LIBYA

Mixed Migration Routes and Dynamics in Libya in 2018

June 2019

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Summary[1]

Migration to Libya is not a new phenomenon. Since the 1950s Libya has held an important position as a destination for refugees and migrants[2] in the North African region with individuals coming from West and Central Africa, Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to work. In 2011 and 2014, coinciding with the first and second civil wars in Libya, refugees and migrants started to increasingly arrive via boat from Libya in Italy. From early 2017 onwards reactionary migration measures were implemented in Libya and its southern neighbours to stem the flow of refugee and migrant sea arrivals to Italian shores. In 2018 refugee and migrant sea arrivals from Libya to Italy drastically decreased, with only 15,342 refugees and migrants reaching Italy irregularly via boat from Libya, a seven-fold decrease compared to the previous year.[3] The risk of death at sea, however, doubled, making the Central Mediterranean Sea route the deadliest route to Europe in 2018.

The situation for the 663,000 refugees and migrants estimated to be in Libya remains inherently complex.[4] Due to their irregular situation in the country,[5] refugees and migrants tend to be hidden, so-called 'hard-to-reach' populations in Libya, making it challenging for humanitarian actors to access them. At the same time, refugees and migrants are exposed to severe protection risks in Libya, exacerbated by the continued fragile security situation and the politicised context of migration in the country. Disentangling these dynamics, and disentangling the diversity of profiles the term 'refugees and migrants' in Libya encompasses, is key to a more nuanced and evidence-based understanding and response to mixed migration in Libya.

The present report is based on a longitudinal analysis of assessments on mixed migration routes and dynamics, conducted over the course of 2018. It is based on six rapid thematic studies, conducted over the course of 2018, as well as a longitudinal analysis of changes in mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya since 2017, with analysis based on comparable indicators monitored in late 2016 and early 2017.[6] In total, the present report is based on 477 individual in-depth semi-structured interviews with refugees and migrants, conducted in Libya (436) and Italy (41) and 113 key informant interviews, conducted in Libya, Italy and Tunisia.

Migration routes to, within and from Libya

- **Mixed migration[7] routes and dynamics in Libya in 2018 have not stopped, they have evolved**: while the overall number of refugee and migrant arrivals at Italy's shores has drastically decreased, refugees and migrants still arrive in Libya. Routes to and within Libya have diversified: while refugee and migrant arrivals from Niger seem to have decreased, an increase in refugees and migrants reaching Libya via Chad was recorded over the course of 2018. Within Libya, boat departures are still concentrated along Libya's western coast, however, secondary routes have re-emerged in Libya's eastern regions. Both developments respond to migration measures implemented since early 2017 in Niger and western Libya respectively.
- **New trends in the use of the Central and Western Mediterranean Sea routes**: over the course of 2018 a change in the predominant use of the Central and Western Mediterranean Sea routes has been recorded with

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[1] This assessment was conducted by IMPACT Initiatives in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
[2] For the purposes of this study the expression 'refugees and migrants' refers to all people on the move along the routes studied, including migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and other populations (such as victims of trafficking or unaccompanied and separated children), unless a distinction is otherwise made.
[3] This data is based on a review of all data available on refugee and migrant departures from Libya, interceptions, death and missing figures conducted by Matteo Villa, migration researcher at the Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), based in Milan, Italy. Data sources include UNHCR, IOM, the Italian Ministry of Interior and relevant press sources. The dataset is available here.
[4] IOM DTM, Libya's Migrants Report, Round 23, December 2018.
[5] The laws Law No. 2/2004 and Law No. 19/2010 criminalise all irregular entries, notwithstanding the individual's status as refugee or asylum seeker; previous regular entries are irregularised, subjecting individuals to penalties of fines and prison sentences; individuals who were in the country in 2017 with regular papers reported difficulties in renewing these (see UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.
[6] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.
[7] For the purposes of this study 'mixed migration' is defined as 'cross-border movements of people including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and opportunities'. Source: Mixed Migration Centre, website, accessed 25 February 2019.

a three-fold increase in the number of refugee and migrant sea arrivals to Spain compared to 2017.[8] Notably, some West African nationalities who in 2017 were among the primary arrivals in Italy, including Guineans, Ivorians and Malians, predominantly arrived in Spain in 2018. This trend was not visible for East African and Nigerian refugees and migrants, groups known to move in highly organised smuggling networks within Libya.

Evolution of refugee and migrant profiles in 2018

- **Refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa** have traditionally come to Libya to work, with the view to support their families back home. From 2016 onwards these nationalities also increasingly started to migrate to Italy; in 2018 their proportion among overall sea arrivals slightly decreased. In Libya, the situation for refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa seems to have deteriorated over the course of 2018, as the liquidity crisis has made earning and saving money more difficult and rendered them more vulnerable to labour exploitation and robbery.
- **Refugees and migrants from East Africa** have more transitory profiles, with most in the country with the intention to transit to Europe. Traveling in closed smuggling networks, with the journey usually organised already in the country of origin, their journeys to Europe have become longer and more dangerous over the course of 2017 and 2018. While in 2016 reports suggested that individuals from East Africa could stay in Libya for as little as a few weeks between arriving to the country and transiting to Italy, in December 2018 East African respondents were found to have spent an average of 1 to 2 years in Libya, waiting to transit to Italy. The crackdown on smuggling in parts of the country has reportedly resulted in over-reliance on few highly organised smuggling rings, leading to an ever increasing blurring of the lines between smuggling and trafficking of East African refugees and migrants in Libya.[9]
- **Refugees and migrants from the MENA region** tend to be well integrated into Libyan society. They also tend to have been in the country for longer, often living there with their families. Asian refugees and migrants, mostly Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, tend to be in Libya working in the service sector. No major changes seem to have occurred in the situation for these two population groups over the course of 2018.

Outlook

Moving forward, mixed migration routes and dynamics are likely to be shaped by several, interrelated factors:

- **At the micro level,** findings on migration drivers suggest that the root causes which make refugees and migrants come to Libya have remained unchanged between 2017 and 2018. As long as the needs underlying the root causes of migration remain unaddressed, refugees and migrants are likely to continue to leave their countries of origin, in search of a safe haven or more attractive labour destinations in the region.
- **At the meso level**, access to information, diaspora and smuggling links are important mediating factors in shaping migration decision making. Refugees and migrants interviewed in Libya reported to have had all relevant information to decide to come to Libya. Most also reportedly knew someone who lived in Libya or who had made the journey before them, not surprising considering Libya's position as a longstanding destination in the region. Different smuggling networks seem to have reacted differently to migration measures implemented, suggesting that, while some may be more adaptable in responding to changing migration policies, others, notably the smuggling networks of East African refugees and migrants, have more difficulties in adapting - to the detriment of East African refugees and migrants who still aim to reach Europe via Libya.

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[8] UNHCR, Mediterranean Situation Dashboard, accessed 13 March 2019.

[9] 'Human trafficking' and 'migrant smuggling' are two distinct crimes that often are erroneously conflated or referred to interchangeably. A key difference is that victims of trafficking are considered victims of a crime under international law; smuggled refugees and migrants are not—they pay smugglers to facilitate their movement. **Source**: US Department of State, Human Trafficking & Migrant Smuggling: Understanding the Difference. For a full definition of each term please see, on **smuggling**: The Smuggling of Migrants Protocol supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime defines the smuggling of migrants in Article 3 as the *'procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.'*. On **trafficking**: Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as '*the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.'*

- **At the macro level**, the security situation in Libya remains volatile with some refugees and migrants continuing to be exposed to severe protection risks. While the liquidity crisis has had a severe impact on refugees and migrants, the economy is slowly recovering. Overall, labour opportunities still present a driver of migration to Libya. However, considering the severity of the protection risks faced, it is likely that only individuals with a high risk appetite may still choose to come to Libya under these circumstances.

Overall, Libya is likely to remain a relatively attractive labour migration destination in the region, particularly for individuals with a high risk appetite and considering the lack of strong alternative attractive destinations in the North African region. Transit migration from Libya to Europe is likely to develop differently, based on refugees and migrants' regions of origin. Considering their step-by-step journeys, as well as the rise in particular nationalities reaching Spain in 2018, who used to arrive in Italy, West African refugees and migrants may increasingly aim to reach Europe via the Western Mediterranean Sea route. East African refugees and migrants, among the most vulnerable groups in Libya, are likely to continue to try to reach Europe from Libya, and remain at extreme risk in the country.

Contents

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List of Acronyms

DCIM	Department for Combating Illegal Immigration (Libyan institution)
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM data collection mechanism)
EU	European Union
GNA	Government of National Accord
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LCG	Libyan Coast Guard
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SAR	Search and Rescue zone
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund

Geographical Classifications

Mantika	Libya's districts, admin level 2

List of Figures, Tables and Maps

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Introduction[10]

Libya has been a long-standing destination for refugees and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) since the 1950s. Mixed migration routes and dynamics in the country, however, gained prominence with the rise in sea arrivals from Libya to Italy from 2014 and, increasingly, from 2016 onwards. Many refugees and migrants in Libya have dire humanitarian needs: of the 663,000 refugees and migrants in Libya in 2018,[11] the United Nations (UN) estimates that 412,000 are in need of humanitarian assistance with many facing severe protection risks.[12,13] Only 15,342 refugees and migrants reached Italy irregularly via boat from Libya in 2018, a seven-fold decrease compared to the previous year.[14] At the same time, interceptions and returns to Libya, operated by the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG), increased drastically, with 47% of all individuals who left Libya by boat being returned to the country, 15,235 individuals.[15] The risk of death at sea for those trying to leave Libya doubled from 2017 to 2018, making the Central Mediterranean Sea route the deadliest route to Europe.[16] A total of 3,311 individuals were reported dead or missing in the Mediterranean sea off the Libyan coast in 2018. More deaths are likely to have gone unreported.[17]

The humanitarian response to mixed migration in Libya has grown over the course of 2018. Still, access to refugees and migrants in Libya, particularly those outside official detention centres, remains difficult. Due to their irregular situation in the country,[18] refugees and migrants tend to be hidden, so-called 'hard-to-reach' populations in Libya, making it challenging for humanitarian actors to access them. At the same time, the continued fragile security situation and the politicised context in which humanitarian actors in Libya operate make it difficult to identify those most in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly considering the diversity of profiles the term 'refugees and migrants' in Libya encompasses. While some refugees and migrants are in the country with the intention to transit to Italy and are extremely vulnerable, others have been in the country for years, having built their life there with strong local community ties, protecting them from harm. Disentangling these dynamics is key to a more nuanced and evidence-based understanding and response to mixed migration in Libya, to ensure that those most in need of humanitarian assistance are able to access it.

The present report is based on a longitudinal analysis of findings on mixed migration routes and dynamics conducted through six rapid studies over the course of 2018, with the aim to improve humanitarian actors' and policy makers' understanding of mixed migration dynamics in Libya, to support a more evidence-based response. While each study analysed distinct thematics in relation to mixed migration in Libya,[19] some indicators on mixed

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[10] This assessment was conducted by IMPACT Initiatives in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

[11] IOM DTM, Libya's Migrants Report, Round 23. December 2018.

[12] OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview: Libya 2019, February 2019.

[13] For an overview of protection risks see: OHCHR and UNSMIL, Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya, 20 December 2018; OHCHR, Oral update of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Libya pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 34/38, 20 March 2018; MSF, European governments are feeding the business of suffering, 7 September 2017; Amnesty International, Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-bound Refugees and Migrants, 11 December 2017; Amnesty International, Libya: desperate plight of detained migrants has 'deteriorated' - news briefing, 12 November 2018.

[14] This data is based on a review of all data available on refugee and migrant departures from Libya, interceptions, death and missing figures conducted by Matteo Villa, migration researcher at the Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), based in Milan, Italy. Data sources include UNHCR, IOM, the Italian Ministry of Interior and relevant press sources. The dataset is available here.

[15] This compares to 11% of individuals of total departures in 2017 who were intercepted and returned to Libya. Figures obtained by calculating the number of individuals arrested at sea by the Libyan coast guards compared to the total number of individuals who attempted to cross the sea from Libya and either arrived to Italy or died at sea. The latter figures are available at IOM Missing migrants project; UNHCR, Flash update, 1-7 December 2018.

[16] Calculation based on datasets consolidated on basis of different data sources, available at Villa, M., dataset, last accessed 16 January 2019.

[17] UNHCR, Mediterranean Situation Dashboard, accessed 13 January 2019.

[18] The laws Law No. 2/2004 and Law No. 19/2010 criminalise all irregular entries, notwithstanding the individual's status as refugee or asylum seeker; previous regular entries are irregularised, subjecting individuals to penalties of fines and prison sentences; individuals who were in the country in 2017 with regular papers reported difficulties in renewing these (see UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

[19] For an overview of each study conducted, please consult Annex 1.

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migration routes were tracked throughout the research cycle, to capture changes in mixed migration routes to and within Libya over the course of 2018. In total, the present report is based on 477 individual in-depth semi-structured interviews with refugees and migrants, conducted in Libya (436) and Italy (41) and 113 key informant interviews, conducted in Libya (99), Italy (9) and Tunisia (5). An extensive secondary data analysis was conducted of publically available data on mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya in 2018 to triangulate and supplement findings in the report.[20] Additional longitudinal analysis on changes in mixed migration routes and dynamics since 2017 was carried out on the basis of comparable data that had been collected in late 2016 to early 2017.[21]

Following a short methodological note, the report outlines the key assessment findings, organised into the following sections: (1) historical and recent mixed migration context in Libya; (2) routes to, within and from Libya; (3) evolution of refugee and migrant profiles in 2018 and (4) outlook on mixed migration in Libya in 2019.

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[20] Throughout the report, all secondary data sources drawn upon are cited as relevant.
[21] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

Methods Note

This report is based on a longitudinal analysis of six research cycles on mixed migration routes and dynamics conducted in Libya over the course of 2018. These included:

- [Mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya: The impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya](#), April 2018;
- [Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya](#), June 2018;
- [Refugees' and migrants' access to food, shelter and NFIs, WASH and assistance](#), September 2018;
- [Mixed migration routes and dynamics: May – December 2018](#), December 2018;
- [From hand to hand: the migratory experience of refugees and migrants from East Africa across Libya](#), April 2019;
- Libyan refugees' and asylum seekers' irregular boat migration to Europe in 2018, July 2019.

The research thematics explored were selected on a rolling basis with emerging information needs identified in collaboration with humanitarian partners over the course of 2018. Topics were selected on the basis of available secondary data and identified information gaps on mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya, with the aim to inform humanitarian actors and policy makers operating in the mixed migration response in Libya.

Each qualitative study was conducted within a six to eight-week timeframe, with two weeks of research design, two weeks of data collection in Libya (and, for some, in Italy and Tunisia), and two to three weeks of data analysis and output production. For each research cycle, distinct research methodologies were developed, including research questions, tools and interview guidelines, as well as sampling methodologies for the population of interest and data collection locations. Refugee and migrant respondents were sampled purposively, on the basis of the specific aims of each assessment, which usually included: respondents' region of origin, time of arrival and location in Libya (east/west/south). Data collection locations in Libya were determined on a case by case basis, depending on each research cycle's aim, but were usually sampled on the basis of the location hosting significant refugee and migrant populations, which is based on the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)'s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) data in Libya. For some research cycles additional data collection was conducted in Italy and Tunisia. This was done in the research cycles for which it was deemed too challenging to collect sufficient information on the research topic within Libya, due to (1) difficulties in reaching the population of interest, such as in the case of East African refugees and migrants, who are hard-to-reach in Libya, or (2) due to the sensitivity of the research questions and ethical considerations around conducting data collection with highly vulnerable groups within Libya. In the cases were key informants were based outside of Libya, supplementary data collection was carried out in Italy and/or Tunisia and, in a minority of cases, remotely over skype/phone.

In total, findings presented are based on a total of 477 individual in-depth semi-structured interviews with refugees and migrants conducted over the course of 2018 in Libya, of which 41 were conducted in Italy. In addition, a total of 113 key informant interviews were conducted, of which 99 in Libya, with an additional 9 conducted in Italy and 5 carried out in Tunisia. Table 1 illustrates a breakdown of relevant outputs and how each fed into the different sections of the present report. For a more detailed breakdown of the methodology employed for each research cycle, please consult the methodology section at the end of each output (see Annex 1).

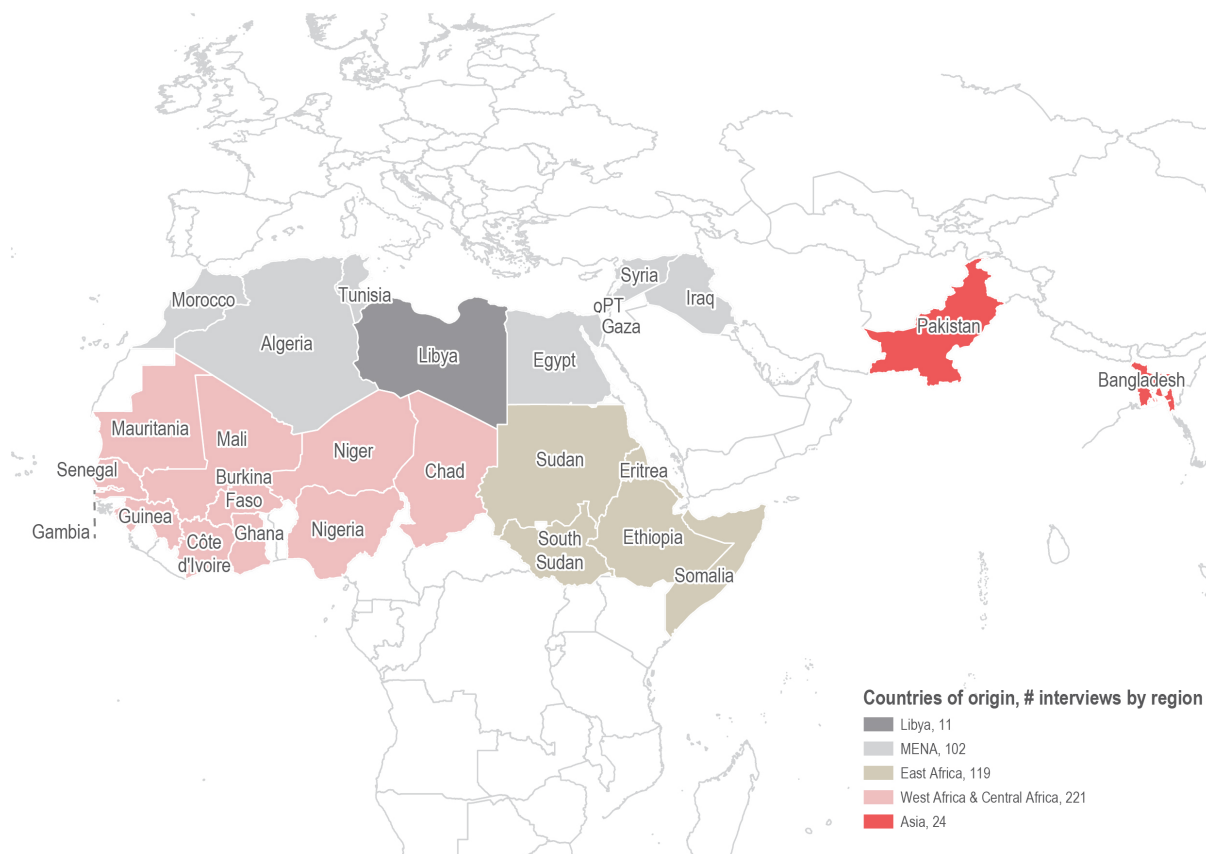**Table 1: Overview of data collection method, location timeframe and number of interviews, by report section**

Section	Output	Methodology						Total # interviews	
		Data collection (DC) method	Primary DC locations	DC timeframe	# R&M IIs	# KIIs		# R&M IIs	# KIs
1. Historical and recent mixed migration context in Libya	See secondary sources cited in the relevant section	Secondary DC	-	-	-	-		-	-
2. Routes to, within and from Libya	Mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya: The impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya, April 2018	Primary & secondary DC	**Libya:** Sebha, Alkufra, Misrata, Ejdabia, Tripoli, Bani Waleed, Garabolli, Azzawya	21 March - 2 April 2018	75	32		165	59
	Mixed migration routes and dynamics: May – December 2018, December 2018	Primary & secondary DC	**Libya:** Tripoli, Zwara, Azzawya, Ghat, Wazen, Ras Jedir, Sebha, Kufra, Ejdabia; **Tunisia:** Tunis	01 - 25 Dec 2018	90	27			
3. Evolution of refugee and migrant profiles in Libya in 2018	Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya, June 2018	Primary & secondary DC	**Libya:** Tripoli, Misrata, Sebha, Ejdabia	28 May - 11 June 2018	120	30		301	44
	Refugees' and migrants' access to food, shelter and NFIs, WASH and assistance, September 2018	Primary & secondary DC	**Libya:** Tobruk, Sebha, Misrata, Ejdabia, Zwara	14 - 23 Sept 2018	151	-			
	From hand to hand: the migratory experience of refugees and migrants from East Africa across Libya, April 2019	Primary & secondary DC	**Italy:** Rome, Bologna, Catania, Siracusa, Agrigento, Palermo, Priolo Gargallo; **Libya:** Tripoli; **Tunisia:** Tunis	12 Dec 2018 - 12 Jan 2019	30	14			
4. Outlook	Review of outputs 1 - 5 above	Primary & secondary DC	**Libya:** Tripoli, Zwara, Azzawya, Ghat, Wazen, Ras Jedir, Sebha, Alkufra, Tobruk, Bani Waleed, Misrata, Garabolli, Ejdabia; **Italy:** Rome, Bologna, Catania, Siracusa, Agrigento, Palermo, Priolo Gargallo; **Tunisia:** Tunis	21 March 2018 - 12 Jan 2019	466	103		**477**	**113**
	Libyan refugees' and asylum seekers' irregular boat migration to Europe in 2018	Primary & secondary DC	**Italy:** Rome, Catania, Palermo, remote; **Tunisia:** Tunis; **Libya:** Tripoli	12 - 25 Dec 2018	11	10			

Legend: DC = data collection; R&M = refugees and migrants; IIs = individual interviews; KIIs = key informant interviews

Additional longitudinal analysis on changes in mixed migration routes and dynamics since 2017 was carried out on the basis of comparable data collected in late 2016 to early 2017. This included data collected in Libya, Chad, Niger and Italy.[22] Any further publically available secondary data on mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya in 2017 and 2018 was also included in the analysis, with outputs cited in the text as relevant.

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[22] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

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Map 1: Regions of origin of refugee and migrant respondents who participated in individual semi-structured interviews in Libya and Italy

Countries of origin, # interviews by region
- Libya, 11
- MENA, 102
- East Africa, 119
- West Africa & Central Africa, 221
- Asia, 24

Limitations

- All findings herein presented are based on qualitative research design, sampling and analysis. As such, findings should be treated as indicative only of overall mixed migration trends in the country.
- No primary data was collected inside detention centres in Libya. As such, primary data collected in the course of 2018 and presented here is based on interviews with refugees and migrants outside official detention centres only. While secondary data reviewed and included in the present analysis also draws on the experiences of refugees and migrants in detention, the profiles and needs of this population group in particular are likely to be underrepresented in this study.
- The present report aims at providing an overview of key trends in relation to mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya in 2018, without aiming to be exhaustive. As research thematics were chosen on the basis of identified information gaps, some themes, on which it was deemed that already a significant body of knowledge was available prior to this study, may be underrepresented in this report. This notably includes the protection risks that refugees and migrants face in Libya. Recent publically available studies on the topic include: OHCHR and UNSMIL, Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya, 20 December 2018; Amnesty International, Libya: desperate plight of detained migrants has 'deteriorated' - new briefing, 12 November 2018; 4MI/MMC, Fraught with Risk - Research Paper: Protection concerns of people on the move across West Africa and Libya, May 2018.

Map 2: Data collection locations for individual refugee and migrant and key informant interviews

Findings

This section of the report presents the study's main findings and is comprised of:

- *An overview of the historical and recent context of mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya;*
- *Key findings in relation to mixed migration routes to, within and from Libya in 2018, including longitudinal analysis on changes thereto since 2017;*
- *Key findings in relation to the evolution of refugee and migrant profiles in Libya in 2018;*
- *An outlook section, including a review of key factors which are likely to influence mixed migration routes and dynamics from 2019 onwards.*

Historical and recent mixed migration context

This sub-section of the report aims to present a concise overview of the context within which mixed migration to, within and from Libya occurs. It is structured into two main sections: (1) a historical overview of migration to and from Libya since the 1950s and (2) an overview of key migration measures and developments in the country since 2017.

Historical overview of migration to and from Libya

Migration has been a central feature of the Libyan economic and political landscape since the country's independence in 1951. An attractive labour destination for refugees and migrants from sub-Saharan and North Africa and the Middle East since the 1950s, Libya's role as a transit country from the African continent to Europe evolved from 2011 onwards, coinciding with the first and, in 2014, second civil war in Libya.[23]

1950s – 1990s: Encouraging migration to Libya for economic and geopolitical gains

In 1957 the first oil fields were discovered in Libya. This led to the gradual creation of urban and economic hubs in parts of the country and, with it, the need for migrant labour to work and develop these new economic opportunities. Migration to Libya from the Arab world grew significantly, with Libyan authorities actively seeking out foreign labour for the construction sector and in the oil industry.[24] Between 1970 and 1982, the proportion of foreign workers in the total active labour force increased from 11% to 50%.[25] At the same time, then-leader Muhammar Al Ghadafi used migration from the MENA region to position himself and his country in the region as a champion of Pan-Arabism. In 1980, a law was passed that granted Libyan nationality to '*nearly every Arab under the age of 50 residing in Libya*', thereby facilitating the entry of Arab refugees and migrants and their stay in Libya. In 1987, this openness was brought even further when Libya passed a law according to which nationals from Arab States and from Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea could enter Libya without a visa.[26]

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[23] Bredeloup, S. and Pliez O., 'The Libyan migration corridor'. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute, 2011; Hamood, S., 'African transit migration through Libya to Europe: the human cost', Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, The American University in Cairo, 2006; Paoletti, E. and Pastore, F., 'Sharing the dirty job on the southern front?: Italian-Libyan relations on migration and their impact on the European Union', DEMIG Working Paper 29, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, 2010; Paoletti, E., 'Migration and foreign policy: the case of Libya', The Journal of North African Studies, 16:2, 215-231, 2011.
[24] Pliez, O. ed., 'La nouvelle Libye, géopolitique, espaces et sociétés au lendemain de l'embargo', Karthala-Iremam, 2004.
[25] Beauge and Burgat 1986:57, quoted in Paoletti, E., 'Migration and foreign policy: the case of Libya', The Journal of North African Studies, 16:2, 215-231, 2011.
[26] European Commission, [Technical mission to Libya on illegal immigration](#), 2005.

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From the 1990s onwards, the attitude of the Libyan regime gradually shifted from pan-Arabism towards pan-Africanism.[27] The new pan-African stance of the Libyan regime translated into a series of bilateral and multilateral agreements with several African states. This culminated in the foundation of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States which, *inter alia*, aimed at promoting the free movement of persons, capital and the interests of nationals of Member States.[28] As a result, tens of thousands of sub-Saharan migrants were welcomed to Libya to work in the emerging economy. As of 2005, it is estimated that between 1.3 to 1.8 million refugees and migrants lived and worked in Libya, a country with, at the time, 5.5 million inhabitants.[29]

In June 2005, Gadhafi stated:

'Libya is a country belonging to all Africans. [...] What we call clandestine migration is a totally natural phenomenon. [...] It is normal that Africans move around their own land. [...] Free yourself from the efforts that you are making now to control borders: surveillance along frontiers, custom control, immigration and security [...]. Leave people free to move and to look for a job from one place to another. If they will not find this job they will go back to where they came from.'

Source: Panapress 18 June 2005, quoted in: Paoletti, E. and Pastore, F.,'Sharing the dirty job on the southern front?: Italian-Libyan relations on migration and their impact on the European union', 2010, DEMIG Working Paper 29, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, 2010.

Focus 1: Protection risks for refugees and migrants in Ghadafi's Libya

Already under Ghadafi's reign in Libya some refugees and migrants were highly exposed to protection risks. At border crossing points this reportedly included the risk of arbitrary detention, arrest and rights violations, notwithstanding officially visa free entry regulations for sub-Saharan and Arab refugees and migrants.

Besides the problems experienced at the border, sub-Saharan refugees and migrants in particular tended to be exposed to protection risks also in urban centres. Routine abuses and human rights violations reportedly included verbal insults, stone-throwing, beatings, robbery, extortion, exploitation and forced evictions, all already widely reported as of the late 1990s.

Several authors argue that attitudes of many Libyans towards sub-Saharan refugees and migrants were connected to the former existence of regional slave trades. First-hand accounts of sub-Saharan refugees and migrants interviewed in the 2000s support this claim, whereby the most common problems cited by respondents were Libyan youths harassing them because they were '*abeed/'abd*, meaning 'slave' in Arabic.

Sources: Amnesty International, Libya: forcible return/fear for safety/fear of torture, 2004; Amnesty international, Libya: forcible return/torture and ill-treatment, 2007; Human Rights Watch, Stemming the flow: abuses against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, 2006; Hamood, S., 'African transit migration through Libya to Europe : the human cost', Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, The American University in Cairo, 2006; Pliez, O. ed., 'La nouvelle Libye, géopolitique, espaces et sociétés au lendemain de l'embargo', Karthala-Iremam, 2004.

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[27] Pliez, O. ed., 'La nouvelle Libye, géopolitique, espaces et sociétés au lendemain de l'embargo', Karthala-Iremam, 2004.
[28] Hamood, S., 'African transit migration through Libya to Europe: the human cost', Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, The American University in Cairo, 2006.
[29] European Commission, Technical mission to Libya on illegal immigration, 2005, accessed on 25 February 2019.

2000s - 2010: Reversal of open door policy; boat arrivals to Italy remain low

In response to domestic pressure to limit the arrival of sub-Saharan refugees and migrants to Libya from the late 1990s onwards,[30] a new law was passed in 2004 restricting migration and making it notoriously difficult for refugees and migrants to work legally in the country.[31] The stringent requirements imposed for regular stay were impossible to meet for many foreign workers, most of whom were of sub-Saharan origin. As a result, an unknown number of migrants became irregular overnight.[32] In 2005, the authorities estimated that between 750,000 and 1.2 million refugees and migrants were irregular in the country, between 13% and 20% of the total population.[33]

Despite the increasingly hostile environment for refugees and migrants, and the overall high refugee and migrant population estimated to be in the country (between 1.3 and 1.8 million, irregular and regular combined), between 2000 and 2010 an average of only 19,000 refugees and migrants reached Europe irregularly via boat each year.[34] Albeit the challenges particularly newly irregularised refugees and migrants faced in Libya, Libya remained an attractive destination to work in the region and not, as of 2010, a major transit point to Europe.

2011 onwards: 1. and 2. civil wars; onset of irregular boat migration from Libya to Europe

In 2011 the first civil war broke out in Libya and, with it, many of the estimated 1.3- 1.8 million refugees and migrants left the country, primarily fleeing to neighbouring countries or back to their countries of origin.[35] As of December 2011, 800,000 refugee and migrant workers had left Libya. Refugees and migrants working in Libya at the time left the country in different ways. A relative majority fled to Tunisia (350,000), with others fleeing to Egypt (263,500), Nigeria (85,000) and Chad (57,000).[36] An approximate 160,000 migrants were evacuated and flown to their countries of origin by IOM;[37] others, an unknown number were repatriated directly by their home governments or employers.[38]

In comparison, a comparatively low number of refugees and migrants fled Libya by boat: in 2011 37,800 (plus 1,575 arriving in Malta) refugees and migrants reached Europe from Libya irregularly via boat, making up 4% of the overall population displaced by the civil war in Libya that year.[39] Still, this was a significant increase compared to the years before [see graph 1 below].

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[30] For more information, please consult: Human Rights Watch, Stemming the flow: abuses against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, 2006; Bredeloup, S. and Pliez O., 'The Libyan migration corridor'. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute, 2011.

[31] Law no 6 required foreigners to present the following documents to work legally in the country: i) proof that a Libyan could not do the job the foreigner is proposed to do; ii) contract with an employer; iii) registration with the tax authorities; iv) and health certificate proving that the foreigner do not have any contagious diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Source: Human Rights Watch, Stemming the flow: abuses against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, 2006.

[32] Migration Policy Centre (MPC), MPC – migration profile Libya, 2013.

[33] European Commission, Technical mission to Libya on illegal immigration, 2005, accessed on 25 February 2019.

[34] UNHCR, Mediterranean Data Dashboard, accessed 25 February 2019.

[35] This included a large community of Egyptian and Tunisian workers, multi-national high skilled workers associated with the oil industry and the construction sector and significant numbers of sub-Saharan irregular migrants, mostly working in the informal sector. It also included 8,000 Palestinian, Iraqi, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Somali and Eritrean refugees and 3,000 asylum seekers, registered with UNHCR. Sources: IOM, Egyptian migration to Libya, 2011; IOM, IOM response to the Libyan crisis, external situation report, 22 march 2011, 2011; MPC, MPC – migration profile Libya, 2013; Koser, K., Chatham house briefing paper - Responding to migration from complex humanitarian emergencies: lessons learned from Libya, Centre on global health security, 2011, accessed 25 February 2019; UNHCR, 'Humanitarian situation in Libya and the neighbouring countries', various updates: 2 March 2011; 22 March 2011; 22 June 2011.

[36] IOM, IOM response to the Libyan crisis, external situation report, 22 march 2011, 2011, accessed 25 February 2019.

[37] IOM, IOM response to the Libyan crisis, external situation report, 22 march 2011, 2011, accessed 25 February 2019.

[38] Koser, K., Chatham house briefing paper - Responding to migration from complex humanitarian emergencies: lessons learned from Libya, Centre on global health security, 2011, accessed 25 February 2019.

[39] Koser, K., Chatham house briefing paper - Responding to migration from complex humanitarian emergencies: lessons learned from Libya, Centre on global health security, 2011, accessed 25 February 2019.

Figure 1: Sea arrivals from Libya to Italy 2000- 2018[40]

Sea arrivals from Libya to Italy 2000- 2018
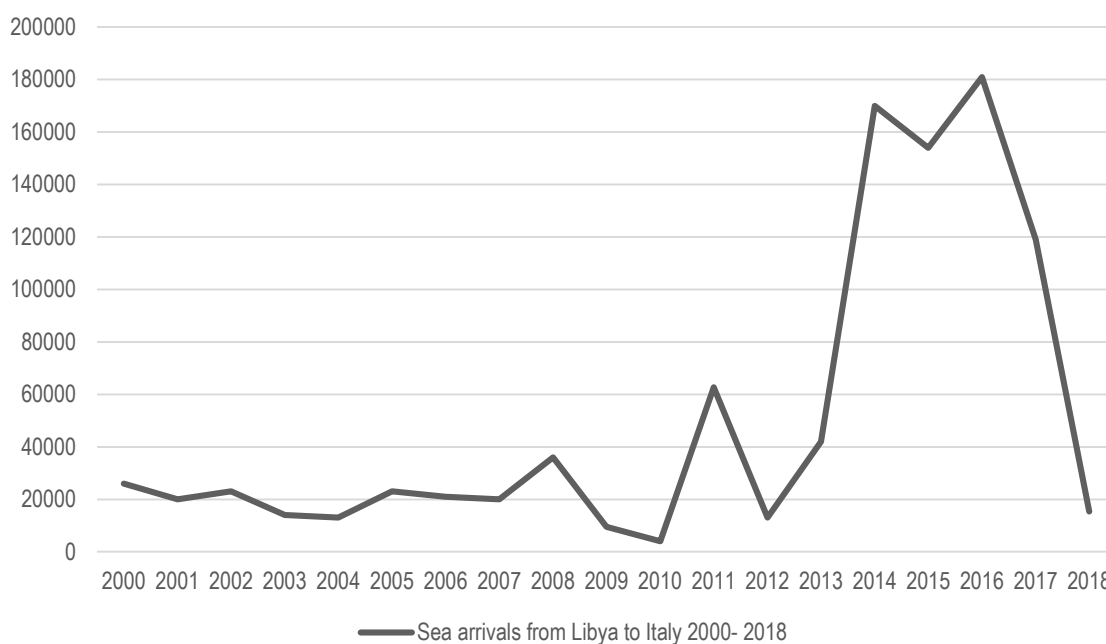
In 2012 and 2013 refugee and migrant sea arrivals to Italy temporarily decreased, mirroring the momentary stabilisation of the situation in the country. However, in 2014 the second civil war broke out, leading to a new peak of arrivals, with 170,000 refugees and migrants reaching Italy from Libya that year. Since 2014, the number of refugees and migrants reaching Italy by boat steadily increased, until an unprecedented peak of 181,000 refugee and migrant arrivals in 2016. From 2017 onwards refugee and migrant sea arrivals to Italy drastically decreased, largely as a result of stringent migration measures implemented on both sides of the Mediterranean with the aim to stop mixed migration flows towards Europe.

Migration measures and developments in 2017 and 2018

Migration measures implemented

While the European Union (EU) and its member states, notably Italy, were not new to implementing joint measures with Libyan authorities to stem migration flows from Libya towards Italy,[41] in response to the rise in refugee and migrant arrivals to Italy in 2016 these efforts took on a new intensity. Most notably, measures included a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between Italy and Libya's GNA to improve border security along the western coast and southern borders in February 2017, EU-supported border management capacity building activities for Libyan security and coast guards, as well as an increase in return operations for refugees and migrants from Libya to their areas of origin and safe third countries.[42]

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[40] Source: consolidated data from the Italian Ministry of Interior and the UNHCR Mediterranean data dashboard.

[41] Since the 2000s with then-leader Gadhafi. One of the most prominent tools was the 'Friendship Treaty' signed in 2008 by Italy and Libya, a treaty with the designated aim to intensify "the fight against terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration". In addition, Italy committed to pay 5 billion USD over a period of 20 years to finance various programmes, including infrastructure, social services, scholarships and border control equipment. Source: Bredeloup, S. and Pliez O., 'The Libyan migration corridor'. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute, 2011

[42] ASGI, Italy-Libya agreement: The Memorandum text, February 2017; EU External Action, Factsheet on the relations between Libya and the European Union, January 2018; Return operations herein mentioned include the EU-supported Voluntary Humanitarian Return programme of IOM, the humanitarian evacuations and resettlement programme by UNHCR.

Decrease in sea arrivals to Italy, increase in risk of death at sea

In 2018, only 15,342 refugees and migrants reached Italy's shores, a low unseen since before the onset of violence in Libya in 2011. At the same time, interceptions and returns to Libya, as well as the risk of death at sea, increased drastically. In mid-2018, Libyan authorities declared a Libyan Search And Rescue (SAR) zone off Libya's western coast, in a maritime area previously mostly coordinated by the Italian coast guard. This enabled Libyan authorities to return shipwrecked individuals to Libya, rather than carrying rescued individuals to European shores.[43] Also, a crackdown on charity or privately-run SAR boats since mid-2017 led to an almost complete stop of all rescue at sea activities by charity or privately-run rescue boats.[44] As of January 2019, only one privately-run SAR boat was operating between Libya and Italy.[45] Overall, in 2018 almost half of refugees and migrants who were recorded leaving Libya by boat in 2018 were reportedly intercepted at sea and returned to Libya (47%), 15,235 individuals.[46] However, the risk of death at sea doubled from 2% in 2017 to 4% in 2018:[47] 3,311 individuals were reported dead or missing in the Mediterranean sea off the Libyan coast in 2018.[48]

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[43] Euronews, Prompted by EU, Libya quietly claims right to order rescuers to return fleeing migrants, 7 August 2018, accessed 13 January 2019. Reported impacts of Libyan coast guards coordination on rescuing lives at sea include ignored distress calls, dangerous interceptions and complicity of the Libyan coast guard in human smuggling and abuse. For further information please consult: Amnesty International, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea - Europe Fails Refugees and Migrants in the Central Mediterranean, August 2018; Amnesty International, Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-Bound Refugees and Migrants, 11 December 2017; UN Security Council, Letter Dated 1 June 2017 from the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Addressed to the President of the Security Council, 1 June 2017, S/2017/466, para 105, available here.

[44] Deutsche Welle (DW), Italy to block naval vessels carrying migrants from docking: Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, 9 July 2018, accessed 13 January 2019; Cuttitta, P., Pushing Migrants Back to Libya, Persecuting Rescue NGOs: The End of the Humanitarian Turn (Part II), 2018, accessed 13 January 2019.

[45] On the discussion whether SAR boats in the Mediterranean in 2017/8 lead to an increase or decrease in deaths at sea, please consult: Matteo Villa, Outsourcing European Border Control: Recent Trends in Departures, Deaths, and Search and Rescue Activities in the Central Mediterranean, 11 September 2018.

[46] This compares to 11% of individuals of total departures in 2017 who were intercepted and returned to Libya. Figures obtained by calculating the number of individuals arrested at sea by the Libyan coast guards compared to the total number of individuals who attempted to cross the sea from Libya and either arrived to Italy or died at sea. The latter figures are available at IOM Missing migrants project.

[47] Calculation based on dataset consolidated on basis of different data sources, available at Villa, M., Dataset, available here, accessed 16 January 2019.

[48] UNHCR, Mediterranean Situation Dashboard, accessed 13 January 2019.

Routes to, within and from Libya

This sub-section is based on a longitudinal analysis of changes in migration routes to and within Libya since 2017 and over the course of 2018. The analysis is based on comparative indicators tracked through primary data collection in Libya since 2017,[49] as well as secondary data review of publically available data on migration routes and trends in Libya since 2017.

Routes to Libya

Entry points

There are three main entry points for refugees and migrants into Libya: (1) via Niger or Chad along Libya's southern borders; (2) via Algeria on the north-western or south-western border with Libya and (3) via the eastern route with refugees and migrants reaching the south-eastern region of Alkufra transiting through both Chad and Sudan. Secondary routes include entering Libya via Egypt along the coastal town of Emsaed.

Map 3: Main routes into Libya

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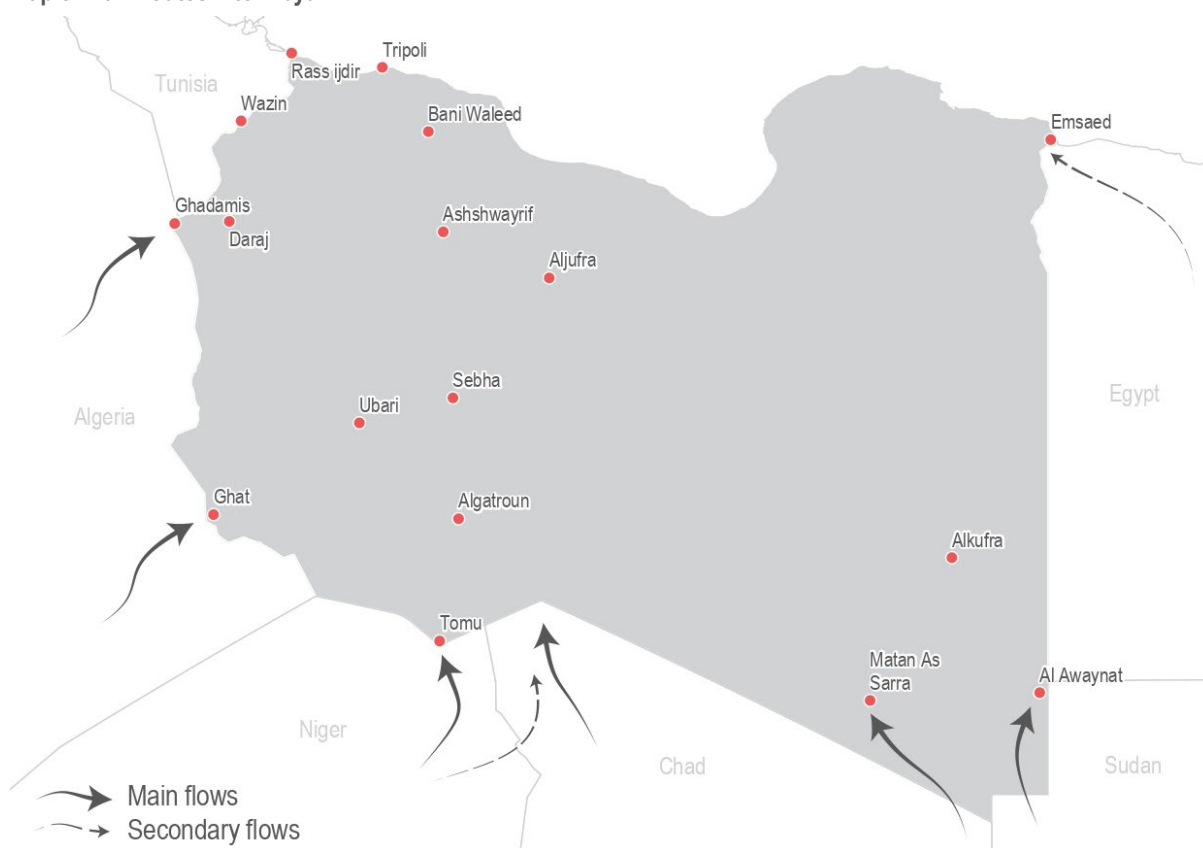
[49] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

Developments between early 2017 and late 2018

Based on longitudinal analysis of data on entry points since 2017, main entry points seem to have remained unchanged over the course of 2018. However, a change in the predominant use of each route was recorded. The majority of key informants interviewed over the course of 2018 reported an overall slight decrease in arrival numbers over the year, mostly along Libya's border with Niger. This was reportedly a result of migration measures implemented in Niger from 2015 onwards.[50] Refugees and migrants interviewed who had entered the country in 2018 along Libya's southern border confirmed that crossing through Niger had become more difficult. This is corroborated by other reports on recent migration to Libya from neighbouring countries,[51] as well as by the decreased number of refugees and migrants recorded by IOM DTM as passing through Northern Niger over the course of 2018.[52]

Along Libya's border with Chad, the majority of key informants and refugees and migrants interviewed over the course of 2018 reported an increase in arrivals. This was found in both April and in December 2018 and is further corroborated by secondary sources.[53] Among non-Chadian respondents who entered Libya via Chad, respondents reported that refugees and migrants had either entered Chad from Niger or from Sudan. Both routes were reportedly likely increasingly used due to the rising crackdown on migration in both Niger and Sudan. Possible re-routing from both Niger and Sudan through Chad to Libya was also found in a recent study on the impact of EU migration measures on central Saharan routes in September 2018.[54] That study also found that refugees and migrants from countries such as Senegal, Mali, Liberia, Somalia and Eritrea, who were rarely seen in Chad in the past, were increasingly crossing Chad towards Libya.[55] The extent to which the increase in arrivals from Chad is largely to be attributed to a re-routing from Niger or from Sudan is to be monitored.

A decrease in refugee and migrant arrivals from the border with Algeria was found over the course of 2018, compared to 2017. While in April 2018 an increase was recorded in arrivals to Libya from Algeria,[56] in December 2018, the majority of key informants reported a decrease in refugee and migrant arrivals, attributed to the increased crackdown on migration in the country in 2018. Refugees and migrants reported that the border with Algeria was highly militarised and difficult to enter.[57]

Routes within Libya

Corresponding to the main entry points into the country, there are two main routes which refugees and migrants in Libya use to reach the coast, via the east and west of the country respectively. In 2017, refugees and migrants who entered Libya from Algeria or Niger used the western route to reach the coast, while individuals entering from Chad and Sudan used the eastern route until Alkufra and, from there, joined the western route. That

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[50] For more information, please consult: UNHCR, Mixed Migration Dynamics in Libya: the impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya, April 2018. and Sudan Tribune, Sudan, Libya, Chad and Niger sign border protection agreement, 02 June 2018, accessed 13 January 2019.

[51] Tubiana, J., Warin, C. and Saeneen, G., Multilateral damage: the impact of EU migration policies on central Saharan routes, September 2018.

[52] IOM DTM, Population Flow Monitoring, Niger – Migration Trends, Dashboard 17, 1-30 November 2018.

[53] Please consult: UNHCR, Mixed Migration Dynamics in Libya: the impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya, April 2018; Tubiana, J., Warin, C. and Saeneen, G., Multilateral damage: the impact of EU migration policies on central Saharan routes, September 2018.

[54] Tubiana, J., Warin, C. and Saeneen, G., Multilateral damage: the impact of EU migration policies on central Saharan routes, September 2018.

[55] Tubiana, J., Warin, C. and Saeneen, G., Multilateral damage: the impact of EU migration policies on central Saharan routes, September 2018.

[56] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Dynamics in Libya: the impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya, April 2018; 4Mi, Trend Report: Niger Route, January 2018.

[57] See also: Debora Del Pistoia, 10 July, 2018, Why Algeria is emptying itself of African migrant workers, News Deeply, July, and Jennifer O'Mahony, 25 June 2018, Algeria dumps thousands of migrants in the Sahara amid EU-funded crackdown, accessed 25 February 2019.

year, it was found that the northeast of Libya was no longer an important area for migration due to recurrent fighting in the area.[58]

Developments between early 2017 and late 2018

Over the course of 2018 this changed: in April 2018 an increase in smuggling hubs along the eastern coast was found, mirroring the increase in anti-smuggling operations in the west. Reportedly, anti-smuggling operations in the west had led to an increase in sites, also along the eastern coast, where refugees and migrants were held for long periods of time waiting to cross the sea. At the same time, the stabilisation of the region around Sirte after the defeat of armed groups in 2017 had reportedly made the eastern region more accessible and the coastal road through Sirte useable for smugglers.
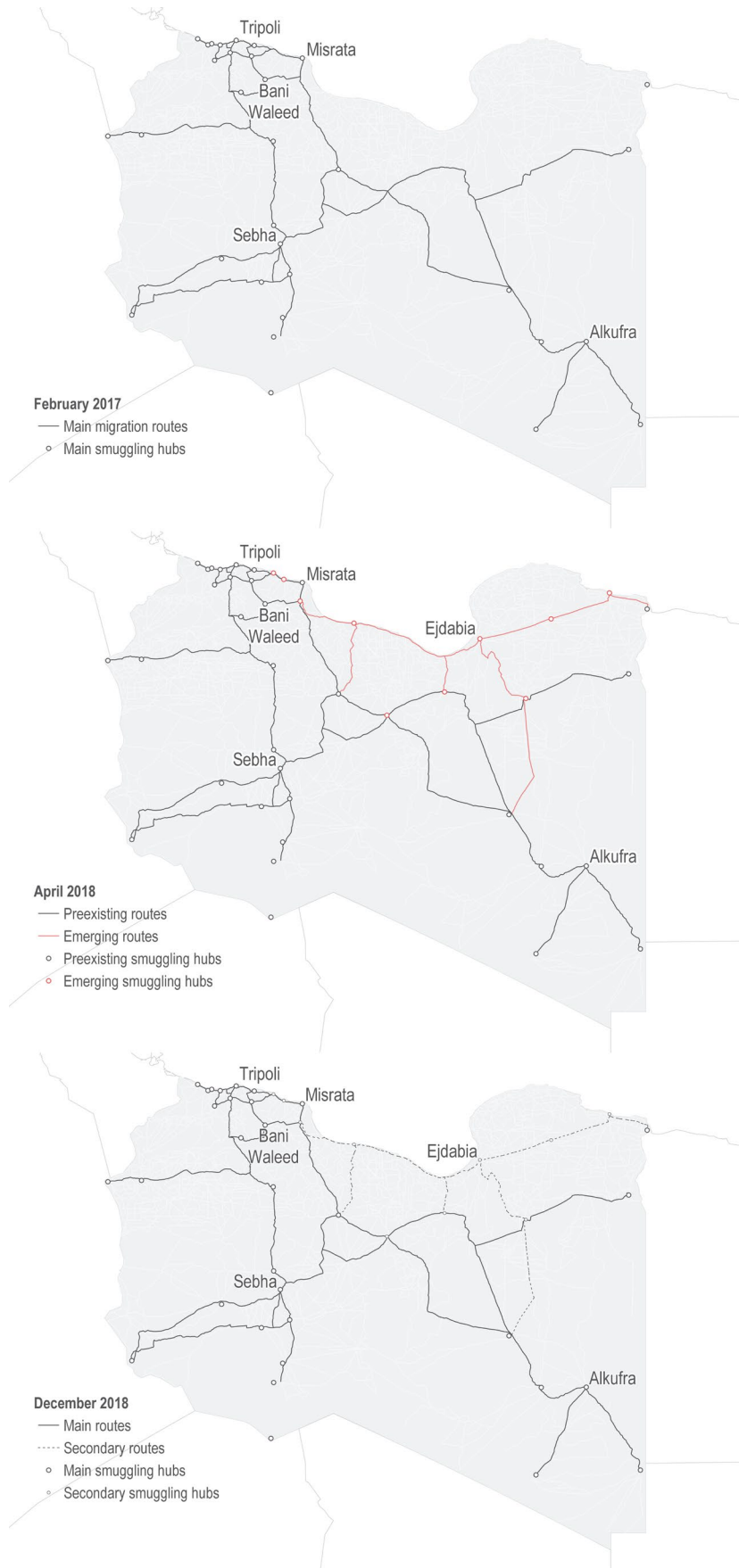
In December 2018, the majority of key informants held that secondary routes and smuggling hubs in the east were still functioning. However, respondents reported that the vast majority of boat departures still occurred from the western coast. Since November 2018 there has been an increase in reported deaths of refugees and migrants off the coast of Sirte, closer to Libya's eastern coast.[59] While the majority of boat departures seemed to still occur from the western coast, some commentators have suggested that this may also be tied to the difficulties in gaining access to trustable information on mixed migration dynamics in Libya's east.[60]

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[58] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

[59] In January 2019, 20 bodies were recovered off the shore in Sirte. In December 2018, 15 persons reportedly drowned off the eastern coast near the city of Misrata. Source: MSF-Sea, Twitter feed 14 January 2019, accessed 16 January 2019.

[60] Cochetel, V., Twitter Feed, 15 January 2019.

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Map 4: Evolution of mixed migration routes within Libya, February 2017 – December 2018

February 2017
— Main migration routes
○ Main smuggling hubs

April 2018
— Preexisting routes
— Emerging routes
○ Preexisting smuggling hubs
○ Emerging smuggling hubs

December 2018
— Main routes
‑‑‑ Secondary routes
○ Main smuggling hubs
○ Secondary smuggling hubs

Types of journeys: 'organised' and step-by-step

Refugees and migrants who are in Libya with the intention to transit to Italy tend to travel to and within the country in two main ways: 'organised' and step-by-step journeys. These two types of journeys are mostly linked to the region of origin of refugees and migrants, as well as their economic and social resources.[61]

'Organised' journeys

'Organised' journeys are a form of package travel deal, where highly-structured smuggling networks offer to take clients from their country of origin to the Libyan coast or even to their destination of choice in Europe. They are mainly used by refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa (in particular Eritreans and Somalis), as well as by Nigerian women being trafficked. A large amount of money is paid to the smuggler in advance (or in some cases upon arrival in the destination country). Clients are considered to be under the protection of the smuggler who is responsible for their safe arrival. This means that while individuals may change hands many times before reaching Europe, they do not deal directly with intermediaries or hosts along the way. They also do not stop to live and work in the cities they pass through, as those travelling 'step-by-step' do. As a result, refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa tend to transit through Libya largely unnoticed. With this type of smuggling, the lines have become blurred between the methods of smuggling networks and the forms of control used by traffickers, meaning that smuggling can turn into human trafficking along the way.[62] Over the course of 2018, this mode of travelling appears to have become more exploitative *(see section 'Evolution of refugee and migrant profiles in 2018')*.

Step-by-step journeys

Most refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa reach Libya through 'step-by-step' journeys which are longer, more fragmented and cheaper than 'organised' journeys. Each smuggler, driver or intermediary is paid individually and is only in charge of a segment of travel from one location to another. Journeys are usually minimally planned before departure and are heavily influenced by encounters along the route (with smugglers, other groups using the same route or established members of the individual's community). They stop multiple times along the route to organise the next leg and potentially work to fund it. Those undertaking step-by-step journeys are also vulnerable to extortion, but they have more freedom of movement. They plan the journey, accommodation and routes themselves. However, given the more fragmented nature of the journey, individuals travelling step-by-step tend to be more at risk of becoming stranded along their journey, unable to continue and extremely vulnerable as a result.

Routes from Libya

There are two main ways for refugees and migrants who are irregular in the country to leave Libya: (1) transiting irregularly via boat to Italy and (2) leaving Libya through the land border to one of its neighbouring countries.

Leaving from the coast

In 2018, 31,928 individuals were recorded having attempted to leave Libya irregularly via boat.[63] Of them, almost half were reportedly intercepted at sea and returned to Libya (47%), 15,235 individuals.[64] The number of people

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[61] Overview adopted from: UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.
[62] See: Global Initiative, Responding to the Human Trafficking- Smuggling Nexus: with a focus on the situation in Libya, July 2018; UNHCR, From hand to hand: the migratory experience of East African refugees and migrants in Libya, April 2019.
[63] Calculation based on dataset consolidated on basis of different data sources, available at Villa, M., dataset, last accessed 16 February 2019. This includes Libyan refugees and asylum seekers. For more information on this population group in particular, please consult UNHCR, Libyan refugees and asylum seekers´ irregular boat migration to Europe in 2018, forthcoming.
[64] This compares to 11% of individuals of total departures in 2017 who were intercepted and returned to Libya. Figures obtained by calculating the number of individuals arrested at sea by the Libyan coast guards compared to the total number of individuals who attempted to cross the sea from Libya and either arrived to Italy or died at sea. The latter figures are available at IOM Missing migrants project.

dying attempting to reach Italy is estimated at 3,311; however, other estimates report this figure is likely much higher due to unreported deaths in the Mediterranean.[65]

The vast majority of boat departures in 2018 occurred from the Western coast, as was already the case in 2017 and 2016. In a study conducted in December 2018, which aimed to ascertain why the majority of boat departures still occurred from the west, considering that migration measures implemented in Libya since mid-2017 were also concentrated in the west, most reported reasons provided by refugees and migrants interviewed were (1) that the western coast was closer to Italy, hence the journey shorter and (2) that there was less security in the west and that, as a result, many more smugglers were operating along the western coast. Some refugees and migrants interviewed reported that crossing from the west was cheaper than the east and hence the preferred option, with others reporting that the western coast was also closer to reach for the many refugees and migrants who reached Libya through the western route. Considering the reportedly high level of control and security in eastern Libya, these findings indicate that the western coast remains the main departure area for boats to Italy and may remain so in the near future, unless there are major changes in the security situation in the east of the country. However, some secondary sources also suggest that boat departures in the east may go unreported, due to the more limited sources of information available on Libya's east.[66]

Leaving via land

Information on migration routes from Libya to neighbouring countries is scarce. In a study conducted in December 2018,[67] **the majority of key informants reported little movement of refugees and migrants from Libya to neighbouring countries, mostly due to high levels of security along neighbouring borders**. The Libyan borders with Egypt, Algeria, and Sudan were reportedly highly militarised and difficult to cross into.[68] The border between Libya and Tunisia was reportedly also well controlled, especially in view of people smuggling towards Tunisia (goods smuggling was reportedly more common). Libya's southern borders with Niger and Chad were reportedly more porous and, due to the long history of circular migration in the region, key informants reported it more likely that there was regular movement from Libya towards the south, which they were unable to quantify.

Map 5: Routes from Libya to neighbouring countries

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[65] UNHCR, Mediterranean Situation Dashboard, accessed 13 January 2019.

[66] Cochetel, V., Twitter Feed, 15 January 2019.

[67] UNHCR, Mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya, May-December 2018, January 2019.

[68] On Sudan, please consult: Tubiana, J., Warin, C. and Saeneen, G., Multilateral damage: the impact of EU migration policies on central Saharan routes, September 2018; on Algeria, please consult: Debora Del Pistoia, 10 July, 2018, Why Algeria is emptying itself of African migrant workers, News Deeply, July, and Jennifer O'Mahony, 25 June 2018, Algeria dumps thousands of migrants in the Sahara amid EU-funded crackdown, accessed 25 February 2019.

Refugees and migrants interviewed in December 2018 as part of the same study largely confirmed these observations. The majority of respondents knew of family or friends who had recently exited Libya via the south of the country, however, most said these were circular migration patterns, whereby individuals were expected to return to Libya after some time in their country of origin. Only few respondents had friends who had recently left for Algeria, Sudan, and Egypt for non-Egyptian nationals, as they reported these borders were very difficult to cross and overall not destinations for refugees and migrants in Libya. With regards to Tunisia, one in four respondents reported having a friend or family member who had recently left Libya to Tunisia. Cross-border movement from Libya to Tunisia was also found in a study by REACH on sub-Saharan migration patterns to Tunisia.[69] The extent to which this may become an increasing trend is to be monitored.

Focus 2: Re-routing to Spain from Libya via Morocco

While refugee and migrant arrivals at Italy's shores increased drastically in 2018, arrivals to Spain from Morocco saw a new increase, with 58,569 refugees and migrants arriving in Spain from Morocco in 2018, making Spain the first port of entry for refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean region that year.[70] The countries of origin of arrivals from Morocco in Spain in 2018 mirror arrivals in Italy in 2017, which had previously arrived from Libya.[71] In this context, the question has arisen to which extent a re-routing is occurring of mixed migration flows from Libya to Morocco, and whether this re-routing occurs once in Libya or already further south in origin countries.

In an IOM flow monitoring survey, conducted in Spain over the course of 2018, 51% of respondents had reportedly left their country of origin with the intention to reach Spain.[72] At the same time, among 90 refugees and migrants interviewed in December 2018 in Libya,[73] only one respondent reportedly knew someone who had recently transited from Libya to Morocco with the aim to reach Europe via Spain. In that case, the individual had exited from Libya's southern border with Niger, as the border crossing with Algeria was reportedly too difficult to cross from Libya. The low level of reporting of refugees and migrants re-routing from Libya towards Morocco, as well as the high reporting of Spain as the final destination in the IOM flow monitoring survey, suggest that re-routing from the Central Mediterranean Sea route towards Europe is likely to occur before Libya and possibly already at origin. The implications thereof, as well as the level of information about the situation in Libya which leads to re-routing, require further investigation.

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[69] REACH, Tunisia, country of destination and transit for sub-Saharan African migrants, October 2018.

[70] UNHCR, Mediterranean Situation Dashboard, accessed 13 January 2019.

[71] Primary countries of origin of individuals who arrived primarily in Italy in 2017 and who, in 2018, predominantly arrived in Spain include, among others, Guinean, Ivorian and Malian nationals. For further information, please consult: UNHCR, Mediterranean Situation Dashboard, accessed 13 January 2019; Brenner, Y., Forin, R., Frouws, B., The "Shift" to the Western Mediterranean Migration Route: Myth or Reality?, 22 August 2018, accessed 13 January 2019.

[72] IOM DTM, Profile and reported vulnerabilities of migrants along the western Mediterranean route, March 2019.

[73] For further information, please consult the following report: UNHCR, Mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya, May-December 2018, January 2019.

Evolution of refugee and migrant profiles in 2018

This sub-section of the report aims to shed light on the evolution of the profiles of refugees and migrants in Libya since 2017. It is based on longitudinal analysis of data on refugees and migrants' profiles in 2017, and data collected over the course of 2018. Findings are based on primary and secondary data analysis.

In 2018, 663,000 refugees and migrants were estimated to be in Libya.[74] Coming from West, Central, North, East Africa and the Middle East, the top five nationalities of refugees and migrants living in Libya in 2018 were, according to IOM, 1. Niger (20%); 2. Egypt (15%); 3. Chad (14%); 4. Sudan (12%) and 5. Nigeria (10%).[75] The term 'refugees and migrants' in Libya encompasses a very diverse population group, from individuals who have been in the country for decades and are well integrated to very vulnerable profiles, who suffer from severe protection risks in the country. Some of the most important factors which shape refugees and migrants' experiences in Libya include: (1) their regions of origin and, relatedly, their language skills and religious affiliation; (2) the length of time spent in Libya and individuals' social networks in the country and (3) refugees and migrants' migratory intentions, i.e. whether they intend to stay and work in Libya or are in the country with the intention to transit to Europe.

Map 6: Countries of origin of refugees and migrants in Libya as of December 2018[76]

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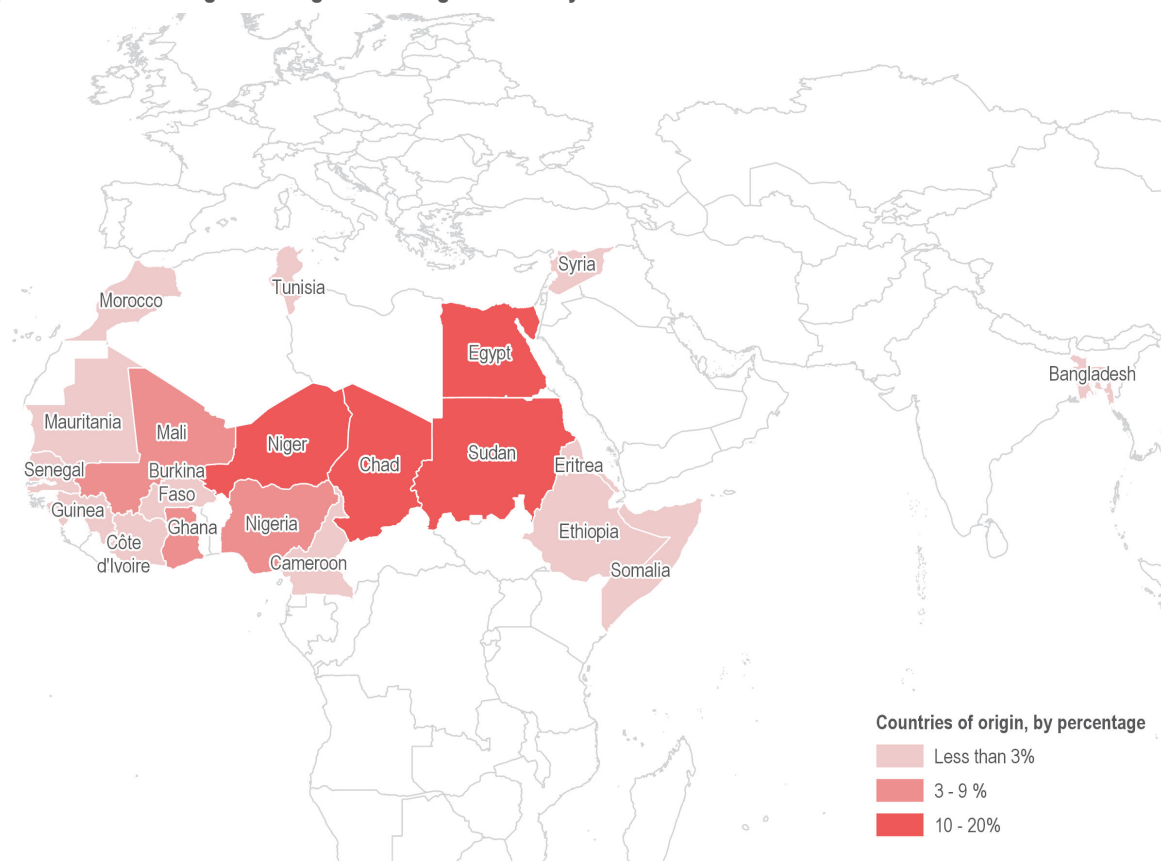
[74] IOM DTM, Libya's Migrants Report, Round 23, December 2018.

[75] IOM DTM, Libya's Migrants Report, Round 23, December 2018.

[76] IOM DTM, Libya's Migrants Report, Round 23, December 2018.

Refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa

The majority of refugees and migrants in Libya in 2018 were estimated to be from West and Central Africa (65%).[77] Refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa are traditionally in the country to work, building on a long history of circular migration between Libya and its southern neighbours. In 2016 and 2017, however, refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa increasingly started to arrive in Italy via boat from Libya. In both 2016 and 2017, more than half of all sea arrivals to Italy from Libya were refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa.[78] This evolution has largely been attributed to the rise in insecurity in Libya, which led to individuals who were primarily in the country with the intention to work and eventually return to their countries of origin to decide to attempt to migrate to Italy.[79] In 2018, while overall arrival numbers sharply decreased, this trend continued, albeit in smaller proportions, with 39% of all refugees and migrants who reached Italy from Libya in 2018 being from West and Central Africa.[80]

At the same time, findings on refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa in Libya in 2018 suggest that their situation in Libya has deteriorated since 2017. Two main factors have played a role in this regard: (1) the liquidity crisis and value loss of the Libyan Dinar which deteriorated over the course of 2017 and (2) an overall lack of improvement in the security situation in the country.

Impact of the liquidity crisis

Refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa tend to work in low skilled, often daily, labour in Libya, primarily in the construction and agricultural sectors. Due to their irregular situation,[81] most are paid in cash and often work under exploitative conditions. Most are in the country with the intention to work to save money, either to support their families back home, to save to eventually return to their countries of origin or, in a minority of cases, to transit to Italy. As such, the economy is key to their stay in Libya.

Between January 2016 and June 2018, the Libyan Dinar lost almost 55% of its value.[82] While in some locations key informants interviewed in June 2018 reported that refugees and migrants were paid more Libyan Dinars than in the past to compensate for the value loss, all confirmed that the increase had not been proportional to the Libyan Dinar's fall. As such, refugees and migrants' work had equally lost value with individuals *de facto* earning much less than what they did in the past. As a

> *'The impact on my family back home is huge, because I used to transfer 150 LYD to them each month, 100 USD at the time, but since 2016 this is only 30 USD each time.'*
>
> Ghanaian woman, Tripoli

consequence, refugees and migrants in Libya in 2018 reportedly needed to work much more to still earn less than what they did previously. For refugees and migrants who were in the country to work, this meant that their plans to return home and build a life there were delayed, as they needed to save much longer to pay for their return home, as well as to earn what they thought they would need to be able to build a life back home. At the same time, the money that respondents could reportedly send back to their families in the country of origin had disproportionately decreased, with larger intervals between one remittance transfer to the other. This reportedly put a strain on refugees and migrants' families in countries of origin, who counted on the regular cash transfer from their family member in Libya to support them at home.

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[77] IOM DTM, Libya's Migrants Report, Round 23, December 2018.

[78] UNHCR, Refugees and migrants arrivals to Europe in 2017, December 2017; UNHCR, Mediterranean Data Dashboard, accessed 25 February 2019.

[79] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

[80] UNHCR, Mediterranean Data Dashboard, accessed 25 February 2019. NB that recorded refugee and migrant sea arrivals in Italy are not disaggregated by departures from Libya vs Tunisia. As such, this figure should be treated as indicative only.

[81] The laws Law No. 2/2004 and Law No. 19/2010 criminalised all irregular entries, notwithstanding the individual's status as refugee or asylum seeker; previous regular entries were irregularised, subjecting individuals to penalties of fines and prison sentences; individuals who were in the country in 2017 with regular papers reported difficulties in renewing these (see UNHCR).

[82] REACH, Joint Market Monitoring Initiative, available here.

Continued precarious living situation

While some individuals from West and Central Africa are relatively well integrated, due to common language and their length of stay in Libya (notably Sudanese and Chadian refugees and migrants), many sub-Saharan refugees and migrants in Libya live in very precarious conditions, reportedly exposed to, among others, kidnapping, extortion and robbery.[83] This was already the case in 2017 and is largely associated to the overall poor security situation in Libya and due to the irregular situation of refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa in the country, which means that they cannot access law enforcement. As a result, refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa tend to move as little as possible in public spaces, moving only between their work place and home, to minimise their exposure to risk. Over the course of 2018, however, refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa reported that their risk of robbery and kidnapping had increased, due to the shortage of cash in the country and the widespread knowledge that refugees and migrants were still paid in cash with limited ability to store it safely, which made them easy prey for extortion or robbery, both at home and on the street.[84]

Focus 3: Unaccompanied and separated children in Libya

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) are recognised among the most vulnerable groups, especially in contexts of emergency. In December 2018, IOM DTM estimated that 9% of the 663,000 refugees and migrants estimated to be in the country were children. Thirty-three percent (33%) of them, a total of 19,691 children, were unaccompanied or separated.

A study completed by UNICEF on the situation of UASC in Libya in 2018,[85] to which 288 children participated, both in Libya and Italy, found that, despite having child-specific rights, the lives of interviewed UASC in Libya were characterised by a higher level of hardship than that of adult refugees and migrants. This emerged from challenges reported by interviewed UASC in meeting their basic needs and accessing services, their reported working conditions and struggles with discriminatory practices to access healthcare for the fact of being a refugee or migrant, and because of their undocumented status.

The study also found that among the 152 children interviewed in Italy, 93% had been held in captivity at some point during their time in Libya. To cope, children reported trying to go unnoticed and minimising their time outside the home or workplace, thereby also minimising their chances of getting outside support, feeding into their overall sense of extreme isolation in Libya.

Refugees and migrants from East Africa

Among the 663,000 refugees and migrants estimated to be in Libya in 2018, 115,000 (17%) originated from East African countries, namely Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan (including Darfur), South Sudan and Eritrea.[86] Refugees and migrants from East Africa have distinct migratory profiles in Libya, as they mostly come to the country with the intention to transit further towards Europe and move through Libya in closed smuggling networks. They are also among those refugees and migrants in Libya who can register as populations of concern with UNHCR.[87] While East African refugees and migrants have been arriving in Italy via boat already since 2014, they were more represented in 2018 than they were in previous years. In 2018 14% and 7% of all sea arrivals were of Eritrean or

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[83] See UNHCR, Mixed Migration Dynamics in Libya: the impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya, April 2018.

[84] The heightened risks for refugees and migrants in Libya as a result of the economic recession were also reported in Reuters, Migrants in Libya face rising threat from 'stronger' gangs and traffickers, 17 July 2018.

[85] UNICEF, Solitary journeys of unaccompanied and separated children in Libya, forthcoming 2019.

[86] Source: IOM DTM, Libya's Migrants Report, Round 23, December 2018.

[87] **NB**: Libya has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, Libya's GNA allows UNHCR access to persons of concern from nine nationalities (Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia (Oromo), Sudan (Darfur), Yemen and South Sudan), as they are countries producing persons unable to return to their homes due to generalised violence. UNHCR continues to advocate for access to other nationalities.

Sudanese nationality, compared to only 5% in 2017. Also, in 2018 Eritreans were the first nationality arriving in Italy from Libya, compared to them not falling under the top five nationalities of arrivals in 2017.[88]

Longer and more dangerous journeys

Journeys of East African refugees and migrants across Libya were found to be longer and more dangerous in 2018, compared to 2017. Refugees and migrants from East Africa interviewed in December 2018 reported that they had spent between one to two years in Libya, longer than what was noted in the past for these more transitory profiles.[89] This change was reportedly tied to the increase in anti-smuggling operations and coast guard controls, which made the smuggling process longer and the smuggling networks operate more underground.[90] As a result, smuggling operations became more hidden over the course of 2018, with smugglers reporting that they had to hold refugees and migrants for longer in several warehouses, both within the country and along the coast, to avoid coast guard controls.

While refugees and migrants from East Africa already in 2016 and 2017 moved in more organised closed smuggling networks, frequently with limited freedom of movement, analysis of findings over the course of 2018 suggests that this phenomenon has increased in 2018. Among 30 refugees and migrants from East Africa interviewed in December 2018 in Italy all reported that they had been held in captivity, with no freedom of movement, during their time in Libya. According to a recent UNSMIL report, refugees and migrants from Eritrea and Somalia appear to be the most vulnerable to prolonged captivity while in Libya.[91] Other protection risks faced while crossing Libya were also found to have increased since late 2016 for East African refugees and migrants: risks reportedly escalated and diversified, with torture and the practice of being sold accounting for the most reported protection risks faced during the journey in 2018, compared to threat and extortion reported in 2017.[92]

Over-reliance on few, highly organised smuggling networks

At the end of 2016 smugglers active on the East African route were reportedly mostly providing combined services (organised from origin to destination),[93] and were already described as highly hierarchical and transnational.[94] In 2018 this was still found to be the case, with few, transnational, highly organised smuggling networks organising the journey of refugees and migrants from East Africa through Libya to Italy.[95] High

> *'After that [the first contact], it is like a chain which means one smuggler links you with other smugglers.'*
>
> Eritrean man, Sicily

reliance on smugglers heightens refugees and migrants' risk of exploitation and abuse, limits their ability to access

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[88] UNHCR, Mediterranean Data Dashboard, accessed 25 February 2019.

[89] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

[90] See also UNHCR, Desperate journeys, January 2019; Global Initiative, Responding to the Human Trafficking- Smuggling Nexus: with a focus on the situation in Libya, July 2018.

[91] UNSMIL/OHCHR, Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the Human Rights Situation of Migrants and Refugees in Libya, 18 December 2018.

[92] UNHCR, From hand to hand: the migratory experience of East African refugees and migrants in Libya, April 2019; UNSMIL/OHCHR, Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the Human Rights Situation of Migrants and Refugees in Libya, 18 December 2018. The 1985 United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment defines torture as: *'... any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. […] It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.'* 'Selling of individuals' in this context is defined as 'the sale of human beings as commodities, against their will.'

[93] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

[94] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

[95] Global Initiative, Responding to the Human Trafficking- Smuggling Nexus: with a focus on the situation in Libya, July 2018.

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humanitarian assistance and heightens the risk of trafficking.[96] Among 30 East African refugees and migrants interviewed in December 2018, none had been able to receive humanitarian assistance while in Libya.[97]

Refugees and migrants from the Middle East, North Africa and Asia

In 2018, 17% of refugees and migrants in Libya were estimated to be from the MENA region and 4% were estimated to be from Asia.[98] Refugees and migrants coming from Arab countries tend to be well-integrated with the local population in Libya, drawing on a common language, cultural and historical ties in the region. They are also more likely to be travelling in family units than other communities, with many settled in the country for the long-term, working in stable forms of employment and as accepted members of the Libyan community. Refugees and migrants from Asia, most prominently from Bangladesh and, to a lesser extent, Pakistan, Philippines and India, tend to work in the service sector, and frequently in people's homes as cleaners.[99] Comparable dynamics were also found in 2017, suggesting that no major changes have occurred for these population groups in Libya over the course of 2018.[100]

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[96] Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as '*the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.*'

[97] UNHCR, From hand to hand: the migratory experience of East African refugees and migrants in Libya, April 2019.

[98] IOM DTM, Libya's Migrants Report, Round 23, December 2018.

[99] UNHCR, Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya, June 2018, UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

[100] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

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Outlook

This sub-section of the report aims to explore possible future developments in mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya. It analyses factors at the micro, meso and macro levels which are likely to shape mixed migration routes and dynamics from 2019 onwards, drawing on established migration theories and developments monitored in 2018.

How mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya are likely to develop from 2019 onwards will depend on several factors. Migration decision making, i.e. whether refugees and migrants intend to still come to Libya, stay in Libya or leave and, if so, where to, is shaped by several factors. These factors can be divided between three levels: (1) the individual, micro-level; (2) the meso-level, i.e. the facilitating or undermining role of social capital and the migration industry and (3) the macro-level, meaning the socio-economic and political context, including policies, in which migration occurs.[101] The three levels interact with each other and influence an individual's decision to move or stay in the first place, as well as decisions about secondary movements – what to do after the first destination is reached – as the journey unfolds. While not aiming to be exhaustive, the below overview of micro, meso and macro level factors relevant to the Libyan context, based on key changes in mixed migration dynamics recorded in 2018, aims to provide some central elements to the analysis of mixed migration routes and dynamics in 2019 and beyond.

Micro level factors

Migration drivers at origin and in countries of first displacement

Reasons for leaving one's country of origin seem to have remained unchanged among refugees and migrants interviewed in Libya between 2017 and 2018. Poor economic opportunities, fear of individual persecution and violence in countries of origin and in countries of first displacement remain the predominant factors which make refugees and migrants decide to come Libya. The continuity of this trend is supported by secondary sources[102] and suggests that, as long as the needs underlying the root causes of migration remain unaddressed, refugees and migrants are likely to continue to leave their countries of origin, in search of a safe haven or more attractive labour destinations in the region.

> *'All the women I know here came escaping from poverty, hunger, ethnic conflict in their countries … escaping with their children from death. I do not think these conditions have changed in their countries of origin, so migrants' reasons for coming here will not change as well.'*
>
> Nigerian woman, Azzawya

Meso level factors

Access to information & diaspora links in Libya

Level of information about a potential destination and diaspora links can be strong influencing factors in shaping the decision to migrate. As Libya has been a destination for refugees and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region for decades, refugees and migrants in the region tend to be well connected with individuals who were at some point or still are in Libya, be that (extended) family, friends or acquaintances.[103] Notably, in 2016 and 2017 research suggested that while individuals had personal links in Libya, the information that they received about the situation in country was incomplete (with refugees and migrants interviewed reporting that they had not been aware of how poor the security situation was in Libya when they left home).[104] Studies conducted over the course

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[101] Kuschminder, K., De Bressner, J. and Siegel, M., Irregular Migrants Routes to Europe and Factors Influencing Destination Choice, *WODC*, The Hague, 2015.

[102] UNHCR, Desperate journeys, January 2019

[103] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017.

[104] UNHCR, Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges, July 2017. REACH/UNHCR, Children on the move in Italy and Greece, June 2017; REACH/MHub/MMP, Youth on the move along the Central Mediterranean Route, September 2017.

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of 2018 suggest that this trend has changed. Two studies conducted on migration decision making in 2018, focusing on both adult and child refugees and migrants, found that refugees and migrants in Libya at the time were well informed about the situation in the country before leaving their country of origin and were not dissuaded by it.[105] While the extent to which this holds true for all population groups (research is currently lacking on refugees and migrants' access to information disaggregated by regions of origin, differing access to information means, and the experience of female refugees and migrants in particular) is yet to be determined. However, this does suggest that refugees and migrants who arrived in Libya in 2018 did so irrespective of the poor security situation and, accordingly, that information about the poor security situation in Libya also moving forward may not be a key inhibitor to further migration.

Smuggling networks

Smuggling networks are important intermediaries in shaping migration flows. In 2017 and 2018 smuggling networks to and within Libya were also a key target of migration measures implemented, aiming at stopping refugee and migrant arrivals to Europe. Research conducted since mid-2017 suggests that smuggling networks have faced a significant crackdown, both along Libya's western coast[106] and at Libya's southern borders with Niger between mid-2017 and over the course of 2018.[107] As a result, refugee and migrant sea arrivals to Italy drastically decreased from 2017 onwards. Still, some refugees and migrants reached Europe irregularly via boat from Libya in 2018. In this context it is important to look at the reconfiguration of nationalities who still arrived that year, as this is telling, among others, about the differing smuggling dynamics at play between different refugee and migrant nationalities. In 2017, four out of the five top nationalities arriving in Italy were from West Africa. In 2018, none of the top 5 sea arrivals were from that region, with Nigerians arriving only 6th in sea arrivals that year, compared to 1st in 2017 (*see table 1 for a breakdown of top 5 refugee and migrant sea arrivals to Italy in 2017 and 2018*).

Table 2: Top 5 refugee and migrant sea arrivals to Italy in 2017 and 2018[108]

2017		2018
Nigeria (18,100)	1.	Tunisia (5,200)[109]
Guinea Conakry (9,700)	2.	Eritrea (3,300)
Cote d'Ivoire (9,500)	3.	Iraq (1,700)
Bangladesh (9,000)	4.	Sudan (1,600)
Mali (7,100)	5.	Pakistan (1,600)

The change in primary nationalities of sea arrivals in Italy between 2017 and 2018 is striking. While a variety of factors – which are currently underexplored – are likely to have played a role in this change, differing smuggling dynamics between different nationalities are worth highlighting: excluding Tunisian arrivals (as they departed from Tunisia), Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers[110] are the first nationality arriving in Italy in 2018. Eritrean nationals, as East Africans more generally, are known to travel in highly organised smuggling networks, often organised from the country of origin (*see section 'Evolution of refugee and migrant profiles in 2018' for more detail)*. This suggests

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[105] UNHCR, Mixed migration Routes and Dynamics in Libya: The impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya, April 2018; IMPACT/UNICEF, Solitary Journeys of Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Libya, forthcoming 2019.

[106] Global Initiative, Responding to the Human Trafficking- Smuggling Nexus: with a focus on the situation in Libya, July 2018.

[107] Tubiana, J., Warin, C. and Saeneen, G., Multilateral damage: the impact of EU migration policies on central Saharan routes, September 2018.

[108] Source: UNHCR, Mediterranean Data Dashboard, accessed 25 February 2019; rounded figures.

[109] **NB** that arrivals of Tunisian nationals are widely attributed to Tunisian nationals departing via boat from Tunisia, not from Libya. For more information please consult: REACH, Tunisia: country of emigration and return, December 2018.

[110] The term 'refugees and asylum seekers' is employed for nationalities UNHCR can register as persons of concern in Libya. These include nationals from the following countries: Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia (Oromo), Sudan (Darfur), Yemen and South Sudan.

that their smuggling dynamics are more organised and, accordingly, more difficult to crack down on.[111] In contrast, West African refugees and migrants are more likely to engage in step-by-step journeys and may thereby be able to adapt quicker to changing migration policies and switch to other routes. While the decrease in the number of refugees and migrants from West Africa among arrivals in Italy in 2018, and the increase in arrivals of these same nationalities in Spain via the Western Mediterranean Sea route may be an indication thereof *(see sub-section 'Routes from Libya' for more information)*, this is a trend to be monitored.[112]

> *'I knew through relatives and friends that Libya has work opportunities and also armed conflict. I do not plan to stay here, I am here only to cross. But I expected to face accidents or be arrested.'*
>
> Eritrean woman, Ejdabia

Macro level factors

Economic opportunities and liquidity crisis

Libya is an attractive destination for refugees and migrants in the region for a large part because of the economic opportunities the country offers. While the liquidity crisis severely impacted refugees and migrants in the country in 2018,[113] refugees and migrants' labour was found to be still in demand with refugees and migrants interviewed over the course of 2018 maintaining that there remain economic opportunities in Libya despite the liquidity crisis. A study conducted in May 2018 found that while all 120 refugees and migrants interviewed had reportedly been negatively impacted by the liquidity crisis in Libya, almost half of them (55/120) held that the liquidity crisis did not impact their decision to stay or leave Libya.[114] Further, according to some indicators, the Libyan economy has grown over the course of 2018,[115] suggesting that the trend of migration (or permanence of refugees and migrants) to Libya for work is likely to continue.

Security situation

The security situation Libya has remained volatile over the course of 2018, illustrated by the re-emergence of localised fighting, such as the resumption of violent clashes in Tripoli between August and September 2018. Protection risks which refugees and migrants may face in Libya include 'unlawful killings, torture, arbitrary detention, gang rape, slavery, forced labour and extortion'.[116] In detention centres, the sites where refugees and migrants intercepted at sea are returned to and can be held indefinitely, humanitarian organisations and human rights groups have documented torture, ill-treatment, forced labour and sexual abuse.[117] Among refugees and migrants interviewed in Libya in 2018, knowledge of the poor security situation reportedly did not dissuade respondents from coming to Libya. Considering that individuals who decide to migrate to Libya despite knowing of the severe security risks they may face are likely to have rather high risk-seeking profiles, it is not currently clear

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[111] For more information, please consult: UNHCR, From hand to hand: the migratory experience of East African refugees and migrants in Libya, April 2019.

[112] A particularly peculiar case are Nigerian refugees and migrants' sea journeys: known to rely on very well established smuggling networks, often tied to prostitution rings in Europe, their arrivals next to stopped in 2018, while being the first country of arrival in 2017. At the same time, they have not (yet) emerged on the Western Mediterranean Sea route. See also: IOM DTM, Profile and reported vulnerabilities of migrants along the western Mediterranean route, March 2019.

[113] For more information, please see section 3 'Evolution of refugee and migrant profiles' and UNHCR, Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya, June 2018.

[114] UNHCR, Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya, June 2018

[115] The Libya Observer, Libya's CBL says budget deficit of 2018 lowered to 4.6 billion dinars from 10.6 in 2017, 15 January 2019.

[116] OHCHR and UNSMIL, Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya, 20 December 2018.

[117] OHCHR, Oral update of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Libya pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 34/38, 20 March 2018; MSF, European governments are feeding the business of suffering, 7 September 2017; Amnesty International, Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-bound Refugees and Migrants, 11 December 2017; Amnesty International, Libya: desperate plight of detained migrants has 'deteriorated' - new briefing, 12 November 2018.

to what extent knowledge of the poor security situation in Libya shapes the migration decision of refugees and migrants who are not yet in Libya.[118]

Migration measures implemented[119]

Sea arrivals in both 2017 and 2018 in Italy drastically decreased. This has been attributed to migration measures implemented, notably along Libya's western coast, but also in neighbouring Niger.[120] Along Libya's southern borders, however, an increase in arrivals from Chad has been recorded, suggesting a potential (partial) re-routing from Niger.[121] Re-routing of migration flows, i.e. refugees and migrants changing routes in response to restrictive migration measures implemented is a well-documented phenomenon.[122] While there are some indications that similar dynamics are at play along Libya's coast, with an increase in smuggling hubs along Libya's eastern coast and a significant increase in refugees and migrants arriving in Europe via Spain (f*or more information please see sub-section 'Routes from Libya'*), this phenomenon needs to be monitored in 2019.

Focus 4: Destination Libya

Migration to Libya from sub-Saharan Africa, the MENA region and Asia has to be seen within the wider regional dynamics in which Libya is situated. A study conducted in December 2018 found that the vast majority of refugees and migrants interviewed (total 90) still felt that Libya was the most attractive destination for refugees and migrants in the region – more attractive than any other country in the North African region. This was reportedly despite the severe protection risks respondents faced, the crackdown on boat departures along Libya's western coast and the fall of the Libyan Dinar, which heavily impacted the lives of refugees and migrants who were in the country to work.

> *'Libya is better in terms of job opportunities [compared to neighbouring countries]. There is also less control of migrants, which is good. […] I wouldn't advise my sister to come here. I do not want her to suffer like us.'*

> Nigerien man, Sebha

When asked why, the majority held that they could still find work in Libya and earn more than in any other country in the region. At the same time, while there was general agreement that transiting to Italy had become increasingly difficult, respondents held that Libya was still the easiest country to attempt to transit to Europe, due to the same reasons, which made the journey difficult, namely an overall lack of rule of law and limited law enforcement. This was because limited rule of law meant that it was reportedly relatively easy to find work, albeit mostly in extremely exploitative conditions, as well as transit to Italy.

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[118] For this primary research on migrants' knowledge of the situation in Libya and its impact on their migration decision making in countries of origin and transit is required, which currently does not exist

[119] For an overview of key migration measures implemented over the course of 2017 and 2018, please consult section 1 'Historical and recent mixed migration context'.

[120] For more information, please consult: UNHCR, Mixed Migration Dynamics in Libya: the impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya, April 2018; Sudan Tribune, Sudan, Libya, Chad and Niger sign border protection agreement, 02 June 2018, accessed 13 January 2019. Tubiana, J., Warin, C. and Saeneen, G., Multilateral damage: the impact of EU migration policies on central Saharan routes, September 2018; IOM DTM, Population Flow Monitoring, Niger – Migration Trends, Dashboard 17, 1-30 November 2018.

[121] Please consult: UNHCR, Mixed Migration Dynamics in Libya: the impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya, April 2018; Tubiana, J., Warin, C. and Saeneen, G., Multilateral damage: the impact of EU migration policies on central Saharan routes, September 2018.

[122] Haas, d. H. for Der Spiegel, Myths of migration: much of what we think we know is wrong, March 2017.

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Focus 5: Outlook on migration from Libya to neighbouring countries

As the security situation for refugees and migrants in Libya in 2018 remained poor, and crossing the Mediterranean via boat in 2018 has increasingly become difficult, the question arises to what extent refugees and migrants may leave Libya to neighbouring countries in the near future. While this is yet to be explored, drawing on findings of a study conducted in December 2018 for which 90 refugees and migrants were interviewed, two proxy indicators of further movement from Libya can be used as a first indication:

1. **Information about the situation in neighbouring countries**: Two thirds of the 90 refugees and migrants interviewed reported not having any information about the situation in neighbouring countries. Among those who reportedly had some information, most of what they knew was reportedly negative. When asked about people they knew in neighbouring countries, the majority of respondents knew someone in Libya's southern neighbours, Niger and Chad (mirroring the countries of origin and cultural ties of many respondents). One in four respondents had a friend or personal connection in Tunisia and one in six in Algeria. Almost all respondents who knew someone in Egypt were Egyptians, as was the case for Sudanese nationals.

2. **Perceived attractiveness as potential destinations:** When asked whether any neighbouring country may be an attractive destination for refugees and migrants in the region, three out of four respondents did not feel that any of Libya's neighbouring countries could be attractive destinations for refugees and migrants currently in Libya, while one in six held that they could be attractive. A minority of respondents held that neighbouring countries may be attractive destinations in the region, but less than Libya. Eleven individuals reported that neighbouring countries may be attractive to transit only, towards Europe.

When asked why the majority of respondents did not think that countries neighbouring Libya could be attractive destinations for refugees and migrants, respondents reported two main reasons: **first, respondents held that in countries neighbouring Libya there would be less work for refugees and migrants, which is important as many were in Libya with the aim to work to support their family back home. Second, respondents reported that higher levels of security and need for legal documentation would make their stay in those countries more difficult**, as most respondents deemed it unlikely that they would be able to stay in neighbouring countries without the necessary legal documentation.

In terms of attractiveness of destinations, respondents distinguished between countries which may be attractive for work and those that may mainly be attractive for transiting to Europe. To work, Algeria was mostly ruled out, as was Egypt, due to high security measures implemented towards refugees and migrants in both countries. Tunisia was reportedly attractive in terms of potential transit to Europe, but less so for work, as respondents reported that there were less economic opportunities for refugees and migrants in the country, compared to Libya. Morocco was overall not reported as an attractive destination, both in terms of work, and in view of migration to Europe.

'I do not think there are other attractive destinations for migrants here [other than Libya]. Because these countries fight immigration, arrest migrants and deport them to their countries. There is no chance for an immigrant who wants to work or migrate to Europe except Libya.'

Guinean (equ.) man, Ghat

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Conclusion

In the context of migration measures implemented in Libya since early 2017 with a view to curb refugee and migrant sea arrivals to Europe, the aim of this report was to present a concise overview of key mixed migration trends, routes and dynamics in Libya in 2018. Drawing on primary data collected in 2017 and 2018, this study sought to provide a longitudinal analysis of key changes in relation to mixed migration routes and the situation of refugees and migrants in the country over the course of 2018. It also aimed to provide some elements for further analysis of future developments in mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya in 2019.

Mixed migration routes and dynamics in 2018

Migration measures implemented since early 2017 in Libya and the Sahel have been successful in their primary aim: stemming the flow of refugees and migrants arriving from Libya at Italian shores. Within Libya the picture is more complex:

- **Initial reconfiguration of mixed migration flows to, within and from Libya:** while the overall number of arrivals at Italy's shores has drastically decreased, 663,000 refugees and migrants are still estimated to be in Libya, including new arrivals. Routes to and within Libya have diversified: while refugee and migrant arrivals from Niger seem to have decreased, an increase in the number of refugees and migrants reaching Libya via Chad was recorded over the course of 2018. Within Libya, while boat departures are still concentrated along Libya's western coast, secondary routes and smuggling hubs have re-emerged in Libya's eastern regions. Both developments respond to migration measures implemented since early 2017 in Niger and western Libya, respectively. While sea arrivals from Libya to Italy decreased over the course of 2018, an increase in arrivals in Spain along the Western Mediterranean Sea route has been recorded, with some West African nationalities who in 2017 were among the primary arrivals in Italy predominantly arriving in Spain in 2018.

- **Needs of refugees and migrants inside Libya remain unaddressed:** refugees and migrants have very diverse profiles in Libya, which can be loosely disaggregated by individuals' regions of origin. West and Central African refugees and migrants tend to be in the country primarily to work to support their families back home; the liquidity crisis in 2018 has severely impacted this group, while the protection risks this group face in Libya persist. The situation for East African refugees and migrants in Libya, who tend to be in Libya with the primary aim to transit to Italy, has worsened in 2018. The protection risks they face have exacerbated, due to the increasingly blurred lines between smuggling and trafficking in Libya.[123] No major changes in the situation for Middle Eastern and Asian refugees and migrants in Libya were found over the course of 2018.

Outlook for 2019

The root causes which shape refugees and migrants' decision to come to Libya remained unaddressed in 2018. As such, in terms of how mixed migration routes and dynamics may develop from 2019 onwards, one needs to

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[123] 'Human trafficking' and 'migrant smuggling' are two distinct crimes that often are erroneously conflated or referred to interchangeably. A key difference is that victims of trafficking are considered victims of a crime under international law; smuggled refugees and migrants are not—they pay smugglers to facilitate their movement. **Source**: US Department of State, Human Trafficking & Migrant Smuggling: Understanding the Difference. For a full definition of each term please see, on **smuggling**: The Smuggling of Migrants Protocol supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime defines the smuggling of migrants in Article 3 as the *'procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.'*. On **trafficking**: Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as '*the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.'*

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look at Libya's role as a destination both for refugees and migrants who come to the country with the intention to work and for refugees and migrants who come to Libya with the intention to transit to Europe:[124]

- **Labour migration: Libya is likely to remain a labour destination for refugees and migrants in a region**, where livelihood opportunities remain scarce. However, Libya as a destination is likely to remain attractive for particular profiles, notably for individuals who have a high risk appetite and are not dissuaded by the reports of grave protection risks for refugees and migrants in Libya.

- **Transit migration: the response by different population groups to migration measures implemented over the course of 2018 has been different, suggesting that moving forward routes may develop differently based on individuals' profiles:** East African refugees and migrants, whose smuggling dynamics have become more hidden and exploitative over the course of 2018, are likely to continue to try crossing through the Central Mediterranean Sea route, due to the highly organised smuggling networks in which they move. The protection risks this group face, which include systematic kidnapping and continued captivity, are likely to be further exacerbated over time. In contrast, refugees and migrants from West Africa who intend to reach Europe, particularly those who are not yet in Libya, are more likely to increasingly use the Western Mediterranean Sea route, as they tend to move in step-by-step journeys and are hence more flexible to re-route in the face of migration measures implemented- and may do so already at origin.

Information gaps

- **Who keeps arriving along Libya's southern borders**: while research suggests that Libya still receives new refugees and migrants along its southern borders, the profiles of most recent arrivals and their decision-making process on coming to Libya remain underexplored. Such information is crucial for humanitarian actors in country to tailor their support accordingly.
- **Situation in neighbouring countries**: Libya and its attractiveness as a destination have to be seen in relation to its neighbouring countries and wider dynamics in the North and West African region. In this context, migration flows to, within and from Libya remain closely linked to the situation in neighbouring countries, requiring a regional analysis of mixed migration trends, at the individual level, but also considering the interplay of individual migration decision-making processes with meso and macro level factors shaping mixed migration across the region.
- **Situation in countries of origin**: For both refugees and migrants who came to Libya to work and those with the intention to transit to Europe, the situation in their origin countries was the key driver of migration. This remained constant since 2016, suggesting that the root causes of migration remain unaddressed. In this context, understanding what can make people stay in a dignified way and with opportunity to build a life at home is lacking.
- **Decision-making on migrating to Europe along the Central vs the Western Mediterranean Sea route**: Initial findings from this study suggest that it is not refugees and migrants who are already in Libya who decide to migrate to Morocco via the Western Mediterranean Sea route to Europe. However, it is not clear at which point of the journey decision-making on potential re-routing takes place and how information travels along and between the two routes. This is key for a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of mixed migration routes and dynamics within the entire region.
- **Protection risks along the Western Mediterranean Sea route**: Considering the rise in the number of refugees and migrants reaching Spain via the Western Mediterranean Sea route, there is currently very limited information about the protection risks individuals face on this journey, notably in key transit countries, such as Mauritania, Algeria and Morocco.

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[124] Over the course of 2018, few refugees and migrants were found to have changed their mind over their intentions to stay or leave Libya once in the country, reportedly due to the high level of information available on the situation in Libya.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Overview of mixed migration outputs

- [Mixed migration routes and dynamics in Libya: The impact of EU migration measures on mixed migration in Libya](#), April 2018
- [Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya](#), June 2018
- [Refugees' and migrants' access to food, shelter and NFIs, WASH and assistance](#), September 2018
- [Mixed migration routes and dynamics: May – December 2018](#), December 2018
- [From hand to hand: the migratory experience of refugees and migrants from East Africa across Libya](#), April 2019
- Libyan refugees' and asylum seekers' irregular boat migration to Europe in 2018, July 2019.

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