



A HOLISTIC OVERVIEW OF **MIGRATION** FROM AFRICA TO THE EU

The 'who', 'why' and 'how' of migration

Juliëtte Heij

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by
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Bergstraat 33
3811 NG Amersfoort
The Netherlands
info@sallux.eu

www.sallux.eu

About the author

Juliëtte Heij (2003) is 3-year bachelor student in Management of International Social Challenges at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). Driven by her interest in international relations and politics, this has become the focus of her studies. Next to studying in an international and academic context, she also works as an assistant in elderly care in her hometown Krimpen aan den IJssel.

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Foreword

Anyone following the migration debate will be aware of the fact that almost in every instance the debate is only focused at the moment that people try to cross the Mediterranean or any other border of the EU. In that sense it is as if people only appear on our radar at the moment that they appear on our borders.

Of course, everyone recognizes that the people concerned are coming from somewhere. However, that 'coming from' and the 'somewhere' remain undefined and are rarely really part of the political debate over migration in the EU.

At the same time there are organizations and UN institutions that are dedicated to mapping the migration streams before the people concerned arrive at or near the borders of the EU.

Simultaneously there is a host of aid and related organizations that deal with most of the countries where people are coming from.

The reality is that these have effectively become three 'bubbles' that hardly communicate with each other in an integrated way. The cause of migration, the routes of migration and the attempts of migrants to enter the EU are not seen and discussed 'in one picture'. The simple fact that a publication like this that presents this overview did not exist, is evidence of the disconnect in the debate over migration.

As a consequence, we have a situation where the political debate over migration is disconnected from the debate over foreign policy and both are disconnected from the debate over economic policy. That does not mean that foreign policy and economic policy are disconnected. They are connected in practice to the extent that foreign policy is de facto the foreign policy of short-term economic interests with the goal to increase exports and import cheap commodities. The problem is that this ultimately creates migration to the EU as human rights, ecology and human dignity are ignored in the process. One example is that the EU increased trade to Iran which invested it in military proxies that created migration to Europe (for example from Syria).

That is why we need a political debate in which foreign policy, economic policy and migration are understood as one reality. However, this is necessary as we should not have policies that make things worse for people elsewhere. We should have policies that respect and protect their human dignity.

This publication encourages to go in that direction by connecting the countries of origin and migration routes to the EU in one overview. Moreover, it contains many references and links to relevant data relating to various aspects of migration.

We hope therefore that this publication will prove helpful for anyone involved in the migration debate.

Last but certainly not least we as Sallux thank Juliëtte Heij for her excellent work in writing this publication.

Johannes de Jong

Director Sallux

Abstract

This publication explores the migratory routes that are taken by migrants from Africa towards Europe. To comprehensively understand what steps migrants take, and why they take them, this essay is centered around three main questions. The first question is *how* the migrants migrate, which refers to the specific routes that they take as to reach Europe. The second question focusses on *who* the migrants are, which explores where the migrants come from. Along with this question, the third question of *why* people migrate is asked, which

entails the reasons for which migrants leave their home countries. In this we recognize that there are many refugees among the migrants.

The first question of *how* people migrate has led to a threefold of routes from Africa to Europe. The first route is the East and Horn of Africa route, and this refers to the routes that people take from the east side of Africa towards the north and middle north parts of Africa, from which they will set off to Europe by boat. In the last parts of the East and Horn of Africa route, it merges with the second main migratory route: the Central Mediterranean route. This route flows from countries in the middle of Africa, which take this route often through sub-Saharan areas. This route ends, like the first route, in the northern parts of Africa, specifically Tunisia and Libya. From here, migrants set off towards Italy. Lastly, the Western African and Mediterranean route flows from the western parts of Africa towards Algeria, towards Spain. This route often consists of coastal departures towards the Canary Islands, from which Migrants leave for Spain. Along all three main routes, smuggling networks are highly active. The migrants are often obliged to use smuggling to reach their intended destination, often putting them at risk. Smuggling and human trafficking often causes for dangerous situations, in which the migrants are often exploited and harmed.

After examining the routes, the questions of *who* the migrants are and *why* they migrate are asked. Most migrants are younger men, who leave their country in search of a better life and a better future. The migrants come from a wide variety of countries. While most migrants come from African countries, there is also a large influx of migrants from countries from other areas, for example Syria, Pakistan and Bangladesh. These migrants use the African routes as to reach Europe. In this publication, the countries of origin can be found, along with a description of the push factors for the specific countries. For most African countries, economic reasons along with corruption, political instability and violence, and general bad living

conditions are the most important reasons for leaving the country. Other reasons are persecution, natural disasters, and food shortages. The top countries of origin from which migrants travel towards Europe differ every year, in accordance with the situation in countries of origin.

After examining the routes, the reasons, and who the migrants are, a comprehensive picture of the migratory trajectory is outlined. It is of high importance to take into account the migratory travels that people make before they cross the sea towards Europe. When looking at two main opinions of 'keeping everyone out of Europe' and 'welcoming everyone in Europe', the information indicates that both are insufficient approaches to the migration challenge in Europe. It is important to implement a country-specific policy in accordance with the situation and needs of specific countries of origin. An economic and foreign policy is needed, which not only focusses on the maximalization of profit and the increasing of export. The improvement of the situation in countries of origin cannot be left to the institutions and organizations that focus on aid and development. It must become a principle of both economic and foreign policy.

Introduction

In this time, the importance of international migration, especially within the context of migration from Africa towards Europe, keeps proving itself. This publication will explore the migratory trajectory from Middle and Northern Africa towards Europe. Where the focus is oftentimes laid on the arrival in Europe, there is a gap in the literature on the actual routes and origins of the migrants. There is literature on when migrants and asylum seekers arrive in Europe, there is research on the routes they take. Moreover, there is research on, and work in, the countries of origin. What is not available, is a short publication in which all three are described and that offers a more complete overview.

This publication aims to fill that gap. To do so, the publication consists of a 3-step analysis of the migratory trajectory from Africa towards Europe. First, the routes of the migration will be mapped and explained, as well as the context and obstacles of the routes. When the migratory routes are mapped, the question will be researched: *Who* are the migrants? This will consist of the countries of origin as well as the characteristics of the migrants. Lastly, the question *Why* do they migrate? Will be researched, as to comprehend the fundamental reasons for migrants to start their migration process abroad. When these three questions are researched and answered, the trajectory of migration from Africa to Europe will be fully mapped.

The term 'migrant' is used here in the full recognition and acknowledgement that there are many refugees within these groups of people that move from Africa to Europe.

Migratory routes towards Europe

The routes of migration from middle and northern Africa can be divided in three main trajectories: The Western Mediterranean route, the Central Mediterranean route and the East and Horn of Africa route. First, the East and Horn of Africa route will be explored, after which the Western Mediterranean route will be mapped and explained. Finally, the Central Mediterranean route will be explored.

East and Horn of Africa route

The first main route from Africa towards Europe is the East and Horn of Africa route. This route, as the name suggests, explains the move from countries in the East of Africa and the Horn of Africa towards the North, where it 'joins' the Central Mediterranean route, which will be discussed later¹². In this section, this route will be indicated, alongside the main hubs and challenges that occur on the route.

The East and Horn of Africa route flows from countries like Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia towards Libya and Tunisia. A first important migration hub is Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia. From there, migrants often set travel to other hubs more north, mainly Khartoum in Sudan. To reach Khartoum, three main routes exist to do so. Migrants can travel there directly (there is a direct bus line), but in between the two cities, the migration hub of Metema also functions as a passing-through for migrants³. The migration route when reaching Khartoum through Metema causes for over 1000 migrants to arrive daily nowadays (IOM, 2023). Metema is a city which is on the border between Sudan and Ethiopia and is thus a hub for migrants crossing Ethiopia towards Sudan. Due to the possibility of travelling directly towards Khartoum, which will be discussed later, Metema is less popular as a migration hub than before. However, many still pass through the city, as more than 26,500 arrivals have

1. <https://migration.unu.edu/publications/reports/study-on-migration-routes-in-the-east-and-horn-of-africa.html>

2. <https://www.iemed.org/publication/the-dynamics-of-migrant-smuggling-in-north-africa-focus-on-the-central-mediterranean-route/>

3. <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/ref-hornresearch/files/2020/03/Migration-Management-Metema-final-Mar-2020.pdf>

been recorded in Metema between April 21st, 2023, and May 21 2023⁴⁵.

Moving on to the direct passage from Addis Ababa towards Khartoum, bus lines and direct airplane flight options used to provide migrants with the option of travelling directly to Khartoum. A third option is travelling through Humera, which is laid on the border between Sudan and Eritrea, towards Khartoum. For migrating children, especially when unaccompanied, the towns of Metema and Humera are dangerous. Oftentimes, children from neighboring areas with dire economic conditions migrate to or through these towns in search of jobs or a better life. These children are often prone to child trafficking⁶.

Khartoum was the main migration hub in Sudan, where migrants often stay for a longer period (up to two years). Here, they found work and tried to save money, as to prepare themselves for their upcoming trip further north, towards Europe. Khartoum was a city where many smugglers offered their services, and therefore the place where many migrants contacted smugglers who got them from one point to the next. The smugglers often pay bribes, as to get they 'clients' to the next stop in their travels going north⁷. However, Khartoum has been subject to rising violence due to a conflict, which erupted on April 15th, 2023. The conflict, which will be discussed more in detail later in this essay, has caused for more forced displacement within the area, as Sudanese but also the migrants that came to Khartoum often have to flee the area of Khartoum⁸. This has made Khartoum an area of departure instead of transit, as many Sudanese flee this area which causes for both internal as well as external displacement⁹. More than 1,042,114 Sudanese people have been displaced internally, and more than 319,194 have fled to neighboring countries. Many Sudanese travel south, towards the East and Horn of Africa. Examples of countries are South Sudan and Ethiopia. This pattern of migration is a reversal of the 'usual' pattern, which flows upwards towards Europe ^{10,11}. Furthermore, the con-

4. https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/situation_reports/file/iom-sudan-external-situation-report-6.pdf

5. <https://www.iom.int/news/over-1000-daily-arrivals-sudan-ethiopia-iom-data>

6. https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/news/ethiopia-supporting-unaccompanied-children-their-best-interest-2022-07-27_en

7. https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/008_going-west.pdf

8. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/mixed-migration-consequences-sudans-conflict>

9. <https://www.unhcr.org>

10. <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoIbDUyMzVmZDEtZjRlZCooODBiLTgsYWltZTkzOWU-zOGRkOGUxliwidCI6IjE1ODgyNjkLTlZmItNDNiNC1iZDZlLWJjZTQ5YzhINjE4NiIsImMiOiJh9>

11. https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/situation_reports/file/iom-sudan-external-situa-

flict causes for some Sudanese migrants to also take on the travel north, towards Libya, Chad, or Egypt. Currently, Sudanese refugees are among the top nationalities intercepted by the Libyan coastguard attempting to reach Europe, and in the top 20 nationalities arriving in Italy.

The Khartoum process, also called the EU- Horn of Africa migration route initiative, was an interregional forum on migration. The objectives of the Khartoum process were to create a framework for policy and dialogue, share knowledge and experiences as to strengthen cooperations, and to seek funding opportunities and facilitate resource mobilization to support concrete projects. This process has been established as to battle smuggling and human trafficking along the route of the East and Horn of Africa towards Europe. The Steering Committee of the Khartoum Process consisted of five EU member states, namely Italy, France, Germany, The Netherlands and Sweden ¹²

Even before the conflict in Sudan, there were already big flows of migration from Sudan towards Libya, but this has thus increased in the last years. From Sudan, the travel goes on towards Libya, where migrants hope to depart towards Europe, mainly Italy. Some migrants have also reported to have travelled through Chad towards Libya, for example through Al-Sara towards Murzuq in Libya. Libya as an important transit country for migrants, as it functions as a passage towards Tunisia from which migrants hope to travel towards Europe, or when they go directly from Libya through the coastal areas. In 2021, more than 575,874 migrants from over 41 nationalities were identified in 100 Libyan municipalities. Some important regions that migrants travel through are Tripoli, Ejdabia, Misrata, Benghazi, Azzawya and Murzuq¹³. There are many ways from which migrants can enter Libya, depending on the efficiency of the route and their area of departure. Due to the fluctuating conflicts and situations in neighboring countries, routes can change depending on safety or efficiency. Many migrants, when they have arrived in Libya, move to cities on the west coast, where they stay for a while. Oftentimes, the migrants have saved money only for the travel towards Libya, and they find work in Libyan (coastal) cities as to save for their desired trip towards Europe¹⁴.

tion-report-6.pdf

12. <https://www.iom.int/eu-horn-africa-migration-route-initiative-khartoum-process>

13. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/libya-%E2%80%94-migrant-report-35-january%E2%80%94february-2021>

14. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Human-smuggling-and-trafficking-ecosystems-LIBYA.pdf>

From the East side, there are also large numbers of migrants coming from Egypt, as the country accounts for the highest influx of migrants towards Europe¹⁵. The influx from Egypt is interesting, as the country deals with an interesting pattern of human trafficking and smuggling. The scenario often occurs that men vanish from rural villages in Egypt without letting families and friends know. Days later, they call their families from Libya, to say that they need around 140,000 Egyptian pounds (\pm €4200). This is a big amount of money for families from these areas, which they often have no choice to pay to the smugglers. By paying this, the Egyptian migrants (usually males) can reserve a spot on a boat towards Italy or Greece. Oftentimes, the Egyptian men are lured by smugglers with the promise of a better and beautiful life, and the men are usually willing to take the oftentimes dangerous travels towards Europe. Egypt as a country has enforced better border control policies, as no migrant boat has left Egyptian shores since 2016. However, the migration flows have moved through Libya instead¹⁶. In Libya, as described above, migrants stay for a while to work and save money for their trip towards Europe. Here, contact is made with smugglers who provide boat transits towards Europe. Later, more context around smuggling and human trafficking will be given. The most popular area of transit at the coast of Libya is Tripoli, mainly because of its geographical location to Italy. In Tripoli, part of the migrants makes it their destination, but part moves on towards Europe. Boat fees can come up to €12000. Tripoli is known to be dangerous for migrants, as safety is often low. When finding jobs in Tripoli to save for a travel further north, oftentimes migrants come across dangerous working conditions¹⁷. The East and Horn of Africa route can also flow from Libya towards Tunisia, which has become more and more of an important transit hub for migrants in the past years. In the last years, growing insecurity, and eruptions of conflicts in Libya have caused for more and more migrants to move up towards Tunisia, making this one of the most important transit and destination locations currently¹⁸. Some migrants have been reported to take the travel from Libya towards Tunisia on foot, which can take up to four days¹⁹. Important to note is that while most migration flows towards Italy these days, there are also reports of migrants travelling towards Greece. Migrants from Africa, but also from the Middle East, can take the route

15. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2023/07/21/1188582560/egypts-vanishing-village-men-risking-it-all-to-get-to-europe>

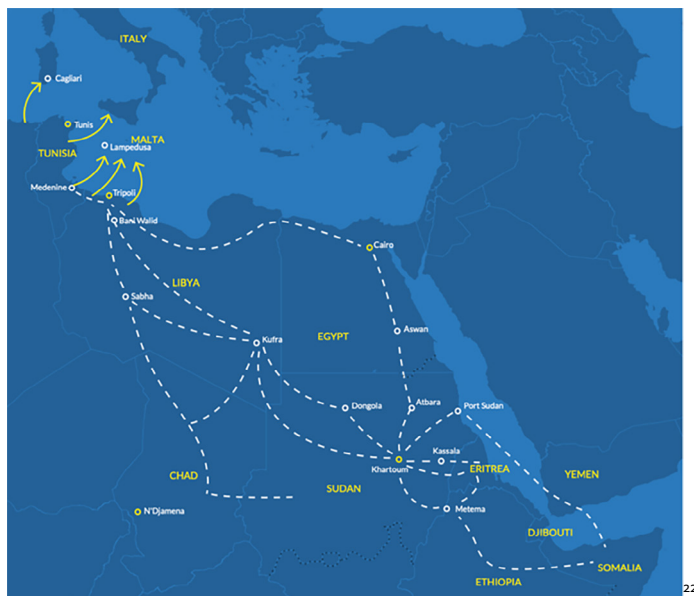
16. <https://theearabweekly.com/egyptians-try-reach-europe-sea-risk-their-lives-mostly-libya>

17. <https://migrantsmove.migration.mit.edu/journeys/libya-tripoli>

18. <https://www.euronews.com/2023/06/01/migrant-crisis-in-the-mediterranean-from-tunisia-to-italy-who-are-those-fleeing-to-europe>

19. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-27/tunisia-migrant-crisis-inside-the-escape-from-africa/102755432>

to Greece²⁰. Multiple reports have shown incidents in which migrants have been rescued, or where migrant lives have unfortunately been lost at sea. An example is the Messina boat tragedy, where more than 300 migrants have died. While there is not much data on numbers of migrants coming from Libya towards Greece, multiple reports on incidents and Greece's call for the EU to stop migrant boats before they arrive in Greece, indicate that the route towards Greece is (still) being used²¹. As the final part of the East and Horn of Africa route mostly flows into the Central Mediterranean route, this part of the travel will be discussed more in detail later in this report.



Central Mediterranean route

The next route, nowadays also the most popular route, is the Central Mediterranean route. Generally, this route flows from the more central and west Sub-Saharan countries towards the north towards Tunisia or Libya towards Europe. The journey can take different ways, in the Central Mediterranean route, the destination is usu-

20. <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2022/11/24/Greece-transfers-nearly-500-migrants-to-a-ferry-after-dramatic-rescue-operation>

21. <https://www.politico.eu/article/3344121/>

22. <https://www.unhcr.org/fr-fr/en/media/routes-towards-western-and-central-mediterranean-sea-working-alternatives-dangerous-journeys>

ally Libya and/or Tunisia. Since migrants come from a wide variety of areas, which will be discussed later in the report, the focus will be on the main routes and transit areas towards the north. The first route in which migrants often travel towards is from the west to the north. This route meets its first big transit area in Bamako, the capital of Mali ²³. In Bamako, some migrants stay for half a year to a year to work and save money for their upcoming trip further north. Oftentimes, this counts for migrants coming from countries not in the ECOWAS area, which means that they do not require a visa ²⁴. From Bamako, there are multiple areas that migrants can travel to. The first and most used is towards Timbuktu, currently one of the biggest smuggling areas in Mali. Migrants can reach Timbuktu using different methods. Some travel using public transport, as services are provided from Bamako to Timbuktu through the Segou region. Migrants also take routes through other cities, for example by using rented busses through Ségou. Since late 2019, migrants also tend to use boats along the Niger River via Mopti towards Timbuktu²⁵. From Timbuktu, migrants travel further on towards Algeria. Smugglers are highly active in this area, as there is a variety of networks in Mali. The most popular route towards the Algerian border is via In-Agarak and In-Khalil, where migrants often pay between €132-€305 for a travel from Timbuktu towards Algeria.

From Bamako, migrants can also travel north through Gao, the secondary migrant-transportation hub in Northern Mali. Here, there is also a big amount of smuggling and human trafficking of migrants coming from the west and central African countries. Here, migrants often get transported using pick-up trucks towards the Algerian border.

The next route from Bamako is towards the east, towards the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou is also a possible transit area for migrants. However, due to recent conflicts and violence, the area is less safe to migrate through, and displacement of people from the area is also occurring. Because of extremist violence, more than 60,000 persons have been displaced from Burkina Faso to neighboring countries. For this, it is important to note that this area of transit will likely be less popular at this time²⁶. The next popular transit area for migrants is the Niamey area, where many migrants pass through as well. Niger as a country is an area of origin,

23. https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1461/files/reports/2023.06%20WCA_Mobility%20mapping.pdf

24. https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/146-urban_case_study_Bamako.pdf

25. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Human-smuggling-and-trafficking-eco-systems-MALI.pdf>

26. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/rising-violence-drives-refugees-burkina-faso-neighbouring-countries>

transit but also destination for many migrants, coming from all sides of Africa. Migrants passing through Niger towards the North oftentimes pass through the area of Niamey or Tahoua north and towards Agadez. Important to note is that while smuggling has seen a decrease in Agadez, it has been rising in Tahoua. This is most likely because of its accessibility to other transport hubs²⁷. The city of Tahoua has reportedly become more accessible as well after the eruption of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, as it is believed that the pressure from the EU to tackle migration has reduced. Usually, migrants are housed in the area as smugglers wait until there are enough migrants to organize a departure elsewhere. In 2023, a crisis of migration has emerged in the area of Agadez, as there are reports of an ‘overcrowding’ of migrants in the area, pointing to a surplus of migrants stranded in the area²⁸. Important to note is that Niger has been politically impacted by a military coup on 26 July 2023, which caused for a surge in political instability in the country. For this reason, migration routes possibly could change according to the safety in specific areas, along with a possible rise in migration coming from the country itself ²⁹.

After Niamey, migrants often travel to and through the city of Agadez. Agadez is long known to be an important migration hub, with reports highlighting that there are more migrants than tourists in the area. According to authorities, the towns around Agadez have doubled in population in ten years, as a big influx of migrants enters the area³⁰. In 2014, more than half of all migrants who arrived in Lampedusa passed through Agadez. After this, the EU developed its Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling, which took place from 2015-2020. Nowadays, since the transporting of migrants has become illegal, the route from Agadez towards Libya has become more and more dangerous. There are reports of smugglers abandoning their ‘clients’ in the desert when potential detection by authorities is feared. Furthermore, the local economy was dependent on the legal migration flows through the city, making high penalties and prison sentences more and more occurring in the area. This has caused for a rise of poverty in the area ³¹.

As migrants can travel the route above towards Agadez, another route taken by

27. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Alice-Fereday-Niger-Regional-migration-and-gold-mining-consolidate-as-smuggling-to-Libya-stagnates-GI-TOC-July-2023.pdf>

28. <https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/alarming-overcrowding-niger-migrant-transit-centres-calls-urgent-action-iom>

29. <https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/niger-humanitarian-needs-dg-echo-echo-daily-flash-05-september-2023>

30. <https://www.africanews.com/2023/04/12/nigers-agadez-region-overwhelmed-by-migration/>

31. <https://blog.prif.org/2023/03/28/the-externalization-of-eu-borders-the-case-of-agadez/>

migrants is from the direction of Nigeria towards Agadez. For this, many migrants cross Abuja and travel further north along the cities of Kano, Kaduna or Sokoto³². Citizens that come from ECOWAS states can travel freely without visa, but those who are not from such countries must travel illegally. In hubs like these, smuggling is a big issue and there are many illegal immigrants. In Kaduna, for example, reports of more than 500 illegal migrant arrestations have emerged³³. From these areas, migrants can also travel towards Agadez.

When migrants have come through Timbuktu, Gao or Agadez, they travel towards Algeria. From Agadez, migrants can also take their travels towards Libya. When travelling to Algeria, they travel towards Tamanrasset. This center is described as the distribution point for migrants on the central route to Libya through eastern border regions of Algeria. Another direction that migrants can take is straight towards the north, towards Algiers. The routes within Algeria are often changing, due to strict controls of smuggling networks and migration in the country³⁴. As the main transit point into Algeria for migrants, Tamanrasset is filled with smugglers and human trafficking networks. This also entails women and children, who are often victim of sex trafficking in these areas. Oftentimes, sub-Saharan migrant women enter relationships there, as to be provided with shelter, food, income, and safety³⁵. The topic of smuggling and human trafficking will be analyzed more detailed later in this report. Sometimes, migrants get sent back to their countries and areas of departure by the IOM, causing for them to be either stranded or to have to take long travels back³⁶.

Migrants can also travel from Agadez or Tamanrasset towards Libya. Migrants coming from Algeria often go through Ghat, an important migration hub on the route in Libya³⁷, as it lays on the border with Algeria. In Ghat, there are also many migrants that have come from Niger, for example from Agadez. According to the IOM, many migrants have taken private means as to travel towards the area. An-

32. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/edc15a9dd4cf411c8d8eddo61c6c9460>

33. <https://www.channelstv.com/2023/02/06/516-illegal-immigrants-arrested-in-kaduna-over-1000-pvcs-recovered/>

34. <https://doi.org/10.5555/1480-6800.22.3.206>

35. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/algeria/>

36. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/algeria/article/2023/07/14/wandering-sub-saharan-migrants-risk-deportation-in-algeria_6053152_221.html

37. <https://www.mixedmigrationhub.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1836/files/documents/Country-Profile-Libya.pdf>

other popular migration hub is the city of Sabha, in the northeast of Ghat³⁸. Important to note is that while migrants can travel from Algeria to Libya, this can also be the other way around depending on the destinations that the migrants have. Some migrants can also take their travels from Agadez towards Sabha and then Tamanrasset and move on from there.

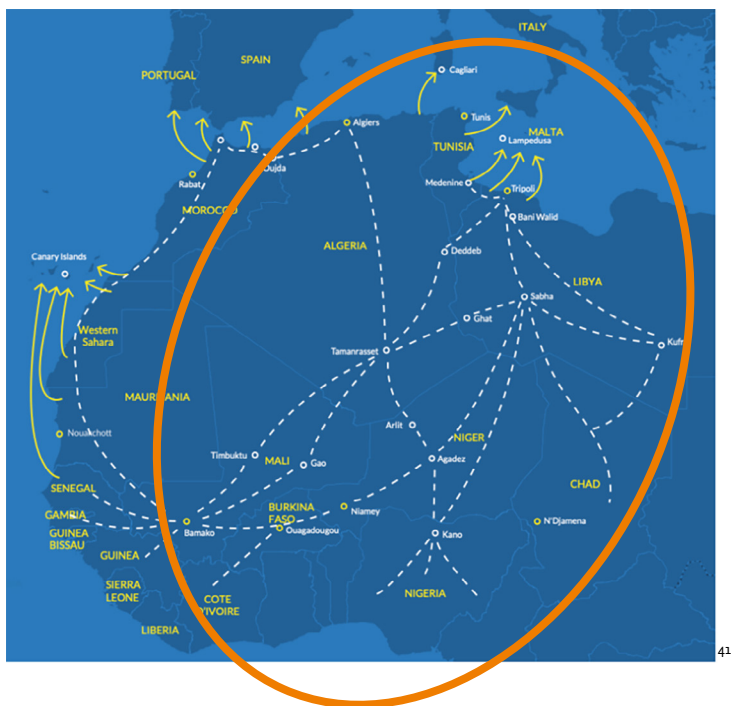
As described earlier, migrants can also take the route from Tamanrasset towards the north, towards Algiers. There, they either travel towards Morocco as to cross the sea towards Spain, or they can travel towards Tunisia and/or Libya as to cross the ocean towards Europe there. As described, nowadays Tunisia is the biggest area for migrants to travel towards Europe, usually towards Lampedusa and Italy.

When migrants have taken the route towards Ghat and Sabha, they often travel north towards coastal areas in Tunisia, such as Tripoli. As described, the central Mediterranean route merges with the East and Horn of Africa route, as most migrants depart from coastal towns in either Libya or Tunisia towards Europe⁴⁰. In these areas, routes are often dangerous and smugglers and human trafficking play a big role in migration.

38. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/745697/EPRS_ATA\(2023\)745697_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/745697/EPRS_ATA(2023)745697_EN.pdf)

39. <https://doi.org/10.1163/09744061-tato0007>

40. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs-32_en.pdf



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Western African and Mediterranean route

The next and last routes are the routes on the west side of Northern Africa, which are the Western African route and the Western Mediterranean route. The Western Mediterranean route refers to the route from the western countries up through Morocco towards Spanish areas. The Western African route refers to the migration route that leads to the Canary Islands⁴¹.

Western Mediterranean route

While the Western Mediterranean route has become less popular due to more restrictions towards Spain, it is still a much-used route towards Europe. The first way to get to Morocco is a route that has partly been described and used in the Central Mediterranean route as well. This route flows towards Bamako and nearby areas to-

41. <https://www.unhcr.org/fr-fr/en/media/routes-towards-western-and-central-mediterranean-sea-working-alternatives-dangerous-journeys>

42. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/western-routes/#africa>

wards Timbuktu, Kidal, or Gao, and then into areas like Bordj Badji Mokhtar, Timiaouine, Tin Zaoutine, but mostly Tamanrasset. Then, they move on northwards, towards Algiers, just like the Central Mediterranean route. However, in the Western Mediterranean route, migrants travel left from Algiers towards Oujda⁴³⁴⁴. Migrants can also come from other places of the Central Mediterranean route towards the area of Oujda, for example from the routes through Libya, Chad, Mali, and Niger. Many of these migrants try to avoid Libya in their migration routes, as smuggling and the need for bribing as to escape certain jails there is highly prominent⁴⁵. From Oujda, migrants travel to either Melilla or Ceuta, two well-known migration hubs. These two areas are part of Spain, and migrants try to get into these areas as to cross the border to the mainland of Spain. Migrants can also come through Agadez straight onto Tamanrasset, towards the north In Algeria (Ain Saleh, Ghardaia. Oran), and then also left towards Morocco⁴⁶.

In these areas, there are high amounts of migration and border-crossing attempts. Only in 2023, more than 25000 migration attempts have been intercepted⁴⁷. Both in Ceuta and Melilla, border fences were built by Spain in the early 1990s, as to prevent irregular migrations towards Europe⁴⁸. However, migrants still attempt to cross these borders, which can result in dangerous accidents. An example of this is the stampede in Melilla in January 2023, where at least 23 migrants died while stampeding the border⁴⁹. In Ceuta, a likewise accident has occurred in 2018, where around 800 migrants stormed the border fence as to enter Europe⁵⁰.

Western African (Atlantic) route

The Western African route is a migratory route that flows from the coasts of western African countries towards the Canary Islands. Migrants travel towards coastal towns in countries like Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, or Morocco, and take boats

43. <https://www.unhcr.org/media/routes-towards-western-and-central-mediterranean-sea-working-alternatives-dangerous-journeys>

44. https://www.unodc.org/res/som/docs/Observatory_StoryMap_2_Final_2021.12.07.pdf

45. <https://www.laprensalatina.com/oujda-a-gateway-into-morocco-for-sub-saharan-migrants/>

46. https://www.unodc.org/res/som/docs/Observatory_StoryMap_2_Final_2021.12.07.pdf

47. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230625-morocco-intercepts-over-25000-migration-attempts-in-2023/>

48. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733692/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)733692_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733692/EPRS_BRI(2022)733692_EN.pdf)

49. <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/45983/morocco-raises-migrants-jail-time-over-melilla-stampede>

50. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/26/hundreds-storm-border-fence-spanish-enclave-north-africa-ceuta-spain-migration>

to the Spanish Canary Islands⁵¹. Earlier on, movements on this route often went from Morocco or straight from Mauritania, but nowadays, Senegal reports many boat departures as well. The boat departures can either be organized by a so-called travel facilitator, but it can also be set up by the migrant group itself. According to numerous interviewed migrants, the route towards and through the sea is the quickest and the cheapest⁵². Migrants travel, for example, from Rufisque in Senegal towards Spain. Many migrants (42%) are aware of the risks of the trip. The trip can be dangerous, for example in a case in July 2023. Where 13 migrants lost their lives on a boat near Morocco⁵³. Migrants from Senegal can also travel straight through Mauritania, as this is often a shorter route⁵⁴. Areas of transit and departure often vary, with Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and The Gambia as the most important departure areas.

The Western African route towards the Canary Islands has seen a slight decrease in migratory movements, as the number of migrants reaching the Canary Islands decreased from 13,118 to 12,506 (4,7%) between 2021 and 2022⁵⁵.

From Morocco, migrants can travel downwards through migration hubs like Rabat towards Casablanca. In Morocco, Areas like Tan Tan, Agadir, Laayoune, Boujdour and Dakhla are departure areas for migrants towards the Canary Islands. Smuggling networks in Morocco often handle their engagements with authorities, as to ensure a safe departure for migrants towards the Canary Islands. The smugglers are often referred to as ‘Hajj’ and are often highly active in smuggling migrants. The topic of smugglers will be discussed in further detail later⁵⁶.

From Mauritania, migrant vessel launches date back to the early 2000s. The city of Nouadhibou serves as the most important point of departure. The migrants coming through this area often meet smugglers through their communities, where

51. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/west-and-central-africa---irregular-migration-routes-europe---western-african-atlantic-o>

52. https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1461/files/reports/Research%20Brief%20SEN_Migrations%20Piroguieres_Final%206%20janvier%20EN.pdf

53. <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/50531/13-senegalese-migrants-dead-in-shipwreck-off-morocco>

54. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/StudyMigrants/IOs/IOMTrendsAcrossMediterranean.pdf>

55. <https://reliefweb.int/report/canary-islands-spain/monitoring-departures-areas-gambia-movements-canary-islands-november-2022>

56. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Lucia-Bird-Canary-Island-December-2022.pdf>

they share information and thus tap into smuggling networks. As mentioned above, some Senegalese migrants also prefer this route, as this reduces the time on sea for them by several days. From the departure points in Mauritania, boat tours can take up to a week or 10 days. The route through Mauritania towards the Canary Islands is sometimes seen as ‘safer’⁵⁷. Within the Mauritanian smuggling networks, the actors often include organizers, which recruit the migrants, vessel captains, and individuals that engage with the authorities. Nowadays, these networks are multi-national, as often other nationalities are also involved. For example, Malian nationals play a big role in organizing trips and recruiting Malian migrants for the Mauritanian sea-crossings. The Mauritanian nationals manage the relationships with local authorities, making sure that they allow the boats to go through. Often, this includes bribing the authorities with up to 500 000 ouguiyas, which is approximately €11,500. Senegalese nationals in Mauritania often play a role in the maritime transport. This often includes shuttling migrants on fishing boats (as they work as fishermen) towards larger vessels for the journey towards the Canary Islands, and ultimately towards Europe.

In Senegal, the most important areas of departure are Mbour, Dakar, and Saint-Louis. In 2020 and 2021, the beaches near Mbour were the more popular launching points. Even though Saint-Louis is laid further north in the country, Mbour is a more prominent migration area due to its higher population. From Senegal, the boat trips can take between 5 to 11 days to reach the Canary Islands. This difference can be due to different reasons, for example the course, possible encounters, or the need to evade authorities at sea, weather conditions and point of embarkation. In Senegal, migrant departures and smuggling are reported to be less organized than in Morocco and Mauritania. As in Mauritania, fishing captains often play a big role in smuggling migrants to the Canary Islands. However, captains of boats from Senegal usually stay in the Canary Islands or move on to Europe themselves as well.

57. <https://www.redcross.org.uk/stories/migration-and-displacement/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/desperate-journeys>

Smuggling on the African migration routes



The migration from Africa towards Europe could not be possible without the presence of great smuggling networks all over the continent. Smuggling in Africa often works in the form of a hierarchical network, as migrants often do not ever see the actual Smuggler in person. The smugglers on top of the hierarchy often have front men and guarantors, who function as ‘executors’ of the smuggling process. Think, for example, of the different roles of individuals involved in smuggling in the western Mediterranean route (Fishermen, contact with authorities, etc.). The distribution of roles also exists in other countries and routes.

The first step for migrants is meeting the smugglers. Oftentimes, social media apps are used as to communicate with smugglers and receive information⁵⁸. Prices for smuggling can vary per country, also in connection to the safety of the routes for both migrants as well as smugglers, who do not want to get caught. Depending on the state situation, smuggling can be easier or safer in some countries than others⁵⁹. Smuggling oftentimes comes with great risk and dangers. Some migrants must wait

58. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Human-smuggling-and-trafficking-eco-systems-MALI.pdf>

59. <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Rupert-Horsley-Libya-Sophisticated-smugglers-thrive-as-Libyan-goernance-stagnates-GI-TOC-September-2023.pdf>

in housed with no food or water access before being able to travel onwards. During the trip, they are often provided no water or food, and they often are unable to fall asleep due to safety risks (For example falling off overcrowded trucks)⁶⁰. Most smuggling routes flow through highly arid desert areas, with small possibilities for water points⁶¹. Smugglers often must circumvent established routes as to avoid arrestation, leading to the possibility of more dangerous routes to be used.

Besides the safety risks due to the trip itself, migrants are often also prone to abuses from smugglers and traffickers. Women and girls are often especially vulnerable within smuggling trajectories, as they are prone to violence and rape⁶². For example, reports show that on the read into Morocco, gangs are on search for money, and have also been known for sexually assaulting women migrants. In other areas, hotspots for human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation has also been reported as common. Sometimes, the women are controlled by voodoo, and told that if they leave their exploiters, the voodoo will/ is threatened to be used against their families back home⁶³.



60. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/perilous-migration-across-desert-niger-africas-hidden-story>

61. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom-niger-four-year-report.pdf>

62. <https://i.unu.edu/media/migration.unu.edu/publication/4717/Migration-Routes-East-and-Horn-of-Africa.pdf>

63. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/StudyMigrants/IOs/IOMTrendsAcrossMediterranean.pdf>.

Who are the migrants, and why do they migrate?



In this section, the question of *Who* the migrants are will be explored. As there is often not much information present on the backgrounds of migrants, this essay will research this subject more deeply⁶⁴. As a guideline, Frontex's list of migrant countries of origin, along with the data provided by the IOM regarding this topic will be used as to explore the nationalities and possible demographics of the migrants. It is of high importance to note that while Frontex provides an overview of top countries from which migrants travel towards Europe, the numbers often differ. The Euro-

pean Commission has also made statements regarding the number of migrants from Africa towards Europe, but used a different number⁶⁵. The numbers often dif-

64. <https://frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-map/>

65. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en#:~:text=962%2C200%20applications%2C%20includ-

fer within different sources and institutions, as there is much uncertainty regarding specific numbers of migrants within the migratory flows towards Europe. For this reason, we emphasize that this part of the essay will focus on *where* migrants come from and *why* they migrate from their countries (push factors).

As the influx of migrants is oftentimes an inconsistent flow depending on specific situations in origin countries and smuggling routes, the countries of origin will not be presented in order of number of migrants.

Important to note is that many of the migrants entering Europe are not from the continent of Africa, but rather from the middle east or even Asia. This will also be specified more in-depth in this section. In this section, the Freedom House Index will be used as to describe the political and civil liberties in each country. This index indicates well how free countries are, and is composed of scores from 0-4 for 10 political freedom indicators and 15 civil liberty indicators⁶⁶.

Morocco



Morocco has a long-standing history of migration towards Europe. Not only is the country one of the most important countries of transit, it is also a country of departure towards Europe, mainly Spain. Youngsters in Morocco often grow up with a certain desire of migrating. As in other African countries, the ‘better life’ concept is also applicable here, as many imagine moving elsewhere to seek greater opportunities, social security, and a sense of freedom. According to the Arab Barometer report, nearly 70%

ing%20881%2C200%20first,than%20in%202019%2C%20before%20COVID.

66. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FITW_2023%20MethodologyPDF.pdf

of Moroccans under 30 express desire to leave the country⁶⁷. Leaving the country is often seen as an achievement. Especially young people want to move abroad, as they dream of a life full of chances. Oftentimes, acquiring a visa is impossible, leading to illegal migration with boats. This results in illegal immigrations being under control of mafia organizations and smugglers⁶⁸. The freedom House rated Morocco as partly free, with a 37/100 score. This includes a 13/40 score on political rights, and a 24/60 score on civil liberties. The freedom political elections in the country are reported to be relatively low, in the context of fair elections. However, the political situation and freedom in the country does not seem to be the reason for migration; this is often the economic situation of youngsters and their dream of the 'better life'⁶⁹.

Algeria



In 2021 and 2022, Algeria has also been in the top 10 nationalities of arrivals to Europe. While the country is not in the top 10 anymore, it is important to explore the migration patterns in Algeria. The most important reason for emigration from the country is the lack of employment opportunities and generally poor economic conditions. Like in other countries, the youth is usually more eager and willing to migrate towards other countries and thus also Europe to seek better opportunities. Especially, inhabitants of rural areas in Algeria tend to move towards other areas, often urban areas but thus also to international desti-

67. <https://www.freiheit.org/marocco-and-algeria/we-are-well-aware-what-it-takes-stay>

68. <https://www.wafin.com/articles/361/Why-are-young-Moroccans-fleeing-their-country#:~:text=Besides%20unemployment%2C%20the%20wage%20differential,stable%20work%20but%20little%20pay>

69. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/morocco/freedom-world/2023#PR>

nations⁷⁰. People migrating from Algeria often travel towards France, which is partly caused by the colonial history between the two countries. Besides the economic situation in the country, Algeria is also known for political unrest and various restrictions on free speech and human rights. According to the Freedom House, Algeria gets 32/100, with 10/40 in political rights and 22/60 on civil liberties. This classifies the country as not free. Allegations of election fraud, protests including mass arrests and other political instabilities cause for unrest in the country⁷¹. Approximately 23% of the population lives below the poverty line, which can be attributed to the level of corruption in the country. This causes for necessary fields, for example agriculture, to receive less money as the money goes to the government.

Tunisia



Located next to Morocco, Tunisia is an important country of transit but also of departure for migrants. In Tunisia, the increasing authoritarianism and the struggling economy are push factors leading to migration towards Europe. The country is defined as 'partly free' by the Freedom House, with an index of 56/100. This consists of 20/40 for political rights and 36/60 for civil liberties⁷². The economic struggle in the country comes with high inflation rates, rising up to 10,4% in February 2023. Furthermore, the unemployment rate for 15 to 24-year-olds has risen to 38,8% in October 2022⁷³. Calls for a loan by the IMF have been done by Italy,

which fears that Tunisia will be destabilized if they do not get \$1,9b. This worsen-

70. <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/algeria/#:-:text=The%20lack%20of%20employment%20opportunities,irregular%20migration%20to%20international%20destinations>

71. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/algeria/freedom-world/2022>

72. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tunisia/freedom-world/2023>

73. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/30/why-is-tunisia-leader-stoking-hatred-against-migrants-kais-saied>

ing economic situation in the country has led to rising migration rates from the country in the past years. Besides the economic situation, the political and social situation in Tunisia also gives cause for migration towards Europe. The country, under current president Saied, can be defined as an increasingly Authoritarian regime⁷⁴. Furthermore, xenophobia under the current regime is an issue leading to more migration. In a national security council address in February 2023, president Saied accused sub-Saharan African immigrants of fostering violence, crime and unacceptable practices. He stated that they are part of a plan to disrupt the demographic composition of Tunisia and alter the country's identity negatively. This caused for racist violence against black residents. Many neighboring governments started evacuating their citizens, but also, more migrants tried to make the travel towards Italy⁷⁵. The economic crisis, along with the rising authoritarianism and xenophobia (including racist violence) is leading to a rise in migration from Tunisia towards Europe⁷⁶. Because of these reasons, Tunisia has gone from both a transit country to a more important country of departure.

Libya



While recent reports show that Libya is not one of the biggest countries of origin for migrants, it is still an important country. Especially for transit, the country is a key area for migrants to reach Europe. Important to note is that while some migrants plan to stay in Libya, they eventually move to Europe as well. This makes it important to research the reasons for migrating towards Europe. Another reason why it is important to investigate the country is the recent floodings. In September 2023, the country suffered from heavy floods

74. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/13/tunisia-ticking-authoritarian-checklist>

75. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/tunisias-xenophobic-plans-backfire-on-its-fragile-economy>

76. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66222864#>

following the Mediterranean storm Daniel. The heavy rainfall and flooding resulted in large-scale destruction, with reports of 25% of cities disappearing. Local food chains are disrupted, infrastructure has been destroyed, leading to even more food shortages. This disaster will most likely result in more migration from Libya towards Europe⁷⁷. Other already existing reasons for people to migrate from Libya are both economical as well as political. In 2023, approximately one third of the Libyan population lives below the poverty line. Only 14% of children in Libya aged between 6 to 23 months receive the minimum diet as of 2019. 321,200 children are in need of primary and secondary health services⁷⁸. Libya has a history of political unrest, especially around the death of former leader Muammar al-Qaddafi in October 2011. The authority went to the General National Congress (GNC), which has faced multiple challenges the next years, including an attack by Islamist militants on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, and the spread of the IS along with other armed groups in the country. In late 2022, political conditions have improved, but tensions remain high as political negotiations have fractured and the current government has embarked on its own path. The country is defined as not free, with a Freedom House Index of 10/100. This entails a 1/40 for political rights and 9/60 for civil liberties⁷⁹. The history of political unrest in the country impacts the country and most likely has caused for migrants to move abroad⁸⁰. Libya is most important as a transit country, and its number of migrants towards Europe is not in the top 10. However, as an important country for the migratory process, it is important to know the situation in Libya.

77. <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disasters/2023-libya-floods/>

78. [https://borgenproject.org/child-poverty-in-libya/#:~:text=As%20of%202023%2C%20approximately%20one,Children's%20Rights%20Index%20\(RCRI\)](https://borgenproject.org/child-poverty-in-libya/#:~:text=As%20of%202023%2C%20approximately%20one,Children's%20Rights%20Index%20(RCRI))

79. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/libya/freedom-world/2023>

80. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-libya>

Egypt



From Egypt, as already discussed in the routes section, many men migrate towards Europe with the help of smugglers. The main push factors for migrants to leave Egypt are the security situation, economic situation, and the human rights situation in the country. In Egypt, violence has been present in the past years. The ‘war on terror’ has caused for many deaths and missing persons in the country. In Egypt, a Branche of the so-called Islamic State (IS/ISIS) is also present. Furthermore, the National Security Agency has been accused of extrajudicial executions, of

which some were on people that were no threat to the country. The Human Rights situation in the country is also a point of criticism. In 2021, 31 states declared ‘deep concern’ for the human rights situation in Egypt. They highlighted the ‘restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, the constrained space for civil society and political opposition, and the application of terrorism legislation against peaceful critics’. The Freedom House Index indicates this as well through its data, as Egypt has a 18/100 index. This consists of a 6/40 political rights and a 12/60 civil liberties index⁸¹. The government has used Emergency State Security Courts (whose decisions are not subject to appeal) to prosecute persons. Also, poor prison conditions in Egypt have been a subject of attention for some time⁸². Press freedom is low, and the country is in the top three of worldwide state executions. Often, the statements leading to the death penalty are obtained through torture. The economic situation in Egypt is also a big reason for migrants to leave the country. During the Ukraine/Russia war, the country has seen its ‘worst crisis in a century’. An increase in prices for consumers, sometimes of more than 30 per-

81. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-world/2023>

82. https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-08/2022_07_MDR_Egypt-Origin_EN.pdf.

cent, causes for the economic situation for citizens to deter. Furthermore, there is also water scarcity, due to increased water demand by the growing population and climate change and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The livelihoods of agricultural sector workers, who consume 80% of Egypt's water usage, are impacted significantly by the increase in water scarcity.

Sudan



Sudan has seen a history of conflict, ultimately leading to increased migration from the country towards Europe. In 2023, conflict broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in Khartoum. As mentioned briefly earlier, this has caused for the area to be an area of departure for migrants. This has caused for more than 3 million people to be displaced, of which approximately 600,000 externally. While many cross borders to neighbouring countries, a large group also takes the travel upwards towards Eu-

rope. Even before the violence erupted, the country has been one of the biggest refugee-producing countries in the world. While also being a host country in the past, the country also functions as an important country of transit, as mentioned earlier⁸³. The Khartoum process was held in Sudan and was implemented with means of border externalization (including the countries of departure in the process of lowering migration numbers. Later on, more information on this process will be provided. The country knows political instability, also connected to a 2021 military takeover. The economic situation in the country is also poor, and food insecurity is rising⁸⁴. The military and paramilitary elite have struggled to maintain

83. <https://merip.org/2023/07/at-any-cost-the-war-in-sudan-and-europes-flawed-migration-policies/>

84. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/files/2023-06/EHGL%20Sudan.pdf>

order, as the economic situation and hunger crisis worsened⁸⁵. The country already faced unprecedented humanitarian needs, and the migratory flow has worsened this situation. In addition to this, the annual rain season gives cause for worsening food security and safety for migrants, as floodings occur within the season worsening the food insecurity⁸⁶. The multitude of insecurities in Sudan and South-Sudan causes for many to leave the country. The country is low in political and civil freedom, and gets a 10/100 index by the Freedom House. This makes the country not free, with a 0/40 for political rights and 10/60 for civil liberties⁸⁷.

Guinea



Ofentimes, Guinean migrants migrate towards Spain using the western Mediterranean and African migration routes. In Guinea, a military coupe on the 5th of September 2021 has caused for the political situation to be instable ever since. The coup came after a period of political instability following a constitutional referendum in march 2020, which allowed the president Condé to run for a third term of presidency. During this time, heavy force was used during opposition-led demonstrations (<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/guinea>). This situation of political instability

has caused for a rise of migration, along with economic, social and health crises⁸⁸. With a Freedom House score of 30/100, along with a 7/40 for political rights and

85. <https://acleddata.com/10-conflicts-to-worry-about-in-2022/sudan/mid-year-update/>

86. <https://www.wfp.org/news/fleeing-danger-finding-despair-hunger-emergency-looms-south-sudanese-fleeing-conflict-sudan>

87. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sudan/freedom-world/2023>

88. <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-welcomes-guineas-first-ever-migration-governance-framework#:~:text=Within%20the%20country%2C%20various%20factors,largely%20contributed%20to%20the%20migration>

23/60 for civil liberties, the country scores low on political and civil freedom and stability⁸⁹. Mostly, Guinean migrants travel towards Europe due to economic reasons, mostly poverty and economic insecurity. In Guinea, more than 44% of the population lives in poverty, and the countries' situation in the context of infrastructure in some sectors is insufficient for economic prosperity (<https://www.coface.com/Economic-Studies-and-Country-Risks/Guinea>). With a structural weakness in agriculture and a difficult business environment, migrants from Guinea migrate in search of a better life abroad.⁹⁰

Cote d'Ivoire



The country has known great political instability in the period from 2002-2020. This was due to the splitting of the country in two, which led to violence in the country. The country is still recovering from violence in and around 2011. The 2020 presidential election has also led the country into a period of post-election violence, leading to more (internal and external) displacement in the country. Cote d'Ivoire receives a 49/100 Freedom House index, with a 19/40 for political rights and a 30/60 for civil liberties⁹¹. The country is known for being one of Africa's leading producers of different cash crops, and an

economy which is often said to have growing potential⁹². However, the country also sees many citizens emigrating towards other (neighboring) countries, and towards Europe. In the past (before 2015), many migrants went to countries next to Cote d'Ivoire, but nowadays, these countries have an even worse economic situation,

89. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/guinea/freedom-world/2023>

90. <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/door-tunisia-wide-open-west-africans-and-eu-fails-act>

91. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cote-divoire/freedom-world/2023>

92. <https://migrants-refugees.va.it/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/11/2021-CP-Ivory-Coast.pdf>

leading for no positive pull factors in these countries anymore. This causes many citizens to travel towards Europe, mainly to France⁹³. As Cote d'Ivoire is an ECOWAS country, there is visa free movement towards Tunisia. It makes travelling towards Europe easier and a more logical choice. Many migrants, like many other countries in Africa, migrate towards Europe in search of the so-called 'better life'. This includes many young migrants, and also a high number of children who migrate north⁹⁴. The minimum salary in Cote d'Ivoire is low, and even if people earn money for a living, they are often still relatively poor. They are in search of more wealth, and they see Europe as the place in which to achieve this wealth⁹⁵.

Nigeria



Nigeria is also an important country of departure for migrants towards Europe. In 2019, the number of migrants from Nigeria has increased from 450,000 to 1.4 million⁹⁶. In Nigeria, the insecurity, unemployment and corruption are high. More Nigerians are moving towards Europe and North America because of this. Insecurity is meant in the context of kidnappings, terrorism, banditry, killings, cult violence and armed robberies. This impacts the socioeconomic state of the country negatively. Organizations like Boko Haram and ISWAP are active in the country, killing and kidnapping hundreds of Nigeri-

93. <https://migration-control.info/en/wiki/ivory-coast/>

94. <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/48784/why-are-so-many-migrants-arriving-on-italys-shores>

95. <https://decorrespondent.nl/9598/waarom-verlaten-ivorianen-hun-land-en-nog-vier-van-jullie-vragen-aan-de-hoogste-migratieambtenaar-van-ivoorkust/af498b10-9bof-04eo-1cof-792ead204327#:~:text=Uit%20onderzoek%20blijkt%20dat%2085,per%20se%20een%20leefbaar%20loon>

96. <https://visitworld.today/blog/1534/migration-from-nigeria-to-europe-what-motivates-nigerians-to-immigrate#:~:text=How%20many%20people%20move%20from,the%20total%20population%20is%200.7%25>

ans⁹⁷. The country has a Freedom House Index of 43/100, with a 20/40 for political rights and 23/60 for civil liberties⁹⁸. In the context of economics, the country has seen inflation reaching to a 17-year high of 25,8% in August 2023, causing for millions of Nigerians to live in poverty. While economic development is expected due to a change in administration in may 2023, it will take time for the country and its economy to develop to a more positive point⁹⁹. Unemployment, including high levels of youth unemployment, is a problem In the country, and the cost of living is relatively high¹⁰⁰.

Other African countries

While not in the top 10 countries from which immigrants flow towards Europe, multiple sub-Saharan countries still account for a big part of the migrant flow. These countries include Niger, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, and Somalia. Reasons for migrants to leave these countries and travel to Europe are somewhat identical, as there is often a common pattern to be seen. For this reason, this paragraph will highlight the important reasons for people to leave these countries. The most important reason for migrants is, as seen in most of the countries of departure, the search for a 'better life'. Better economic opportunities is often the biggest pull factor of Europe for African migrants¹⁰¹. As these states often are economically unstable, this drives people to migrate. Furthermore, political situations in countries are drivers of migration, as failed states and corruption are often occurring¹⁰².

The Freedom House Index for these countries range from very low to relatively high Indexes, with Eritrea and Somalia both being below 10¹⁰³¹⁰⁴, Mali and Burki-

97. <https://punchng.com/arresting-nigerias-escalating-insecurity/>

98. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/nigeria/freedom-world/2023>

99. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/overview#:~:text=Economic%20Overview&text=Weakened%20economic%20fundamentals%20led%20the,millions%20of%20Nigerians%20in%20poverty>

100. <https://visitworld.today/blog/1534/migration-from-nigeria-to-europe-what-motivates-nigerians-to-immigrate#:~:text=The%20situation%20was%20also%20exacerbated,attributed%20to%20the%20main%20factors>

101. <https://www.intechopen.com/online-first/85713#:~:text=While%20it%20is%20true%2C%20a,and%20that%20of%20their%20kin>

102. <https://www.intechopen.com/online-first/85713#:~:text=While%20it%20is%20true%2C%20a,and%20that%20of%20their%20kin>

103. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/eritrea/freedom-world/2023>

104. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/somalia/freedom-world/2023>

na Faso both around 30¹⁰⁵¹⁰⁶, and Niger and Senegal around 60¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the governance dividend for countries in sub-Saharan Africa is two to three times larger than for the average country in the rest of the world¹⁰⁹. The fragility of the African states, along with high levels of poverty (35% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa lived in extreme poverty in 2019) are also drivers of migration towards Europe¹¹⁰. Another interesting reason for migration are natural disasters. While not the most important factor, disaster displacement is high in Africa, and this causes for migration both in Africa as well as towards Europe¹¹¹. In the past as well as the present, many Africans migrate of have migrated due to droughts¹¹².

Next, African countries often suffer from terrorism and terrorist groups. Groups like Boko Haram, ISIS, and several others often roam African countries, causing for low safety for citizens¹¹³. Violence due to extremism has been causing complex security and humanitarian crises in Africa for some time. The expansion of violent extremism is attributed to persistently weak governance, including corruption, democratic backsliding, legitimacy deficits and human rights violations. Lastly, natural crises also often cause for people to leave their countries. African countries often experience natural disasters. One example of this is drought, which is present in many African countries. Furthermore, floods and also potential landslides can have destructive effect¹¹⁴. These reasons are already causing many to migrate, and this might occur more and more in the future.

The middle East and Asia

While not from Africa itself, many migrants towards Europe come from the Middle

105. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mali/freedom-world/2023>

106. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/burkina-faso/freedom-world/2023>

107. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/niger/freedom-world/2023>

108. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/senegal/freedom-world/2023>

109. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2019/09/tackling-corruption-in-sub-saharan-africa-sobrinho>

110. <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/fragility-and-poverty-in-sub-saharan-africa-two-sides-of-the-same-coin-137354#:~:text=In%202019%2C%2035%20percent%20of,East%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific>

111. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/environment-disasters-and-climate-change/climate-change-and>

112. <https://books.openedition.org/irdeditions/12370>

113. https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/north_and_west_africa.html

114. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1271188/biggest-climate-disasters-in-africa-by-human-loss/>

East and Asia, especially in the last few years. For this reason, it is important to also take these countries into account when examining the migrant flows towards Europe, especially as some of them do take the African routes.

Pakistan



In recent years, Pakistan has been a country with one of the biggest flows of migrants towards Europe. Interestingly, many Pakistanis take the Central Mediterranean route towards Europe, flowing into the East and Horn of Africa route towards Libya or Tunisia. In a recent shipwreck incident, a fishing vessel transporting up to 750 people sank off the Greek coast, after drifting off from the path towards Italy. Interestingly, half of the people on board were Pakistanis. Research done through interviews with Pakistanis identified a variety of push factors due to which migrants leave Pakistan.

The most common is violence, insecurity and conflict, followed by the lack of rights and freedom and economic reasons¹¹⁵. Pakistan faces internal as well as external conflict. Internally, extremism and intolerance of diversity and dissent are reportedly growing. The resurgence of extremist groups along the border with Taliban-led Afghanistan has raised tensions between the two countries¹¹⁶. Economically, Pakistan is going through an economic crisis, leading to high levels of inflation. Furthermore, unemployment levels are high and rising, and there is a presence of a coercive and unstable political climate¹¹⁷. As a result of this, many Pakistani head abroad to look for a better future, as they often have hopeless prospects¹¹⁸. Politically, extremism is very dominant in the country. The most prominent extremist

115. <https://mixedmigration.org/articles/pakistani-nationals-on-the-move-to-europe/#> .

116. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/01/current-situation-pakistan>.

117. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1762004>

118. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/21/hopelessness-why-pakistanis-are-leaving-losing-lives-at-sea#:~:text=Pakistan%20is%20mired%20in%20an,abroad%20for%20a%20better%20future>

movement nowadays is the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The main objectives of the TTP have included fighting Pakistan's security forces, resisting western forces in Afghanistan, and implementing Sharia law in the areas they control¹¹⁹. The Freedom House gives the country an index of 37/100, illustrating that the country is 'partly free'. This entails a political rights score of 15/40 for political rights and a 22/60 for civil liberties¹²⁰. The military is often found to be providing support to different militant proxy groups that collaborate with the TTP. Attacks claimed by the Islamic State have raised concerns over its growing presence and influence in Pakistan. In Pakistan, the blasphemy law has been cause of violence against citizens. The law, in summary, says that any blasphemy against the Islam, will be punished with death or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine. The law has led to attacks on churches and other perceived enemies of the law and insecure situations in the country. Interestingly, many Pakistanis take the Central Mediterranean Route towards Europe. Reportedly, many countries in the area, including Pakistan, have deployed stricter border control policies, leading to the switch in route for migrants. They now often try to reach Libya or Tunisia and then move to Europe via boats.

Syria



For some years now, Europe has also seen many Syrian refugees entering the continent. The main push factor is the civil war in Syria, which has been going on for 12 years, has killed more than 350,000 people and has caused the displacement of half the Syrian population¹²¹. The conflict includes many actors and started in 2011 with peaceful protest. These led to brutal conflict as government and opposition forces clashed¹²². The war has led to unemployment, lack of food,

119. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/islamist-militancy-pakistan>

120. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2023>

121. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9381/>

122. https://shelterbox.org/news/blog-articles/7-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-syrian-conflict/?_gl=1%2Ah4wjam%2A_ga%2AMjY1NDQ4Ni4xNjk3MDE2Njk1%2A_ga_C73VTN624G%2AMTY5N-

lack of access to clean water, and thus forced migration¹²³. Violence is high in the country, and killings, kidnappings and sexual violence occur in the country. The country gets a 1/100 score on the Freedom Houses' index, with a -3/40 for political rights and 4/60 for civil liberties. As the intermittent fighting among a multitude of actors continues and violent attacks persists, the ratings are very low¹²⁴. Persecution persists in the country as well, because of the Assad regime and Iranian proxies. Freedom of speech is low, political opposition is prohibited and assembly is suppressed. There is corruption, enforced disappearances, military trials, and torture in government-controlled areas.

The exception to all these categories being the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria which is however threatened by Turkish aggression. The Turkish aggression against North-East Syria has the potential to create millions of more migrants and refugees coming out of Syria as well as a resurgence of ISIS. Many Syrian refugees do not take the African routes but travel upwards to and through Turkey.

Afghanistan



Over the years, Europe has also seen an influx of migrants from Afghanistan. Likewise, as in Syria, Afghanistan migrants often take the route through Turkey instead of Africa. However, the number of migrants is significant, thus it is important to examine the countries' push factors. With a 10/100 on the freedom index, it can be classified as 'not free'. Its index has decreased

zAxNjY5NS4xLjEuMTY5NzAxNjY5NS4wLjAuMA

123. <https://www.internetgeography.net/igcse-geography/population-and-settlement-igcse-geography/international-migration-from-syria-to-europe/#:~:text=Unemployment%20due%20to%20war,-Forced%20migration%20due%20to%20war>

124. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2023>

from 27/100 last year. In Afghanistan, the elected government has been undermined by an insurgency by the Taliban. Furthermore, there is violence, corruption, and flawed electoral processes. Since the overthrowing of the elected government, the living situation in the country has deterred, especially for women and minorities¹²⁵. The country has suffered conflict, natural disasters, chronic poverty, and food insecurity for over 40 years¹²⁶. The takeover of the Taliban has intensified the instability and violence. For children, the situation in Afghanistan is insecure. Reportedly, armed groups can show up at any time and demand for the children to become a soldier. When refusing, the children can be at risk to be killed¹²⁷. Afghan citizens often have little hope for the future. The COVID-19 pandemic has also worsened the situation, as lockdowns and inflation contributed to increased levels of poverty. Many businesses had to close, as many employers and employees were forced to migrate abroad due to impact of sanctions and rising inflation. Many women remained behind, and had to live with movement, work, and education restrictions under the Taliban¹²⁸. Besides the safety and socio-economic concerns, natural disasters have harmed the country as well. A heavy earthquake in October 2023 has caused for more than 2000 to be killed and/or injured. This is not rare, as Afghanistan often experiences earthquakes. In 2022, another earthquake has also caused for the loss of more than 1,000 lives, leaving tens of thousands homeless¹²⁹. The recent earthquake can give cause for an expected rise in migration from Afghanistan.

125. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/afghanistan/freedom-world/2022>

126. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/#:~:text=In%20June%202022%2C%20the%20worst,natural%20disasters%20and%20deepening%20poverty>

127. <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/refugee-children-crisis/afghanistan-refugee-stories>

128. <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/blog/afghan-women-migration-and-their-future>

129. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-67039463>

Bangladesh



On the Central Mediterranean route, many Bangladeshi migrants have also been identified along the other migrants. They often travel to Libya or Tunisia, up to Italy. The main push factors of Bangladesh are instability and economic depression, poverty, lack of employment opportunities, struggle of livelihood, lack of industrialization, and forces grabbing of landed property from minority groups¹³⁰. The country has a freedom index of 40/100,

making the country partly free. This contains a 15/40 index for political rights and a 25/60 index on civil liberties. The electoral processes in the country are often not free and fair, and there is a relatively low freedom of political and social rights in the country¹³¹. Increasingly, climate change has also played an increasing role in the reasons for migration. Bangladesh is among the countries most affected by natural disasters and climate change, as climate displacement was estimated at 345,000 in 2020. This often was caused by floods and inundations. The countryside is reportedly drying up, along with rising sea levels, saline intrusion, and erosion. These factors are also forcing rural populations to seek new livelihood opportunities in the cities. This increases population density and thus also the impact of natural disasters. Due to the Himalayas' silt being eroded and carried towards the sea by rivers, the coastline structure is changed, leading to more (potential) floods. In Bangladesh, violence between village groups and religious communities is also an issue. Ethnic and religious groups are diverse, and they often clash. Besides these factors, the economic factors are still the most important reason for people to leave Bangladesh. There are an estimated 1.5 million children under the age of 14 being homeless. Many of them are abandoned, have fled disasters, extreme poverty or family crises. The combination of natural disasters, poverty, and clashes between ethnic groups cause for many to leave Bangladesh¹³².

130. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ848371#::~:~:text=The%2oeconomic%2opush%2ofactors%2othat,lack%2of%2oindustrialization%2oin%2oBangladesh>

131. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bangladesh/freedom-world/2023>

132. [https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/bangladesh/#::~:~:text=The%2ocauses%2oof%2omi-gration%2oare,a%2ocommunity%2oabroad%2o\(25%25\)](https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/bangladesh/#::~:~:text=The%2ocauses%2oof%2omi-gration%2oare,a%2ocommunity%2oabroad%2o(25%25))

Conclusion

At the end of this essay, the migratory routes of African migrants have been analyzed. The three questions of *how* the migrants travel, *who* they are and *why* they travel have been analyzed using a multitude of sources.

The migration debate in Europe often begins and ends around the Mediterranean. Questions related to the 'how' are not in focus and the 'why' is hardly debated in connection to migration. There are references to the 'why' of migration but hardly any further reflection.

There is also a serious disconnect in the debate. The moment that migrants arrive in Europe is the focus of the political debate. The 'how' (routes) is the focus of a number of organizations who dedicate time and resources to mapping these routes and the circumstances of the people concerned. The 'who' and 'why' are the focus of organizations and institutions that are dedicated to the development of the countries concerned. Popularly spoken, we see three 'bubbles' that are not connecting with one another. A typical example of that reality is that in the research undertaken for this publication, a similar overview that this publication offers, has not been found.

As a result there is no integrated debate in which the moment of arrival in Europe is connected to the 'how', 'who' and 'why'.

As a consequence the EU is moving on from the one short-term solution to the other. The effect is that stringing short-term solutions has become the long-term policy. The short-term policy of stopping the migrants at the Mediterranean Sea or in Africa or Turkey, which had been adapted a decade ago, has turned into nowadays' long-term policy. This policy has proved itself as falling short, as the migratory flows still exist and many still migrate towards Europe through irregular means. Popularly spoken; none of these measures has really worked as intended.

The EU needs to reflect on two realities. The first is that it is not possible to 'stop everyone from coming'. The second is that it is not possible to 'welcome everyone in Europe' as we simply lack the capacity to do that. Moreover, Africa and the Middle East need many of the people leaving to Europe to stay in their home countries in order to enable development.

The discussion, as shown in this essay, can not be restricted to the Mediterranean area, as the problems causing the migration start in the origin countries in Africa and the Middle East. To tackle the migration problem, it is of high importance to tackle the issues in these countries as to stop the migration at the source.

It is important that the government focusses on what is needed in these countries, and to adapt policies that support the solving of the countries' problems. A country-specific policy needs to be adapted, as many countries have different situations and problems, which will help the countries develop. The foreign and economic policy needs to be adapted to the tackling of the problems causing mass migration towards Europe, and the policy needs to be adapted to the specific countries of origin. A foreign policy that no longer supports extremism and extremist actors is necessary. An economic and foreign policy is needed, which not only focusses on the maximalization of profit and the increasing of export. The improvement of the situation in countries of origin cannot be left to the institutions and organizations that focus on aid and development. It has to become a principle of both economic and foreign policy.

A serious focus on improving the conditions of living in the countries of origin will help migrants, their families and the EU.

This publication offers a concise overview of the migration routes through Africa towards Europe. It also lists the main countries of origin. By using three guiding questions it describes the 'who', 'why' and 'how' of migration from Africa to the EU. This publication aims to support a migration debate that includes the whole picture.

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CONTACT

Sallux | ECPM Foundation

Bergstraat 33

3811 NG Amersfoort

The Netherlands

☎ +31 33 3040012

✉ info@sallux.eu

🐦 @Sallux_Official

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