the disputed territories of Western Sahara, or Syria (UNHCR, 2019). The majority of these foreigners are legal residents in Algeria.

- **Foreign migrants in an irregular situation in Algeria** come from more than 40 countries, according to data from interceptions by security services. The bulk of these interceptions come from three neighboring countries (Mali, Niger, and Morocco), according to data published by the National Gendarmerie (GN, 2018) over the past five years (2012-2017).

### 3. The actors in Algerian migration policy

What are the bottom lines of Algerian migration policy? Who are the actors? What is the evolution of migration flows? How do these actors intervene in international relations? What are the current issues and prospects?

The examination of Algerian migration policy can be done from two angles. A priori, there is no policy reference document and therefore no explicit policy formulation, with principles, objectives, planning, and budgeting according to international norms and standards. Seen from this angle, Algeria is not unique in the world. The absence of a formulation is itself a policy in fact. There is no lack of regulation. There is a specific management: migratory movements are well and truly regulated by the Algerian authorities, through sectoral mechanisms.

Algerian governance of migration movements is based on a national policy, with specific missions distributed among several ministerial departments. Four categories of actors or stakeholders can be observed.

- **The first category** consists of four key actors: (i) the Presidency, since 2020, with its decentralized institutions (the National Institute for Global Strategic Studies (INESG), the National Economic and Social Council (CNES), and the recently-created Algerian Agency for International Cooperation (AACI), not to mention the National Defense instances);

(ii) the Prime Minister's Office<sup>50</sup>; (iii) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (for regular migration), and; (iv) the Ministry of the Interior, Local Authorities and Territorial Development (for irregular migration).

- **The second category** is composed of two ministerial departments that intervene in the management of movements (entry/exit) of particular categories, national and foreign: students by the Ministry of Higher Education and workers by the Ministry of Labor.

- **A third category** of actors intervenes in the regulation of specific and punctual missions, such as Justice, Finance, Health, National, and International Solidarity.

Finally, a **fourth category** of actors is composed of civil society actors (such as the Algerian Red Crescent) as well as social partners (workers' unions and employers' organizations) and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

This governance has cyclical intersectoral coordination. It is activated at the time of crises and emergencies by the competent authorities.

This horizontal distribution of missions to regulate migratory flows is nevertheless coordinated internationally by the Presidency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office in compliance with the international conventions to which Algeria is a party, such as the Intersectoral Commission on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling.

### 4. The impact of migratory movements on Algeria

Four types of issues are topical in Algeria, according to our analysis.

The **first** relates to irregular migration in both directions, either from third countries to Algeria, or from Algeria to Europe. The **second** question is related to remittances from migrants to Algeria, the **third** is related to the mobility of skills, and finally, the **fourth** is related to refugees and asylum seekers.

**Irregular migration has** become one of the main concerns of the Algerian authorities over the past ten years. The application of the law on the conditions of foreigner residency in Algeria (JORADP, 2008) has shown its limitations, particularly principle of "non-refoulement" of irregular migrants in Algeria. The collective repatriation process is systematically activated as soon as migration flows threaten public order. The regularization and/or naturalization process is exceptional. Algeria has often been criticized for carrying out collective expulsions by NGOs in contradiction with its international commitments to respect human rights. The authorities are currently receiving support from IOM to organize the return of migrants, with the agreement of the consulates of the countries of origin. During the COVID-19 period, IOM accompanied the return of 84 Malian migrants by air in consultation with Algerian and Malian authorities<sup>51</sup>. NGOs

<sup>50</sup> Decree No. 20-42 of February 11, 2020

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.iom.int/fr/news/en-pleine-pandemie-de-covid-19-iom-facilite-le-retour-de-84-migrants-dalgerie-au-mali>

(international and national) are also active in taking care of migrants in distress. Free access to public health care and education for irregular migrants has become a reality, but migrants still fear arrest by security services.

As for **Algerians in an irregular situation abroad**, Algeria has signed readmission agreements with certain European countries. The Algerian authorities recently incriminated any exit from the territory by irregular maritime routes. The amendment of the Algerian penal code with the law n° 09-01 of February 25, 2009 was none other than a harmonization of its internal penal legislation in relation to its international commitments by ratifying the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the additional protocols. It has also set up an intersectoral coordination committee to combat migrant smuggling at the Prime Minister's Office.

The application of this law is questionable by lawyers and human rights defenders. In its report in 2010, the Superior Council of Human Rights marked its disapproval of this incrimination of migrants. This tightening of the law has not reduced the phenomenon of illegal migration.

In fact, migration by sea (also known as *harga*) continues. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were a record number of crossings from Algeria to Spain<sup>52</sup>. The peak of the departures would have happened during the end of July 2020 with "boats that were able to thwart the vigilance of the Algerian coast guard". The Spanish authorities stated at the beginning of September 2020 that "5,343 Algerians have been apprehended on the southern coasts of the Iberian Peninsula (67% of irregular immigrants), compared to only 1,178 Moroccans." According to Frontex, "8,200 migrants crossed the Mediterranean during the first eight months of 2020, two-thirds of whom were of Algerian nationality." Following consultations between the Spanish and Algerian authorities, several hundred Algerian migrants were repatriated by boat to Algeria.

Readmission agreements do not always work in all EU countries. Some weaknesses are observed in the implementation of these agreements. The EU-Algeria report (EU, 2020) states the low rate of return of Algerian migrants in irregular situations<sup>53</sup>.

**The issue of the return (voluntary or forced) of irregular migrants**, both for Algerians abroad and for foreigners in Algeria, remains a major concern for both the authorities and CSOs, in order to strike a balance between security and humanitarian requirements.

**Remittances** from the National Community Abroad (NCA) are estimated at 1.1% of GDP in 2020 by the World Bank, necessarily decreasing in relation to the COVID-19

pandemic. The bulk of transfers are made by institutions, particularly in the form of pensions. Personal transfers are insignificant (Musette, 2016). After more than ten years of decline, there has been an upward recovery in remittances since 2014 (World Bank, 2020)<sup>54</sup>. Algeria is trying to substitute money transfers by the investment of the diaspora and the integration of national competences abroad in the process of local development. The institutionalization of migration management at the governmental level remains very hesitant and unfinished.

**The mobility of Algerian skills** is considered a brain drain to foreign countries. Recent data attest to acceleration in the migration of high-level executives, including engineers and physicians (CREAD/ILO, 2016). The need to implement devices to curb these leaks is obvious. Algeria thus participates, in spite of itself, in the financing of the training of skills for the benefit of third countries. A recent study indicates a strong desire to migrate on the part of higher-education graduates. One out of two graduates from Algerian universities declare their intention to leave Algeria, but only one out of three have already taken initiatives in this direction (CREAD/ILO, 2017). Those who want to leave are mainly graduates of scientific and technical courses who have already found a job. A third recent study confirms this trend of brain drain, which is still prevalent in Algeria. According to the results of a survey of Algerian students in France (CREAD, 2019), 78% of students say they do not intend to return to Algeria upon completion of their studies. 57% of them are thinking of settling in France, while 21% are preparing to leave for another country. Only 22% are thinking of returning to Algeria.

**Refugees** in Algeria and Algerian refugees abroad do not have an Algerian legal reference. The majority of foreign refugees in Algeria fall under the responsibility of the UNHCR, which continues to manage the flow of refugees in the absence of an Algerian law on asylum. The oldest are Palestinians who are still struggling to build their state. They are taken care of by UNRWA. People from the disputed territories of West Saharan (90,000 of whom are among the most vulnerable) are cared for by two UN agencies: the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

The number of Algerian refugees and asylum seekers abroad is quite low. According to UNHCR data, there were 10,375 registered in 2018, with more than 50% in France and Germany, some of whom are waiting for recognition of their refugee status.

<sup>52</sup> This resumption of the "harga" is quite symptomatic of the failure of policies and strategies for managing migration flows in the Maghreb countries. Morocco has had a policy in place for the management of migratory movements for several years. It seems that this policy has served to contain migrants from south of the Sahara but has had no impact on Moroccan "haragas" to Europe. For Tunisia, it is worth remembering that at the height of the Jasmine Revolution, young Tunisians were leaving the country for Europe. Tunisia has designed a strategy to manage international migration for several years but struggles to contain the "haragas" who take advantage of the slightest opportunity to return to Europe via the Italian coast.

<sup>53</sup> The number of illegal Algerians on EU territory has increased from 25,005 in 2017 to 27,110 in 2018 and 30,890 in 2019. Moreover, the rate of return, which decreased from 21.4% in 2018 to 19.5% in 2019, remains considerably lower than the average recorded for third-country nationals (36% in 2018 and 32% in 2019). -EU-DZA Report, pp. 14-15

<sup>54</sup> This increase (from \$200,000 to over \$2 billion in one year) should be taken with caution, as definitions change.

## 5. The Algerian vision with regard to global, continental, and regional consultation frameworks

Having ratified most of the international conventions on migration, Algerian legislation has integrated most of the clauses that contribute to the protection of migrants' rights, whether they are Algerians abroad or foreigners in Algeria. For the implementation of these provisions, Algeria regularly submits and produces reports to the UN monitoring bodies, the first in 2008 (OHCHR, 2008) and the latest observations of the commission in 2018 (OHCHR, 2018).

In addition to these official relationships, Algeria is also committed through regional conventions and bilateral agreements with countries where there is a significant presence of the Algerian community abroad. Joint commissions are set up to deal with priority issues, either within the framework of bilateral consultations or regional bodies (African Union, European Union, Arab League, including UMA, UMP, the informal 5+5 Group and recently within the framework of the MENA UNCWA region).

The intervention and dialogue spaces cover five areas of consultation: the Mediterranean, Arab countries, North Africa and the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. In its relations with Africa, Algeria has marked its reservations about the free movement of Africans on the continent<sup>55</sup>. In relation to the European Union, Algeria has also rejected the creation of landing platforms for migrants in North Africa<sup>56</sup>. As for the free movement of people in the Maghreb countries, negotiations remain open with Morocco for the land borders closed by Algeria since 1994, while the air borders are open.

Algeria has subscribed to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the submission of a first Voluntary Report in 2019 (MFA, 2019). The migration issue is not well documented in this report. Algeria has not signed the Global Compact on International Migration (United Nations, 2019).

Algeria has also not subscribed to the joint declaration of the Heads of State at the Valletta Summit between the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) and its Action Plan (EU, 2015). It does not contribute to the Trust Fund. It has expressed reservations concerning the African Union's Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons on the Continent (AU, 2018). These reservations limit any initiative that would allow a stronger contribution of Algerian diplomacy in the spaces of dialogue and consultation on migration issues.

<sup>55</sup> "Algeria had postponed the signing of the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in order not to open the way to illegal migration" according to the statement of the Algerian Prime Minister (APS dated March 21, 2018)

<sup>56</sup> "It is excluded that Algeria opens any retention area (...) following the announcement of the European Union to create "landing zones" on Algerian lands for sub-Saharan migrants" (APS 27 June 2018)

## 6. Conclusion and new directions

The Algerian governance of migration is called to evolve towards a greater contribution to the management of migration flows at three levels: national, regional, and international.

**At the national level**, two elements should be highlighted:

- Algeria has a statistical information system that is far from meeting international standards for counting flows (emigration, transit, and immigration) and stocks.

- In its Action Plan (RADP, 2020), the government affirms a willingness to move towards Open Data (p.7). Making administrative data and survey results available online can help make migration data more transparent. An international migration survey was designed according to the Eurostat model (MED-HIMS). The new General Population and Housing Census (GPHC) and CREAD survey project on foreign workers in Algeria, will certainly provide new knowledge on international migration. A project for the creation of an International Migration Observatory, under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior, is being studied.

**At the regional level**, Algeria cannot continue in the wait-and-see position. Three avenues can be explored:

- Encourage inter-Maghreb migration to promote the chances of progress of the AMU.

- The "Harga" (illegal Mediterranean crossings) having become a recurrent phenomenon, the fight against irregular migration cannot be accomplished without strengthening the legal migration channels. Missions for worker placement deserve to be reviewed and adapted to Algeria's needs.

- Circular migration between the two shores of the Sahara must be organized and better controlled, with the help of the AU in particular.

**At the international level:**

Given Algeria's increasing reservations, or refusal to adhere, to many international frameworks for dialogue on migration, it would be useful for Algeria to set up a national migration management framework to at least regulate its relations with the Algerian diaspora and the ways in which migration from abroad is managed.



Chapter III.  
**TUNISIA AND ITS MIGRATIONS:  
NAVIGATING BETWEEN THE  
SOUTH AND THE NORTH**

*Hassen Boubakri*

# Chapter III.

## TUNISIA AND ITS MIGRATIONS: NAVIGATING BETWEEN THE SOUTH AND THE NORTH

*Hassen Boubakri*

### Introduction

Just like every year since the 2011 revolution in Tunisia, the 10th anniversary of this major socio-political change (January 14, 2021) was marked by night protests and violent clashes with security forces, led by young people from poor neighborhoods and working classes in many Tunisian coastal cities (Tunis, Monastir, Sousse) or the interior (Siliana, Kasserine) (Mosaïque Fm; Le Monde, Le Monde Diplomatique, 2021).

These violent demonstrations revealed the breadth and depth of the social, economic, and also political crisis, which has continued to grow since 2011. The COVID-19 health crisis has made the situation even worse.

The indicators and manifestations of this crisis are numerous:

- The economic crisis (widening public deficits, explosion of debt, low investment and slowdown of activities in many crucial sectors, inflation, and depreciation of the value of the Tunisian dinar).

- The social crisis (the number of unemployed is likely to approach one million by 2021, compared to an average of 600,000 to 650,000 before 2020), the increase in demonstrations and protests, and the persistence of interregional development gaps. Regional development indicators (RDIs) of the coastal regions are twice those of the interior and southern regions (ITCEQ, 2019).

- The political crisis due to governmental and institutional instability (more than eleven governments in ten years).

- The crisis of confidence between the political elites and the population. A large part of the Tunisian population considers that the 2011 revolution is far from having fulfilled its hopes

and expectations in terms of economic development, transparency, and good governance, or social equality and equity between regions and territories (Meddeb, H. 2020).

Emigration is not immune to this general context of crisis, disenchantment, and frustration, hence the explosion of irregular migration and the bleeding of skills.

In terms of migration, the year 2020 was marked by the departure of nearly 14,000 Tunisians who crossed the Mediterranean irregularly, a number of irregular migrants never reached during the last three decades (1990-2020), except in 2011, the year of the revolution (Table 1). The brain drain (nearly 100,000 departures in ten years, between 2011 and 2020)<sup>57</sup> is another indicator of this crisis and represents a serious risk for Tunisia's future development and competitiveness.

Tunisian migratory functions changed significantly between the 1990s and the second decade of the 21st century.

Tunisia has always been, and still is, a country of departure for its own nationals. Just under 1.5 million<sup>58</sup> (1,424,386) Tunisians work and live abroad. Migration occupies a central place in the daily life of Tunisians. It concerns all social categories, rich and poor, and all regions and cities of the country. It makes a decisive contribution to the balance of payments through the transfer of the labor savings of the TREs<sup>59</sup>, without losing sight of the contribution of the TREs to social and territorial development in the regions and communities of origin.

### 1. The historical dimensions of outward and transit migration in Tunisia

If the geographical situation of Tunisia in the heart of the Mediterranean favors its proximity to its European neighbors and facilitates crossings to the other shore, it has also always played a determining role in the opening of the country to the flows of conquests, immigration, transit, and settlement of foreign populations in its territory.

#### Emigration

Tunisian emigration abroad is quite recent. The number of Tunisians residing in Europe almost doubled in ten years, from 140,000 in 1970 to 262,000 in 1980 (OTE, 2007). By 2018, 85% of the 1.5 million TREs were settled in Europe (OECD, 2018). The two decades from 1990 to 2010 were marked by the emergence of Italy and Spain as major

<sup>57</sup> Brain drain: 95,000 Tunisians have left the country since 2011. 2020

<https://www.webdo.tn/2020/11/13/luite-des-cerveaux-95-mille-tunisiens-ont-quitte-le-pays-depuis-2011/#.YfAsa9KjIU>

<sup>58</sup> National Migration Observatory (NMO), 2019. Tunisians Resident Abroad (TRE). Database. <http://data.migration.nat.tn/fr/data/portals/TREs> are settled in three main regions: 80% are in Europe, or 1.1 million Tunisians, (55% of which are in France), Libya (120,000 workers before 2011); the Gulf countries (82,000, or 5.4% of the total) and North America (Canada: 28,500, USA: 18,500).

<sup>59</sup> The volume of income from work abroad (or transfers) reached 6 billion Dinars in 2019, or the equivalent of €1,9 billion (Source: Central Bank of Tunisia). Annual Report 2019)

destination countries for irregular migrants from North Africa, following the signing of the Schengen Agreement and its subsequent implementation in the unified space. These two countries have carried out successive and massive regularizations of illegal aliens<sup>60</sup>.

With approximately 120,000 migrants in 2010, Libya became the third country of immigration for Tunisians, preceded by France and Italy. However, since 2011, civil war, chaos, and the reign of armed groups and militias have profoundly reduced the number of Tunisians still working in Libya. 105,865 Tunisian emigrants returned home between February and October 2011 (IOM, 2011, Ibid).

## Foreigners in Tunisia: immigration and transit

The National Institute of Statistics (INS) counted 53,490 foreigners residing in Tunisia in 2014, compared to 28,100 in 2004 (INS, 2004, 2015). Nationals of other Maghreb countries (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania) numbered 24,841, or 46.5% of all foreigners. European nationals registered in Tunisia number 15,000, or 28% of the total number of foreigners, while sub-Saharan African nationals number 7,524, or 14% of the total. The remaining 11.5% comes from other regions of the world not listed here.

However, the census data seem to fall short of the reality. If we limit ourselves to Libyans or Sub-Saharans, we realize that the number of nationals from these countries or regions can only be higher.

## Libyans in Tunisia

Indeed, the INS counts only 8,772 Libyans and 1,024 Syrians. The Libyan conflict, for example, with its ups and downs (the 2011 war, the fragile transition of 2012-2013, then the resumption of the civil war and the chaos that followed since 2014, and again since 2019) has given rise to the entry and settlement of a large number of Libyans into Tunisia. They sought to access services and needs that they were deprived of in Libya (health care, medicine, drinking water, food, security, etc.)<sup>61</sup>. Therefore, the number of Libyans residing in Tunisia can only be greater than the one claimed by the INS. Two sources allow us to estimate this figure on the rise. The first concerns the accounting of border movements between Tunisia and Libya (Boubakri, 2016): the positive balance of Libyans at the borders (differences between entries into Tunisia and returns to Libya) has more than doubled in five years, from 194,000 in 2009 to 677,000 in 2013. The second source is the IOM, which, in a report on the socio-economic conditions of Libyans staying in Tunisia for long periods of time, estimates their number to be at least several tens of thousands (IOM, 2016)

<sup>60</sup> In 20 years (1986-2006), Italy has carried out nine regularization operations. Spain has done the same. These regularizations followed irregular departures, considered at the time to be massive, towards the Spanish and Italian coasts, called "Harga".

As a result of these regularizations, the number of Tunisians in Italy increased from a few thousand in 1986 (when the Schengen visa system was introduced) to more than 40,000 in 1990, 62,991 in 2000, 101,042 in 2003, 184,304 in 2011, and it exceeded the 200,000 mark in 2013 (OTE, 2003, 2012). In 2018, Tunisian sources counted 217,000 Tunisians registered in Tunisian embassies in Italy (ONM, 2018).

<sup>61</sup> Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. <http://www.alwasat.ly/ar/news/libya/88874>

## 2. Departure, transit, and arrival flows

### Departures of Tunisians: official data

According to the Population Census, the National Institute of Statistics (INS) has counted 66,000 departures of Tunisians<sup>62</sup> abroad in five years (2009-2014), an annual average of 13,200. With 42% of the total, France represents the primary destination, followed by Libya (16.1%), Italy (13.1%), Germany (4.5%), the Gulf countries (9%), and Canada (2.4%) (INS, 2015). Women's participation in certain destinations is relatively high compared to previous decades. They represent 46% of departures to France and other countries, but only 9% of departures to Italy (Ibid).

The return of Tunisians who resided abroad was almost 30,000 in five years, an annual average of 6,000 people per year.

14,400 foreigners settled in Tunisia during the same period (6,400 women and 8,000 men).

### Irregular emigration of Tunisians

In ten years (2011-2020), 65,335 Tunisians crossed the Mediterranean irregularly to Italy, 43% of which did so in 2011 alone, the year of the Tunisian revolution. While flows slowed down in the following years, they have accelerated in the last four years

(Table 2), with a new peak (almost 14,000 arrivals in Italy) in 2020, a figure that has not been reached, with the exception of 2011, since the phenomenon of irregular migration began at the end of the 1980s.

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Number of migrants	1,643	711	28,013	2,244	759	1,525	1,061	1,207	6,415	5,182	2,690	13,885	65,335
%	2.5	1.1	42.9	3.4	1.2	2.3	1.6	1.8	9.8	7.9	4.1	21.3	100.0

Source: Tunisian Institute of Strategic Studies (2018) & Frontex (2009-2019)

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the wave of demonstrations and protests that began in January 2021 revealed the extent of the social, economic, and political crisis that Tunisia has been experiencing since 2011.

We can consider the peak of irregular migration of Tunisians recorded in 2020, dominated largely by young people, as a very strong message of protest and anger against the political and economic system in place, addressed primarily to decision makers and political parties (Meddeb, H. Ibid).

<sup>62</sup> Results of the 2014 General Census of Population and Housing (RGPH), when households remaining in Tunisia were asked about the emigration of their members.

The exodus of higher-education graduates (engineers, computer scientists, doctors, etc.) is another indicator of the crisis and its extent. Their number has approached the threshold of 100,000 people in ten years (Webdo 2020).

Data on irregular migration remain fragmentary and incomplete, as they do not cover all situations and types of flows. The Ministry of Interior has not published data (Open Data) on its website concerning the fight against irregular migration since 2017.

Table 3, covering the period 2011-2017, provides an overview of the results of border and territory surveillance operations.

Table 3. Migrants (Tunisians and foreigners) arrived in Italy or arrested during sea crossing attempts (2011-2017).

Year	Operations aborted by the security forces	People arrested by the security forces during the aborted operations			Number of Tunisians arrived in Italy from Tunisia (2)	Comparison between the number of arrests of Tunisians attempting to cross the Mediterranean from Tunisia, and the number of effective arrivals of Tunisians to Italy (1/2) (In %)
		Tunisians	Foreigners	Total (1)		
2011	238	6,399	1,196	7,595	28,013	<b>22,8</b>
2012	85	975	255	1,230	2,244	<b>43,4</b>
2013	63	586	534	1,120	759	<b>77,2</b>
2014	73	692	499	1,191	1,525	<b>45,4</b>
2015	71	889	922	1,811	1,061	<b>83,8</b>
2016	102	938	97	1,035	1,207	<b>77,7</b>
2017	253	2,443	30	2,473	6,415	<b>38,1</b>
2018	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,182	(*)
2019	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,690	(*)
2020	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	13,885	(*)
<b>Total</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>65,335</b>	-

(\*) Data not available or not reliable  
Source: Ministry of the Interior; Tunisian Institute of Strategic Studies. 2018 and personal compilation

However, the Ministry of the Interior is placing increasing emphasis on the presence of irregular sub-Saharan migrants due to the growing involvement of trafficking networks and the organization of crossing operations from the eastern coast, particularly from the Sfax and Zarzis regions.

Since the mid-1990s, sub-Saharan Africa has become a major source of migrants for all North African countries, including Tunisia. Three main factors have played a determining role in these migratory developments: the population explosion, the widening of the development gap with North African countries and with developed countries, and the outbreak of civil and ethnic wars in East, Central, and West Africa.

All these factors have resulted in forced or voluntary (economic) migration to countries in the West African region (Mali, Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, etc.), as well as to North Africa.

Since the 1960s, Tunisia has maintained strong traditions of technical and academic cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa, especially French-speaking Africa<sup>63</sup>. In the 2000s, the annual number of entries into Tunisia of nationals from sub-Saharan African countries fluctuated between 25,000 and 30,000 (ONTT, 2009). Ten years later, this number has almost doubled: 40,619 in 2018 and 45,217 in 2019 (INS, 2020).

To estimate the number of sub-Saharans present in Tunisia in an irregular situation, the Ministry of the Interior compares the number of regular entries with the number of regular exits. It refers to this gap as "aliens who have not left the territory".

Indeed, during the last three years (2018-2020), about 130,000 sub-Saharan nationals returned to Tunisia on a regular basis, while only 105,000 exits were recorded, a gap of about 25,000 sub-Saharan nationals who remained in the country.<sup>64</sup> In other words, about 20% of sub-Saharans who have legally entered returned to Tunisia do not leave the country within the three-month period allowed for tourist stays.

The question is: Are all the sub-Saharans who have not left Tunisia still in the country? Do they all turn into irregulars? Of course not.

Indeed, in addition to the category of sub-Saharans mentioned above, who entered Tunisia regularly between 2018 and 2020 but who have not left the country, the security and intelligence services of the National Guard responsible for monitoring the sea and land borders report several types of other flows and situations:

- Interception or arrest of Tunisians in the course of attempts to irregularly transgress the maritime borders or who are organizers of these attempts
- Interception of sub-Saharans in Tunisian territorial waters
- Arrest of sub-Saharans during illegal land border crossings

<sup>63</sup> In the field of training of journalists and in the field of expertise and realization of development projects (education, health, water, agronomy, etc.)

<sup>64</sup> For the year 2020, these are estimates that take into account the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the movement of people.



- Sub-Saharanans arrested for organizing or planning irregular migration operations
- Arrest of illegal sub-Saharanans in Tunisia

In total, unverifiable estimates put the number of undocumented sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia at between 30,000 and 35,000 over the years 2018 to 2020.

### 3. The determinant factors of migration in Tunisia

The geographical location of Tunisia, in the heart of the Mediterranean, with its Algerian and Libyan neighbors in North Africa as well as its Euro-Mediterranean neighbors in the North (especially Italy and France), is a primary determining factor in the migratory flows that concern it as a country of departure, transit, and destination.

These migrations can be explained by the historical factors presented at the beginning of this chapter, but structural factors contribute to the renewal and reinforcement of the number of migrants leaving, transiting, or arriving in Tunisia.

Cyclical factors join structural factors to explain the continuity of flows and the increase in the number of migrants (regular and irregular) of all categories: workers, families, students, refugees and asylum seekers, women, minors, etc.

Differences in development and income are a classic and determining factor of these migrations. Tunisia's GDP/capita was estimated at \$11,231 in 2019 (World Bank, 2021), compared to an average GDP of \$47,828 in Tunisia's northern neighborhood, the EU, which represents a 1 to 5 ratio between the two GDP levels.

In Tunisia's southern neighborhood (Sub-Saharan Africa), the ratio is reversed: Tunisia's GDP is three times that of the Sub-Saharan Africa group of countries (\$3,901 in 2019)<sup>65</sup> (World Bank, *Ibid*). The income gap between the EU and sub-Saharan Africa is increasing: European GDP is twelve times higher than that of Africa. This explains the importance of the European destination (and that of rich countries in general) for sub-Saharan migrants, whether they go there directly or transit through North Africa to reach Europe. Those who do not succeed and fail to reach Europe remain in Tunisia, where they find opportunities for survival and work which, even if they do not fully meet their expectations, allow them to survive and send money to their families.

Irregular migration of Tunisians represents a crucial challenge for Tunisia, both internally and in its relations with European destination countries.

Irregular migration abroad, like internal migration, reflects the existence of development and socioeconomic integration gaps in developing countries like Tunisia between the attractive regions of the eastern coastline and large cities on the one hand, and the repulsive regions of the interior and the south on the other. The latter have suffered from

growing and continuous migration deficits, the volume of which doubled or tripled from decade to decade between the 1970s and 2010, with a slight dip between 2010 and 2014.

On the other hand, the coastal and urban regions of the North-East and East coast, from Bizerte in the North to Djerba in the South, have not stopped consolidating their migratory excesses for five decades (1970-2020), which reflects their attractiveness and their ability to polarize populations, facilities, and public and private services.

This migration map is a perfect illustration of the gaps in development, services, and public facilities between, on the one hand, an urbanized, prosperous coastline that is open to the outside world and has good access, concentrated activities, infrastructure, and wealth, and, on the other hand, semi-arid and rural inland and southern regions, dominated by small farms, poorly equipped and isolated, that can neither retain their youth nor attract sufficient new investors and entrepreneurs.<sup>66</sup>

The result is a concentration of wealth in certain coastal governorates with a high degree of metropolization. In 2000, 12.5% of wealth was generated in the governorate of Tunis, 11.2% in the governorate of Sousse, and 10.3% in the governorate of Nabeul, while the share of the governorates of the interior and the Saharan south did not exceed 1% to 3%, sometimes less<sup>67</sup>.

The Regional Development Indices (RDIs) clearly demonstrate the development gaps between the coast, on the one hand, and the interior and south on the other. Nine coastal governorates (Greater Tunis, Northeast, and Center-East) have RDIs above 0.50, while the RDIs of ten governorates in the West and South are below this threshold. The RDI of Tunis (0.60) is almost twice as high as that of Kasserine (0.38)<sup>68</sup> (ITCEQ, 2019).

### 4. The impact of migration and the management of flows by the Tunisian State

The aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings has not finished impacting migration flows and the ways in which they are managed by the states concerned. Tunisia is directly concerned by three circles of situations in its Maghreb, European, and sub-Saharan neighborhoods.

**In North Africa**, the Libyan conflict has had a direct and significant impact on Tunisia. The resumption of civil war since 2014 has led to a total collapse of the authority of the Libyan state and the emergence of a situation of chaos, where militias and local or regional armed groups rule over the entire Libyan territory. One of the consequences of this situation is that Libya has become a platform for the organization of migrant smuggling and human trafficking (see chapter on Libya). Victims, when they can escape these abuses, flee Libya to neighboring countries such as Tunisia. For the past six

<sup>65</sup> However, several countries in this region have even lower GDPs, below the absolute poverty line (DRC: \$1,146, Niger: \$1,278, Burkina Faso: \$2,274; Mali: \$2,424). Many migrants from these countries transit through Tunisia or settle there, often in an irregular manner.

<sup>66</sup> 80% of industrial jobs and almost all export industries are located on the coast and in the major cities. The same applies to public facilities and infrastructures (highways, airports, railroads, etc.).

<sup>67</sup> Commissariat Général au Développement Régional (CGDR). 2013. *Regional Development Review N°3\_2013*

<sup>68</sup> Tunisian Institute of Competitiveness and Quantitative Studies (ITCEQ). 2019. *Regional Development Indices in 2018*.

years, the country has been experiencing an annual influx of thousands of migrants (MI data) crossing the border with Libya in an irregular manner, forcing the army and security forces to closely monitor the borders in order to combat these irregular crossings and to prevent the infiltration of members of terrorist groups among these migrants and refugees. The judiciary in the Medenine region is also mobilized to investigate and judge the offences of illegal border crossings.

While some of these migrants who enter Tunisia illegally fall into the trap of migrant smuggling networks and cross illegally into Libya and then to Italy, others remain in Tunisia to seek asylum or to look for work and extend their illegal stay, while Tunisian regulations remain rigid (labor code), hard (conditions of entry or stay on the territory), or absent (asylum law).

The variety of categories and statuses of migrants coming from Libya makes the management of these flows even more complex and difficult to respond to the needs of these different categories of migrants and refugees.

**The countries located on the southern shore of the Sahara**, which open directly onto two major neighboring countries of Tunisia, namely Algeria and Libya, are still deeply destabilized by the consequences of the war in Libya. Even if Tunisia is not directly affected by the flow of refugees fleeing these wars or migrants fleeing poverty, some of them end up arriving and passing through Tunisia, after having transited through neighboring countries in the region and then through Algeria or Libya.

Consequently, any migration policy (or at least flow management policy, in the absence of a politically-validated migration policy) must take into account these regional dimensions, whether direct or indirect, in order to plan and anticipate Tunisia's migration relations with its sub-Saharan neighborhood.

Tunisia's relations **with the European Union and its member states** are concerned with three registers related to migration management:

- The management of human mobility and irregular migration of Tunisians and foreigners from Tunisia.
- The management of the affairs of members of the Tunisian Diaspora residing in Europe.
- The perspectives of the evolution of public opinions and European electorates regarding migration issues and their impact on immigrant communities settled in Europe (strengthening of anti-immigrant parties, rejection of foreigners, reception of refugees and migrants, Islamophobia, etc.).

The central question that must be asked is how to reconcile Tunisia's own interests with the need to respect its commitments and responsibilities towards its European partners.

Indeed, Tunisia cooperates fully with the EU, and especially with its member states, for the control of external borders and the fight against illegal migration. Training ses-

sions are held for administrations, security services, and judges. The EU or its most influential member States in this field (Italy, Germany, France) regularly provide equipment, logistics, and advanced technologies for the surveillance of coastlines and territorial waters. The EU turns a blind eye to the abuses, denounced by NGOs, at the expense of detainees in detention centers for migrants arrested illegally.

However, Tunisia is more vigilant in other areas. There is no rush to conclude negotiations for the signing of the Mobility Partnership protocols. It refuses to readmit citizens other than its own, mainly nationals from sub-Saharan countries. It refuses to limit visa facilitation to tourist and short-stay visas. It is negotiating with the EU and its member states to extend visa facilitation to new professional categories and to increase the number of long-term study or economic visas (for job search and fixed-term employment).

Tunisia has also refused the European proposal to install landing platforms for migrants and refugees (Hot Spots) on its territory. It also relies on the hostility of civil society organizations (CSOs) to the outsourcing of border controls to admit its classification as a safe country by countries like Germany and Italy.

Indeed, the outsourcing of the EU's external border control raises many questions and criticisms in Tunisia itself, and in third countries in general, from CSOs, academics, and even within some circles of the Tunisian administration.

## 5. What are the prospects for the near future?


Tunisia is facing several major challenges in its migration management:

- It must first work to at least mitigate the hemorrhage of skills and graduates mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The response must be made at two levels: at the national level by reflecting on the reasons and factors of this exodus, then by setting up devices, mechanisms, and advantages to rectify the lack of skills and even convince some of those who are already abroad to return, in a win-win logic. An audit must be conducted to assess the real impact on public services (infrastructure and equipment, health, education and higher education, research) on the competitiveness of Tunisian companies, and therefore, on the competitiveness of Tunisia on the global scene.

- The fight against irregular migration of Tunisians should not be limited to the security approach but should include the correction of its root causes such as the gaps in development and wealth between the two neighbors on both sides of the Mediterranean. At the internal level, this correction must lead to a rapid mobilization of the state, the private sector, and Tunisia's international partners to reduce the gaps in development and wealth between the coastal areas and the interior regions. This can be accomplished by providing inferior regions with public services and quality infrastructure to keep their populations in place and attract entrepreneurs and investors to create activities that create jobs and wealth.

- Facilitating the organized emigration of Tunisians for work and training in Europe must be the cornerstone of bilateral cooperation agreements between Tunisia and EU member states, as well as the Mobility Partnership. Tunisia must also prepare to accompany the stabilization of Libya as its neighbor and meet the needs of its market through ordinary and skilled labor in the reconstruction phase.

- Tunisia must also strengthen its capacity to better control its borders and reduce the number of illegal crossings of land and especially maritime borders, without losing sight of the security imperatives in a geopolitical and security context that is very unstable and even threatening for the region. The laws relating to the conditions of entry and foreigner residence in Tunisian territory must be reformed to facilitate the deployment of means, devices, and mechanisms for the protection and sustainable integration of foreigners present in the territory, whether they are in a legal administrative situation or not. Respect for the fundamental rights of migrants and the international standards ratified by Tunisia must be one of the reference frameworks for any migration policy.



**Chapter IV:**  
**UNPACKING LIBYA'S  
MIGRATION NARRATIVE**

*Marwa Mohamed*

# Chapter IV:

## UNPACKING LIBYA'S MIGRATION NARRATIVE

Marwa Mohamed<sup>69</sup>

### Introduction

Libya has a complex history with migration, taking on different faces over the years, each with its own narrative and equally its own challenges. The importance behind highlighting these trends is to allow for a narrative shift, away from dominate influx narratives used today. Libya, unlike its neighbours has never been a migrant producing country, yet in recent times would become a major transit country, serving as a launch pad to reach Europe.

While historically, migration has played a significant role in the building of Libya's modern state and infrastructure, over the course of Muamer al-Gaddafi's forty-two-year rule, migration became a policy of favouritism and a direct reflection of his shifting alliances that often left people in limbo and despair. Following the uprising in 2011, the subsequent wars and mass human rights violations all became a push factor, shifting the entire narrative and transforming Libya from what was once a destination country into a transit state and ultimately the most dangerous migratory journey today.

By acknowledging the historical significance migration has played in Libya, the aim is to redirect the conversation around migration management towards one that recognizes the reality of movement, its importance to Libya's state building, in both its historic and current contexts.

### 1. Destination Libya, the history of movement flows into the country

Libya is traditionally viewed as a destination country. Overall, movement and mobility are not new to the sub-Saharan and north African region. In fact, trans-Sahara movement and south-south migration was very much characteristic to the region.<sup>70</sup> Historically, the Sahara served as a transit zone for traders, pilgrims and even students, which came to shape the ethnic diversity of populations that still roam it or live in and

around today.<sup>71</sup> This shifted when the colonial borders were drawn, and many families, like those of the Tuareg population, found themselves living on the opposite side of these borders. Until this day they do not necessarily recognize the artificial borders and continue to move freely between countries along the Sahara belt. Eventually, it is their knowledge of the desert and this free movement that gave way for this disenfranchised population to establish a lucrative smuggling business.<sup>72</sup>

Libya gained its independence in 1951 initiating its nation-state building process, it was not until the discovery of oil in 1959 however that mass projects of infrastructure and development began. Libya relied on foreign expertise in the fields of education, law, and other key sectors to help shape the state. This practice of importing foreign experts carried on even after the 1969 blood-less revolution that brought al-Gaddafi to power. The increase in oil revenues led to large state sponsored projects in the likes of The Great Man-Made River, this required manpower as the country shifted to that of a rentier state.<sup>73</sup> Cash-flow from oil, and al-Gaddafi's socialist-inspired policies forced much of the population into the public sector, making Libyans almost entirely reliant on the state for a stable income.<sup>74</sup> In turn the country became heavily dependent on foreign labor in nearly all sectors - making Libya an ideal destination country for foreign workers.<sup>75</sup>

Largely due to its oil wealth, the country attracted many from neighboring countries, where a strong currency and a generally uncomplicated entry and stay process - albeit ambiguous and informal - was ultimately appealing for those in pursuit of economic opportunities.<sup>76</sup>

### 2. Migratory trends and impact on Libya's political and economic stability

The migratory trends in Libya can be easily mapped in different phases where historically, Libya relied heavily on migratory workers for both skilled and unskilled labor. However, the waves of migration movement into Libya were never consistent, and often subjugated to the whims of al-Gaddafi and those in his political favor. Nonetheless, the 2011 uprising and its consequences has largely impacted the migration movement into the country. Where Libya's oil wealth appeared in the past to be the pull factor, the conflict and instability quickly shifted Libya from destination to transit country. The war and atrocities facing refugees and migrants became the ultimate push factor towards Europe.

<sup>71</sup> *dem*

<sup>72</sup> Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *The human conveyor belt: Trends in human trafficking and smuggling in post-revolution Libya*, March 2017, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/GI-Human-Conveyor-Belt-Human-Smuggling-Libya-2017-.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Sara Hamood, *African Transit Migration through Libya to Europe: The Human Cost*, American University in Cairo, *Forced Migration and Refugee Studies*, January 2006, [www.migreurop.org/IMG/pdf/hamood-libya.pdf](http://www.migreurop.org/IMG/pdf/hamood-libya.pdf) (hereinafter: Sara Hamood, *African Transit Migration*).

<sup>74</sup> Edith Chen, *Oil, Ideology, and Regime Adaptation in the Rentier Republics: A Comparison of Libya and Algeria*, *Journal of Middle East Policy and Politics*, 17 April 2013, <https://jmepp.hkspublications.org/2013/04/17/oil-ideology-and-regime-adaptation-in-the-rentier-republics-a-comparison-of-libya-and-algeria/>

<sup>75</sup> *Id*

<sup>76</sup> Katie Kuskminder, "Once a Destination for Migrants, Post-Gaddafi Libya Has Gone from Transit Route to Containment", *Migration Policy Institute*, 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/once-destination-migrants-post-gaddafi-libya-has-gone-transit-route-containment>

<sup>69</sup> Marwa Mohamed is the Head of Advocacy and Outreach of Lawyers for Justice in Libya (LFJL).

<sup>70</sup> Hein de Haas, *Trans-Saharan Migration to North Africa and the EU: Historical Roots and Current Trends*, *Migration Policy Institute*, November 2006, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/trans-saharan-migration-north-africa-and-eu-historical-roots-and-current-trends>

## State building and Gaddafi's 'Open Door' policy

During the initial state building process, policies were introduced to contract skilled workers from neighboring countries to help fill the gaps in various institutions, including education. By the time al-Gaddafi came to power in 1969 and with the wealth from oil revenues, large-scale state sponsored projects were initiated which required a sizeable skilled and unskilled work force.

Libya's much needed labor market often catered to those in al-Gaddafi's political favor. Libya under the al-Gaddafi regime practiced an open policy for regional migration - urging teachers, professors, and other professionals to migrate to the country. During this time, lax border policies and an equally lax migratory framework often meant that regional labor could easily travel to Libya and find jobs without strenuous bureaucratic policies and documentation. Thus, in the early years of his power, al-Gaddafi - much in line with pan-Arab ideals largely influenced by Gamal Abdel Nasser - actively opened Libya's doors for Arab nationals and granted residence as well as rights similar to those of Libyan nationals.<sup>77</sup>

As demonstrated in a study carried out by the University of Durham that examined Libya's workforce between 1973 to 1975, non-Libyan Arab workforce contributed to nearly 85% of the labor force.<sup>78</sup> As al-Gaddafi championed the pan-Arabism rhetoric, practicing an anti-west policy that favored Arab nationals encouraging labor and residency laws reflected his foreign policy direction. For example law no 6 of 1987 gave easy access to Arab nationals to enter Libya without visa where work and residence was organized and managed under the law for short-term stay as well as for long-term residence through a color code system.<sup>79</sup> Libya officially awarded contracts to Iraqi and Egyptian nationals through bilateral agreements, bringing in large numbers of nationals - many of whom remained there for decades. Iraqi nationals would later become surplus refugees following the war on Iraq in 2003.

"Between 1970 and 1982, the proportion of foreign workers in the total active labor force increased from 11% to 50%.<sup>80</sup> Migrants came with various skill levels, working in oilfields, as well as the construction and agriculture sectors."<sup>81</sup>

However, much of the labor decisions were tied to bilateral relations between al-Gaddafi and fellow Arab states that was oftentimes fickle and uncertain, using migrant

populations a pressure point with the country of origin, when relations became strained al-Gaddafi would expel the nationals, in 1995 alone 200, 000 foreign nationals were forced to leave.<sup>82</sup> Such expulsion for political clout was consistent in al-Gaddafi's policies over the decades, 70,000 Sudanese were forced to leave in 1985 when relations between the two countries deteriorated.<sup>83</sup> In the case of Tunisian migrants' relations were strained on numerous occasions over the four decades of his rule, in turn forcing many Tunisians settled in Libya to leave their livelihoods and leave Libya on a whim. This is also the case with Egypt when relations were severed in 1977, only to resume in 1989.<sup>84</sup> For example agreements to invite Tunisian labor were in place as early as 1957.<sup>85</sup> Yet in the same token Tunisian migrants were subjected to expulsion at least three times by 1985.<sup>86</sup> This is also true with Egyptian nationals, where in 1985 al-Gaddafi had expelled no less than 80,000 Egyptian and Tunisian nationals as a protest to their respective foreign ties to the United States.<sup>87</sup> Yet, relations soften again and the influx returns. It is estimated by the time of the uprising in 2011, Egyptians accounted for the largest migrant population in the country.<sup>88</sup>

## Pan-Arabism and the community of Al-Sahel

However, by the mid-1990's, al-Gaddafi's attention began to shift from pan-Arabism to pan-Africanism, and so did his migration policies. This shift is largely attributed to a sense of betrayal that he felt from Arab countries following the UN imposed sanctions on the country in 1992. As a result, al-Gaddafi focused on a pan-African dream where there was greater investment of Libya's oil wealth in the country and the rest of Africa. He opened Libya's borders to the rest of the continent, which proved lucrative to African nationals who found employment in various sectors in the oil rich country. This pan-African sentiment was cemented through a series of regional and bilateral agreements, including the community of Al-Sahel that aimed to create a regional bloc.<sup>89</sup> The Community of Al-Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) aimed at linked Africa through open borders allowing for the free movement of people and goods and interests of member states.<sup>90</sup>

While al-Gaddafi openly encouraged migration to Libya from African states, this also coincided with periods of instability in the region which also served as a push factor to seek refuge and employment in the oil rich country, making the free movement and open doors even more promising.

<sup>82</sup> Emanuela Paoletti, *The Migration of Power and North-South Inequalities: The Case of Italy and Libya*. United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

<sup>83</sup> Id

<sup>84</sup> Id

<sup>85</sup> Id

<sup>86</sup> Hamood

<sup>87</sup> Emanuela Paoletti, *The Migration of Power and North-South Inequalities: The Case of Italy and Libya*. United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

<sup>88</sup> [https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/2017/Libya\\_CaseStudy\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/2017/Libya_CaseStudy_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> Gerasimos Tsourapas, *Migration diplomacy in the Global South: cooperation, coercion and issue linkage in Gaddafi's Libya*, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 10, 2367-2385, 2017, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2017.1350102>

<sup>90</sup> Hamood

<sup>77</sup> This was very true for both Tunisians and Egyptians at early stages of the al-Gaddafi era, see Gerasimos Tsourapas, *Migration diplomacy in the Global South: cooperation, coercion and issue linkage in Gaddafi's Libya*, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 10, 2367-2385, 2017, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2017.1350102>

Gerasimos Tsourapas, *Migration diplomacy in the Global South: cooperation, coercion and issue linkage in Gaddafi's Libya*, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 10, 2367-2385, 2017, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2017.1350102>

<sup>78</sup> Emanuela Paoletti, *The Migration of Power and North-South Inequalities: The Case of Italy and Libya*. United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Id

<sup>80</sup> Id

<sup>81</sup> Floor El Kamouni-Janssen, Nancy Ezzeddine and Jalel Harchaoui, "From abuse to cohabitation: A way forward for positive migration governance in Libya," *October 2019*, [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Migration\\_Governance\\_Report\\_October\\_2019.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Migration_Governance_Report_October_2019.pdf)

## Closing doors and shifting alliances

Not surprisingly al-Gaddafi's open doors towards Africa is short lived. Around 2003 al-Gaddafi began shifting his policies away from the community of the Sahel and one more in favor of the West. This came after agreeing to surrender his stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and open a new chapter with the US and Europe. Restrictive policies ensued. Borders were closed down as new visa requirements were imposed along with state legislation that would largely make everyone an illegal migrant, all the while refusing to recognize refugee status. Detention of irregular migrants was introduced while large scale street sweeps and mass expulsions became common practice. In 2000 Libya deported 2,000 migrants by 2006 over 64,000 individuals were forced to leave.<sup>91</sup> This coincided with increased cooperation with Europe, namely Italy around migration which led to the signing of the very problematic Libyan-Italian 'Friendship' Agreement in 2008.<sup>92</sup> Amongst other areas of bilateral relations the agreement introduced the 'push back' of migrants and refugees, allowing for boats to be intercepted and sent back to Libya. In 2012 the European Court for Human Rights issued a judgement in the *Hirsi v Italy* case, stating that such 'push backs' were in violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, specifically the principle of non-refoulement.<sup>93</sup> In the same token as part of its European cooperation to manage migration, Libya began imposing entry visas for entry with the exception of the nationals from the Maghreb states.<sup>94</sup> This immediately placed thousands in a peculiar status rendering them illegal, while losing their access to state services including education and healthcare.<sup>95</sup>

Ultimately, Libya's so called 'golden era' of migration had come to an end. Although Libya's policies remained ambiguous and arbitrary in implementation, the reality was that until the 2011 uprising, Libya's oil wealth created an inviting job market for foreign labor.

## 3. The 2011 uprising's impact on Libya's stability and on the conditions of migrants into the country

### 2011 mass exodus out of Libya

The total number of foreign workers was estimated to be over 2 million people before the 2011 uprising. The population at the time largely consisted of mainly people from neighboring countries but also included a number of Asian and Eastern European country nationals who had sought work in Libya over the years.

However, the 2011 uprising and the ensuing wars caused a mass exodus into neighboring countries. Largely third country nationals fled the country in 2011, which drained the service sector, until this day. According to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2011, there were approximately 2.5 million migrant workers in Libya before the conflict started and nearly 800,000 fled when the conflict broke out, which in turn left a significant gap in key sectors including health.<sup>96</sup>

### From Destination to Transit

The 2011 uprising and subsequent wars led to the abrupt end to what was largely an economically beneficial and lucrative period for migrant workers.<sup>97</sup> Instead, it was replaced by an alternative economy fueled by people smuggling and trafficking.

In the aftermath of the uprising, the country plummeted into conflict, political instability and economic crisis, which led to the break down in the rule of law and a substantial security vacuum. The south was particularly neglected, far from any weakened central state authority, this provided an ample push to turn towards smuggling as an alternative mean of income compensating for the loss of livelihood years of neglect and conflict imposed on the people in the south. People smuggling ultimately became a lucrative business for a largely disenfranchised population. The instability created a security vacuum which gave space to emboldened criminal networks to take advantage of the crisis, enhancing the smuggling networks into what would ultimately become a multi-million-dollar industry.<sup>98</sup> The closure of alternative migratory routes in the region, i.e. Israel via Egypt and Spain through Morocco, coupled with a weak state and economic hardship, all contributed to the insurmountable growth of the Central Mediterranean

<sup>91</sup> Zampagni, et al, *Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Libya Case Study: An Unending Crisis—Responses of Migrants, States and Organisations to the 2011 Libya Crisis* Insights from Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Niger and Tunisia, 2017, [https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/2017/Libya\\_CaseStudy\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/2017/Libya_CaseStudy_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>92</sup> Italy seals Libya colonial deal, BBC, August 30, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7589557.stm>

<sup>93</sup> *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy*, European Court of Human Rights (2012).

<sup>94</sup> Zampagni, et al, *Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Libya Case Study: An Unending Crisis—Responses of Migrants, States and Organisations to the 2011 Libya Crisis* Insights from Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Niger and Tunisia, 2017, [https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/2017/Libya\\_CaseStudy\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/2017/Libya_CaseStudy_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> Id

<sup>96</sup> Katie Kuskminder, *Once a Destination for Migrants, Post-Gaddafi Libya Has Gone from Transit Route to Containment*, Migration Policy Institute, August 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/once-destination-migrants-post-gaddafi-libya-has-gone-transit-route-containment>

<sup>97</sup> Sylvie Bredeloup, Olivier Pliez, "The Libyan Migration Corridor" European University Institute, 2011, <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00585315/>

<sup>98</sup> Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *The human conveyor belt: Trends in human trafficking and smuggling in post-revolution Libya*, March 2017, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/report-the-human-conveyor-belt-trends-in-human-trafficking-and-smuggling-in-post-revolution-libya/>

Route (CRM) through Libya or what would come to be known as the world's most dangerous migratory route.<sup>99</sup>

All these factors also led to an increase in crime, including trafficking, exploitation and violence against migrants and refugees at the hands of criminal gangs and security forces nominally under control of the state.<sup>100</sup>

Ultimately, a push factor was created, having contributed to an increase in movement towards Europe, which reached its peak in the early part of 2017.<sup>101</sup> As a result, European states quickly responded by not only focusing their foreign policy on curtailing sea arrivals but also circumventing a very fragile Libyan central authority by cutting deals directly with tribes, militias and armed groups causing conflict and instability as seen in Sabratha in October 2017.<sup>102</sup> In the medium and long-term, this threatens to further destabilize an already unstable state. More importantly, Europe's foreign policy priorities were made to become Libya's priorities, and both sides failed in addressing the country's needs and the historical relevance that migration has in Libya.<sup>103</sup>

## Post-CNN video: What now?

In the years following the uprising it became evident that migrants and refugees were not safe in Libya, in fact they were subjected to gross human rights violations including, torture, rape, extortion and killing.<sup>104</sup> At this point there was no shortage of accounts coming out of Libya that demonstrated this brutal reality.<sup>105</sup> This ultimately became the push factor for migrants and refugees living in obscure and dangerous situations to flee, by 2016 it was estimated that nearly 181,436 having actually survived the journey, arrived in Europe.<sup>106</sup>

In November 2017 CNN published a video showing what is reported to be a live slave auction where migrants and refugees are being sold.<sup>107</sup> This video would change the course of migrants and refugees in Libya through a series of policy outputs that would

<sup>99</sup> Paola Monzini, Nourhan Abdel Aziz, Ferruccio Pastore, *The Changing Dynamics of Cross-border Human Smuggling and Trafficking in the Mediterranean*, October 2015, [http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/newmed\\_monzini.pdf](http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/newmed_monzini.pdf)

<sup>100</sup> Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, "Responding to the Human Trafficking-Migrant Smuggling Nexus," 2018 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Reitano-McCormack-Trafficking-Smuggling-Nexus-in-Libya-July-2018.pdf>

<sup>101</sup> Katie Kuschminder, "Once a Destination for Migrants, Post-Gaddafi Libya Has Gone from Transit Route to Containment", Migration Policy Institute, 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/once-destination-migrants-post-gaddafi-libya-has-gone-transit-route-containment>

<sup>102</sup> Amnesty International, *Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-Bound Refugees and Migrants*, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1975612017ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>103</sup> Floor El Kamouni-Janssen, Nancy Ezzeddine and Jalel Harchaoui, "From abuse to cohabitation: A way forward for positive migration governance in Libya," October 2019, [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Migration\\_Governance\\_Report\\_October\\_2019.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Migration_Governance_Report_October_2019.pdf)

<sup>104</sup> Amnesty International, *Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-Bound Refugees and Migrants*, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1975612017ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>105</sup> Id

<sup>106</sup> The Mixed Migration Hub, *The Central Mediterranean Route: The Deadliest Migration Route*, <http://www.mixedmigrationhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/The-CMR-The-deadliest-migration-route-1.pdf>

<sup>107</sup> People for Sale, CNN Exclusive Report, November 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/14/africa/libya-migrant-auctions/index.html>

cement their containment in a broken state that continued to use detention as its migration management while the vulnerability of the migrants and refugees was exploited as a means to extract financial wealth.

The CNN video marks a new era of migration reaction in Libya to what will become known as the 'post CNN video' era, that still continues to this day.

Following the release of the CNN story, the world appeared shocked with the reality on the ground for refugees and migrants. The United Nations Security Council held a special emergency session, while the migrant and refugee situation in Libya was at the top of the agenda during the EU-AU Summit held in November 2017. An AU-EU task force was formed to address the needs of refugees and migrants stranded in Libya.<sup>108</sup> It appeared that the migrant and refugee suffering in Libya had finally grabbed the world's attention. This was short lived. Despite the loud calls for investigations, task forces and public outcry, borders tightened, and little was done to relieve the suffering faced by migrants and refugees at the hands of traffickers and smugglers in Libya. The situation remains the same today.

## 4. Libya's domestic discourse around Migration Today

The authorities in Libya today seem to be in perplexed state when it comes to migration management and refugee protection, failing to recognize the significance of migration for the country. This would have allowed for a constructive dialogue on the ground and an improved reality for refugees and migrants in Libya. The dichotomy of migration in Libya is one of a love-hate relationship.

While al-Gaddafi dictated on a whim, his migration policies were deeply rooted in political agendas and the 'open door' policy was no exception. The influx of African migrants did not bode well with the Libyan population. It generated a strong sentiment of xenophobia along with growing resentment towards African nationals for what was largely perceived as stealing jobs from Libyans, that led to protests and ultimately a bloody attack on sub-Saharan Africans 2000.<sup>109</sup> The state did very little to appease these sentiments, or campaign towards tolerance and was equally silent on accountability for the killings. The reality was Libyan resentment grew against what they saw as 'their money' being squandered into Africa by al-Gaddafi's adventures and lavish giveaways in the continent – the jobs was simply a pretext to what the population was simply unable to voice as the real discontent.

The expressed discontent and abuse against mainly sub-Saharan African migrants escalated during and immediately following the 2011 uprising as sub-Saharan Africans were perceived by the Libyans to be mercenaries used by the al-Gaddafi regime to fight against them.

<sup>108</sup> Joint AU-EU-UN Taskforce Meeting to Address the Migrant Situation in Libya, 14 December 2017, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20171214/joint-au-eu-un-taskforce-meeting-address-migrant-situation-libya>

<sup>109</sup> "Libya unrest over immigration", BBC, 29 September 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/949208.stm>



On a series of occasions, Libya has pushed back against fulfilling EU ambitions to settle migrants and refugees in the country.<sup>110</sup> Yet in the same breath, given the nature of the rentier economy, and as history has shown, Libya is heavily reliant on migrant labor, predominately in the service sector. In the absence of the rule of law and accountability, what was once perceived as a quasi-organized labor market, is now chaotic and violent. Thus, migrant workers are still very much in high demand, however exploitation, forced labor, and the enslavement of migrants are a common occurrence in Libya's chaos today.

A joint study conducted by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime and Clingendael Institute, examining the efforts of three municipalities and their engagement with migrant workers, found that migrant labor continues to be crucial towards the revival of the 'Libyan economy.'<sup>111</sup> Their study reveals that even in times of conflict in Libya -despite the instability and an economic crisis- foreign labor is still heavily relied on.<sup>112</sup> In fact, post-conflict reconstruction activities offer a major opportunity for migrant laborers, who have historically been the main source of labor in this sector.<sup>113</sup> Further noted, is a World Bank enterprise survey that found the growing construction and trade sectors use between 60% and 70% foreign workers, with Libyans filling only key positions, such as managers, accountants and engineers.<sup>114</sup> This remains in line with the historic relevance migrant labor has had in Libya during the initial state-building and development phase in the past. Libya's oil sector has been weaponized over the ten years of conflict, making the country's rentier status no longer sustainable. Self-employment and private business enterprise is necessary and will largely require a migrant labor force to develop the sector.<sup>115</sup>

There remains an absence of a migration and labor framework for this work force, which is undoubtedly needed. Libya has failed to prioritize an environment of tolerance and establishment of migration and asylum frameworks, or to hold criminals accountable. Instead, the state has chosen to take an aggressive and reactive approach towards what is perceived as illegal movement. This aggressive policy is supported by the EU, including the interceptions at sea, that allows for the forceful returns to Libya and the immediate transfer to arbitrary and indefinite detention.<sup>116</sup>

In 2012 in an attempt to centralize its migration response, Libya established the Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM) under the ministry of interior. The DCIM was initially envisioned as a means to address the migration flows, where previously

this was managed under the Libyan Passport and Nationality Directorate.<sup>117</sup> The DCIM is mandated to arrest and deport those found in the country illegally. However, DCIM detention centers where migrants and refugees, largely those intercepted at sea, are taken, remains outside the realms of judicial oversight and thus rendering the detention illegal and arbitrary. In the absence of any judicial oversight, those currently held in these centers have no means of legally challenging their detention nor manage their release.

Libyan law remains problematic, residual from the al-Gaddafi era, the most recent and relevant is law 19 of 2010 that criminalizes the illegal entry, stay or exit, with a fine, detention, forced labor and eventually deportation.<sup>118</sup> This law, although not applied in any current setting as there remains no legal oversight to any current migration response, including that of DCIM detention centers, does however maintain the tone in which the state responds to migration movement. This is coupled with a complete legal and practical silence on asylum and refugee protection, which in turn translates to an absence of refugee protection while all those in the country are perceived as an illegal migrant and thus punishable by law. Libya has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Additional Protocol but is indeed party to the 1969 OAU Convention, yet refugee protection remains arbitrary at best recognizing a handful of nationalities in need of protection. In the absence of a formal recognition of refugee status and an official MOU with UNHCR, the international organizations' status in the country remains ambiguous and limited.

In an attempt to assist Libya in establishing a migration governance framework key European institutions including European Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) helped establish the National Team for Border Security and Management and its White Paper (NTBSM).<sup>119</sup> NTBSM, established by Presidential decree in 2016 acted as an inter-ministerial team consisting of the Ministry Interior, Finance Justice and Defence who also chairs the Team.<sup>120</sup> While the NTBSM as a joint initiative towards border control appears theoretically sensible, it remains void of a reality that these bodies only nominally have control over the territory, if at all, progress around these initiatives has yet to be realized.

<sup>110</sup> Patrick Wintour, *The Guardian*, "Libya rejects EU plan for refugee and migrant centres", 20 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/20/libya-rejects-eu-plan-for-migrant-centres>

<sup>111</sup> *Id*

<sup>112</sup> El Kamouni-Janssen, *supra* note 7 at 48

<sup>113</sup> *Id*

<sup>114</sup> *Id*

<sup>115</sup> *Id*

<sup>116</sup> Shoshana Fine and Tarek Megerisi, *The European Council for Foreign Relations*, "The unacknowledged costs of the EU's migration policy in Libya" 25 July 2019 [https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_unacknowledged\\_costs\\_of\\_the\\_eu\\_migration\\_policy\\_in\\_libya/](https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_unacknowledged_costs_of_the_eu_migration_policy_in_libya/)

<sup>117</sup> Amnesty International, *Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-Bound Refugees and Migrants*, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1975612017ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>118</sup> *Id*

<sup>119</sup> Chiara Loschi, Luca Raineri, Francesco Strazzari, *The implementation of EU Crisis Response in Libya: Bridging theory and practice*, January 2018, <http://www.eunpck.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2018-01-31%20D6.2%20Working%20paper%20on%20implementation%20of%20EU%20crisis%20response%20in%20Libya.pdf>

<sup>120</sup> *Id*

## 5. Externalization policy Europe and Libya: Forward looking

Generally, the narrative today, imposes a heavy emphasis on the 'transit' nature of migration used to justify the blocking of sea crossings. This reality is in large part due to the conflict, lawlessness and violence that has been directed towards refugees and migrants in Libya. The Libyan state's responsibility to protect refugees and migrants under their international legal obligations is woefully neglected. Libya's inability to investigate the crimes and put an end to the violence due to the weakened central authority demonstrates where the European policy priorities should be placed; ultimately not on building the capacity of the Libyan Coast Guard, but rather in security on the ground. Finally, the aim and focus should be directed towards the protection of refugee and migrants and safeguarding their rights. While Libya has persistently rejected permanent settlement camps in the country, paradoxically this has not prevented ongoing bilateral agreements as well as continued interceptions and returns carried out by the EU-trained Libyan Coast Guard. In August 2017 Libya declared its Search and Rescue (SAR) Zone despite lacking in the needed requirements to make such a declaration.<sup>121</sup> Yet, this came as no surprise, months before, the Italian authorities had already begun assisting the Libyans with setting up their own Maritime Rescue and Coordination Center (MRCC), a pre-requisite to establishing the SAR zone. Europe committed to stop migration as its key policy engagement with Libya and a result, a 200 million Euro EU Trust Fund for Africa established in 2017 helped finance a 46.3 million Euro program for Libya that largely focused on curtailing migration flows through training and equipping the LCG, establishing the MRCC operation room with the end goal of the SAR declaration.<sup>122</sup> With the SAR zone established, Italy handed over all reigns of coordination and rescue to Libya and the now trained and equipped LCG. In the meantime, the present humanitarian rescue boats run by non-governmental organizations were harassed, threatened, impounded, forced to sign a code of conduct and some even faced with criminal charges.<sup>123</sup> Slowly many began to withdraw. The sea was now clear to ensure the LCG would intercept and return all migrants boats attempting to flee the war-torn country and return them to Libya. By 2018 the number of sea arrivals to Italy from Libya saw a profound drop. Where in 2017 108, 409 individuals arrived in Italy, only 12, 297 arrived from Libya the following year.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, Libya's response to the changing migration trends is limited by its own shortcomings and largely dictated by external factors. A weakened state and European foreign policy that prioritized curtailing migration have in turn made it a priority for Libya. This

<sup>121</sup> Amnesty International, *Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-Bound Refugees and Migrants*, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1975612017ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>122</sup> Amnesty International, *Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-Bound Refugees and Migrants*, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1975612017ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>123</sup> Amnesty International, *Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-Bound Refugees and Migrants*, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1975612017ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>124</sup> UNHCR, *Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard*, January 2019, <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&escr=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiZwLz66-zvAhVugP0HHa0QCWUQFjACegQIChAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdata2.unhcr.org%2Fen%2Fdocuments%2Fdownload%2F67555&usq=AOvVaw3QLsa07RDxvRAJ7caPArsZ>

approach has ultimately failed to prioritize the human rights of migrants and refugees, as well as Libyan stability and state building. All of this has led to a rather catastrophic migrant and refugee response and a complete absence of protection for migrants and refugees, while further destabilizing the country.

By looking at the past and understanding Libya's reliance on the migration movement, Libya could use that knowledge as an opportunity to assist in state building. This could be achieved by opening the doors to formal migration and shifting movement back into the hands of the individual rather than into the hands of smugglers, armed groups and criminal gangs that exploit the precarious nature migrants and refugees find themselves in, due to the closed borders, and pushbacks.

## 6. Conclusion and key recommendations

Migration, a reality in Libya's past, present and definitely future, must be examined and reclaimed as a key element of public policy and a sustainable component of development in Libya's relation with its partners. Libya is need of migrant workers, particularly as it enters a post-conflict reconstruction phase. Much of Libya's past state-building, development and infrastructure is attributed to the support of migrant workforce, both skilled and unskilled labor. Looking forward, Libyan authorities must prioritize the establishment of a framework that will allow for the legal routes and formal migration opportunities which will serve beneficial on all sides and dismantle the criminal networks that thrive off of the illegality imposed on migratory movement as it stands today. The prospects of a stable Libya and the expected launch of major reconstruction programs in the country could pave the way for promising opportunities for south-south migration. Here lies the opportunity for Libya to once again act as a migrant receiving country, but this time with a human rights centric approach that adheres to international standards. Such a focus can only promote stability and prosperity.

Moreover, migration cooperation with Libya in its current form only serves to further destabilizes the country. While smuggling and trafficking networks thrive in the country, interceptions and returns only serves to feed the system. Instead, any cooperation extended by European member state cooperation should be geared towards state building, harnessing a transition from conflict and fragmentation to one of stabilization, and institution building that will generate stability and- eventually - economic growth, one that is focused on accountability and the establishing the rule of law. These are key long-term priorities that should be the immediate focus.

Human rights and protection must also be at the core of any migration policy and cooperation with a fragile and fragmented state. With that said, policy should be geared towards ending the environment of detention, extending protection to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as upholding human right standards for refugees and migrants in the country, rather than a focus on containment.

Libya must immediately stop the detention of migrant and refugees, immediately release those held in arbitrary detention and bring an end to the use of detention as the

de facto migration management response. Instead the country must establish a migration governance framework that is embedded in human rights standards and seeks to protect the rights of those individuals in its territory.

Stop all forms of returns to Libya and recognize that in its current state, Libya is not a safe country for return.

Europe must offer formal migratory routes, including visa opportunities and resettlement slots for refugees. This removes the ambiguous nature of movement and depowers the smuggling and trafficking networks.

Libya in dire need of migrant labor must regularize the migrant workforce, establish a formal migration workforce framework that removes power from the smuggling and trafficking networks, offering legal oversight and protection to those on their territory.

The background of the slide is a dark blue color. Overlaid on this is a complex network diagram. It consists of numerous small, light blue circular nodes connected by thin, light blue lines. Some nodes are significantly larger than others, acting as hubs. The connections form a dense, interconnected web that fills most of the frame, with a higher concentration of nodes and lines on the left side, tapering off towards the right.

# GENERAL CONCLUSION

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The reflections developed by the authors in the four chapters of this study have made it possible to lift the veil on dimensions and aspects that are highly relevant to understanding the place and role of international migration in North African societies, as well as questions about the future of this migration within the region and in its relations with its European and sub-Saharan neighbors.

The beginnings of the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration and the achievement of the 2030 Development Goals present North African countries and societies, as well as their international partners, with a series of challenges and issues which they must address.

The upward curve of the number of migrants in the world (175 million in 2000, 220 million in 2010, 270 million in 2020, and 300 million in the next few years) clearly shows that migration and settlement in a country other than one's own is becoming an almost unending destiny for large sections of the world's population, affecting the poor as well as the rich, the developed as well as the developing countries, the urban as well as the rural, and the unemployed as well as the workers.

Rampant globalization, the efficiency of modern means of transport and communication, and the digital networking of migrant communities, families, and actors will eventually make migration a way of life. Migration must be supported, encouraged, and protected in order to make it a tool for development, shared prosperity, and economic and social innovation.

North Africa must take its place and ensure its contribution to this endeavor, provided that political, economic, and social actors create the necessary conditions to resolve and correct the weaknesses, dysfunctions, and factors that are at the origin of economic or forced migration in the region.

Internally, the countries of the region must reduce the development and wealth gaps between their own regions and between their own social classes. Unemployment, precarious work, poverty, pollution, as well as environmental damage, water shortages, lack of schooling, the decline in the quality of public services and facilities (education, health, public transport, water and sanitation, etc.), the depreciation of the value of diplomas and the mismatch between training and job opportunities, and poor governance are all factors cited by people who migrate or who plan to migrate.

On the other hand, income and wealth differentials between neighbors are other classic determinants of migration.

Announced at least a quarter of a century ago, the Mediterranean zone of shared prosperity (Barcelona Declaration, association agreements, neighborhood policies, etc.) is slow to materialize, which can only delay the resolution of the economic causes of migration to Europe.

For its part, North Africa's northern neighborhood (the EU) remains very closed to any prospect of free movement of people between the two shores of the Mediterranean and does not pave the way for a serious and wide opening of legal migration channels for work and training in Europe for nationals of its southern neighborhood. Persisting on the same logic, the EU and its member states mobilize funds and multiply the control and containment programs of the southern populations in their own countries.

In the introduction, we have shown how irregular migration from the southern shore of the Mediterranean is a product of the implementation of the single space and the application of the Schengen visa system. 25 years later, the number of irregular crossings of the Mediterranean and landings on European coasts has never been so high, not to mention the number of third-country nationals, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa.

Since the advent of the new century, voices from the north and south of the Mediterranean calling for a «Marshall Plan» for North Africa or even the MENA region as a whole have not been silenced. Like the global pact on migration, a new Euro-Mediterranean regional pact on migration can be created to bring the economies and incomes of these two groups closer together. To get closer to this goal and eventually achieve it, two points should be decided: a) Include the mobility of people and their free movement in any agreement or treaty between the two shores and combine it with the other freedoms provided for in the association or free trade agreements, such as the Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), and; b) Dissociate and extract the chapters relating to security matters, border control, and the fight against irregular migration from the «Partnership for Mobility» agreements, so that they truly become mobility agreements and not barriers to mobility.

North African countries also have a long way to go: strides must be made in terms of good governance, transparency in the management of public affairs, respect for the human rights of people in general and especially of immigrants and their protection, and reforms of migration and asylum laws to ensure their consistency with international standards in this area. Foreigners in the territories of North African countries should have the same rights of access to public services and health and education facilities as nationals.

Horizontal regional integration and the removal of barriers to the free movement of people, workers, capital, services, and information must be considered a top priority for elites and decision-makers. Its success will undoubtedly resolve some of the factors of migration in general and irregular migration from the region.

Finally, North African countries need to think about how to anticipate the rules and opportunities for human mobility with the economic communities and countries of

sub-Saharan Africa in the context of economic cooperation and the continent-wide free trade area initiated by the African Union.

North African countries cannot afford to «clone» the migration policies that the EU and its member states apply to third-country nationals, applying the same rules and restrictions to other third-country nationals from sub-Saharan Africa, for example.

The interests of the EU and its member states in migration policy, while legitimate from their point of view, can in no way correspond to those, at least partly, of North African countries in their present or future relations with sub-Saharan Africa.



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