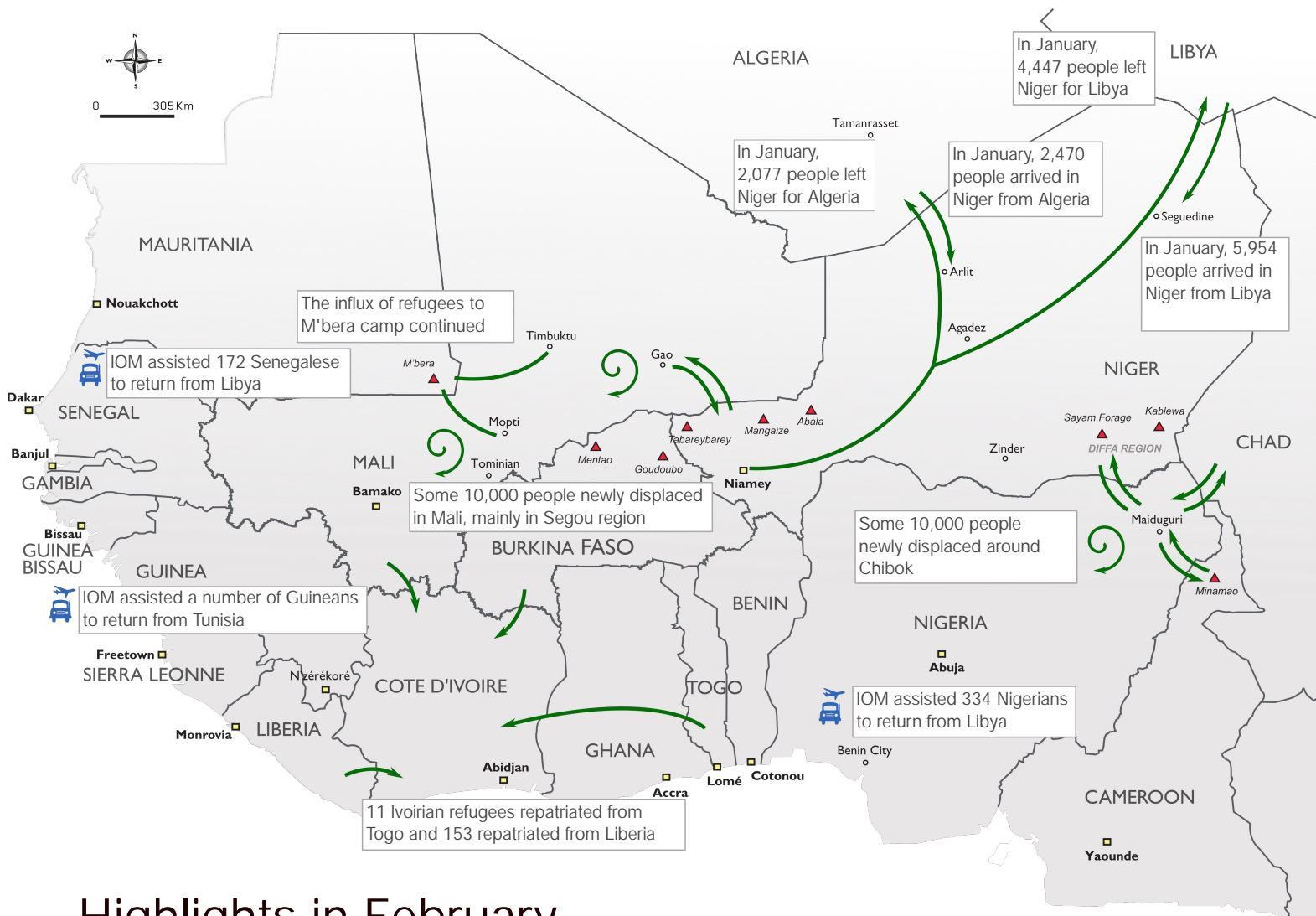


# West Africa Monthly Mixed Migration Summary

Covering mixed migration events, incidents, trends and data for the West Africa region.  
Please visit our [website](#) or sign up to the mailing list [here](#)



## Highlights in February

- Nigerian migrants living in South Africa raised concerns about anti-immigrant violence after local protesters looted and torched shops and businesses belonging to immigrants in Johannesburg and Pretoria and violence broke out at a protest against immigrants in Pretoria, resulting in police intervention. The Nigerian government called upon the South African government to act against anti-immigrant sentiment.
- The number of IDPs in Mali increased by 26% in February, with over 10,000 people newly displaced by violence, mainly in the region of Segou.
- The heads of 28 European States signed the Malta Declaration on external aspects of migration, re-affirming their determination to reduce migratory movements along the central Mediterranean route. UNHCR has pointed out that the Declaration does not acknowledge the mixed nature of movements along the route and has called for a differentiated response for those in need of international protection.
- In January, 97% of children arriving in Italy by sea were unaccompanied. Unaccompanied children accounted for 39% of Gambian nationals arriving in Italy by Sea in January. Unaccompanied children were most often from Cote d'Ivoire (215), Gambia (142), and Guinea (134).

## Burkina Faso

---

**Border closure in the north of Burkina Faso:** On 27 February, two coordinated [attacks](#) on Police stations took place in northern Burkina Faso near the border with Mali. In response, the [government](#) implemented a ban on night traffic on the border with Mali. Between 17.00 and 06.00 hours, only ambulances with passes are able to travel, with restrictions also applying to the towns and villages along the border.

**Refugees in Burkina Faso:** As of 28 February, there were [32,498 refugees](#) in Burkina Faso. The majority of refugees (55%) are [children](#) under the age of 18, mostly between the ages of 5-11 years old, and 51% are female. The majority are located in Mentao (12,374) and Goudebo (9,947).

## Cote d'Ivoire

---

**Arrivals of Ivoirians in Europe:** In January and February 2017, [1,645 migrants and refugees](#) from Cote d'Ivoire arrived in Italy by sea via the central Mediterranean route, including 320 unaccompanied children. [UNHCR reported](#) that the percentage of unaccompanied children among Ivorian arrivals in Italy is increasing.

**Humanitarian Repatriation:** On 3 March 2017, [IOM assisted](#) a number of migrants from Cote d'Ivoire to return home from Tunisia. The Ivoirians, along with migrants from Senegal, Guinea and Chad had crossed into Tunisia from Libya by foot in mid-February, fleeing insecurity.

**Refugees in Neighboring Countries:** As of 28 February, there were [17,358 Ivorian refugees](#) in Liberia, representing a decline of 799 since 31 December 2016. According to the latest available [information](#), as of 31 December, there were 6,453 Ivorian refugees in Ghana, 4,577 in Guinea and 2,529 in Togo.

**Voluntary Repatriation:** On 15 February, the government of Cote d'Ivoire and UNHCR organised the repatriation of [11 Ivorian refugees](#) from Togo and on 16 February a further [153 Ivorian refugees](#) from Liberia. From December 2015 to 15 January 2017, [UNHCR](#) facilitated the return of [19,150 Ivorian refugees](#), the majority from Liberia.

## Guinea

---

**Context:** In February, Guinea witnessed the highest levels of [political violence](#) since the presidential elections in 2015, including a nationwide strike that descended into violence and left 8 people dead and infrastructure destroyed.

**Arrivals of Guineans in Europe:** In January and February 2017, [2,092 Guineans](#) arrived in Italy by way of the central Mediterranean route, including 359 unaccompanied children. This represents a significant increase from the 763 Guineans who arrived in the first two months of 2016 and the 179 who arrived during the same time in 2015.

**Refugees in Guinea:** As of 31 December, there were [4,577 Ivorian refugees](#) in Guinea.

---

## Liberia

---

**Refugees in Liberia:** As of 28 February, there were [17,358 Ivorian refugees](#) in Liberia, almost 800 less than were recorded in December 2016. The repatriation of Ivorian refugees from Liberia is ongoing, and it is expected that by June 2017 the population will be reduced to between 7,000-12,000.

## Mali

---

**Context:** On 23 February, Malian soldiers staged their first [joint patrol](#) in the city of Gao. The patrol included [hundreds of soldiers](#) from Mali's army, France's military operation, the UN peacekeeping mission, the Tuareg separatist Coordination of Azawad Movements and pro-government militias. The [joint patrol](#) is a long awaited step in the implementation of the peace deal brokered in 2015.

At the end of February, the [government stated](#) that it had reached an agreement with armed groups in northern Mali to return interim authorities to Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu in early March. The authorities will remain in place until the planned regional elections.

**Malian Arrivals in Europe:** In January and February 2017, [645 Malians](#) arrived in Italy by sea via the central Mediterranean route, including 74 unaccompanied children. This represents a slight decrease when compared with January and February 2016, when 793 Malians arrived in Italy by sea.

**Migrants rescued from shipping container:** In February 2017, [56 Malians](#) were rescued after having been locked inside a shipping container for several days while it was transported to a coastal town in Libya. Rescuers also found the bodies of 13 migrants who had suffocated during the journey in the container, including those of two children.

**Number of UN personnel killed in Mali in 2016:** Underscoring the difficult environment for humanitarian personnel working in Mali, in 2016, the [UN recorded](#) the highest loss of life of UN personnel in Mali for the third year in a row. In 2016, 23 UN personnel were killed in Mali in ambushes, by improvised explosive devices, or when their vehicles hit landmines.

**Refugees in Mali:** According to the latest available information, as of 31 December, there were [17,512 refugees](#) in Mali, the majority, 15,298, from Mauritania.

**Malian Refugees in Neighbouring Countries:** As of 28 February, there were 141,450 Malian refugees hosted in countries neighbouring Mali, including [60,154](#) Malian refugees in Niger, [48,798](#) in Mauritania and [32,498](#) in Burkina Faso.

The arrivals of [Malian refugees](#) into the Mbera camp in Mauritania continued during February, but at a slower rate than observed during December and January. The Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR Tripartite Commission met in February to adopt a joint action plan and a framework for the return of Malian refugees from Mauritania. However, due to ongoing insecurity in Mali, no returns of Malian refugees were facilitated in February and a large-scale return is not anticipated in the near future.

In February, UNHCR facilitated the resettlement of a Syrian family from Mauritania, the fifth Syrian family to be resettled so far in 2017.

**Internal Displacement:** The [Malian National Directorate of Social Development](#) (DNDS) estimates that the number of IDPs in Mali increased by 26% in February. The DNDS

---

recorded an estimated [10,116](#) newly internally displaced persons in February, including 6,455 people fleeing their homes between 22 and 28 February. These newest displacements are due to a deterioration of the security situation in the Circle of Macina and surrounding areas in the region of Segou.

Additionally in February, three days of [violent clashes](#) between the communities of Bambara and Pele in central Mali left some 20 people dead and an estimated 600 people displaced

The displacement situation within Mali is fluid, with [new displacements](#) occurring alongside IDPs returning home. Thus, while overall numbers of IDPs recorded by DNDS declined by 1,337 between September 2016 and January 2017, 14,117 people were newly displaced during this period following looting, various forms of violence and inter-community tension.

As of 28 February, DNDS estimated that there were [44,762 IDPs in Mali](#), an increase from the 35,353 IDPs recorded in January, and the 36,690 recorded in October 2016. The majority of IDPs are located in the regions of Segou (10,794), Menaka (10,381) and Timbuktu (9,109). As of 31 January, women made up 57% of IDPs in Mali and 53% of IDPs are under the age of 18.

## Niger

---

**Context:** On 23 February, [militants ambushed](#) an army patrol in Niger in an area near the Malian border, killing 15 soldiers and wounding 19. In response, [France announced](#) it was preparing to send a detachment of troops to support the Nigerien forces in the border area from Operation Barkhane, the French counterterror operation in the Sahel region. The [Government of Niger](#) declared a state of emergency in seven departments in Western Tillabery and Tahoua regions bordering Mali.

**Departures from Niger:** In January 2017, IOM recorded [6,524 people](#) travelling from Niger to North Africa, with Nigeriens representing 89% of those leaving Niger. This is largely consistent with the 4,084 migrants and refugees recorded traveling to North Africa during February 2016.

In Séguédine, the main transit point for those traveling to Libya, IOM recorded 4,447 refugees and migrants in January, a decrease from the 9,454 recording in December.

In Arlit, the main transit point for those traveling to Algeria, IOM recorded 2,077 refugees and migrants in January, a decrease from the 3,469 recorded in December.

**Arrivals in Niger:** In January 2017, for the first time since data collection began, IOM recorded more migrants and refugees arriving in than leaving Niger. In January, IOM recorded [8,424 migrants and refugees](#) arriving in Niger from North Africa, with 5,954 arriving arriving via Séguédine from Libya and 2,470 arriving via Arlit from Algeria. 72% of the incoming migrants and refugees were Nigerien.

**Mixed Migration Routes through Niger:** In February, as part of the Missing Migrants Project, IOM published a series of [infographic maps](#) detailing mixed migration routes to Europe from West Africa, including a snapshot of the routes [through Niger](#).

**Refugees in Niger:** According to the latest [available information](#), as 31 December, there were [60,154 Malian refugees](#) and 105,491 Nigerian refugees in Niger.

---

UNOCHA reported in February that between December 2016 and January 2017, some [400 people](#) crossed the border into Mali from Niger.

**Food security in Niger:** According to [UNFAO and WFP](#), the pastoral situation in Niger will require special attention in 2017. Niger has recorded a forage production deficit representing 48% of needs, with a particular deficit in regions of Diffa, Tahoua, Tillabery and Zinder. This is in contrast with other countries in the region, where WFP reports that pastures are well supplied and the livestock food situation is acceptable. The food security situation is an important context to movements within and out of Niger, as people/households may attempt to diversify income sources in times of environmental stress.

**Forced Displacement in Diffa Region:** In 2016, the number of attacks in the [Diffa region](#) of Niger (76) remained largely consistent with the number recorded in 2015 (80), indicating a continuation of insecurity in the region. According to UNOCHA, between February 2015 and February 2017, around [455 people](#) were killed, injured or abducted in the Diffa region, with 70% of incidents occurring in the department of Bosso. The ongoing insecurity continues to [disrupt markets](#) and livelihoods and contributes to food insecurity in the region.

According to the latest [available figures](#), as of 28 February, there were 242,541 displaced persons in the Diffa region, with 106,162 Nigerian refugees, 15,423 Nigerian returnees (i.e. people returned to the Diffa region from Nigeria) and 120,956 IDPs.

## Nigeria

---

**Arrivals of Nigerians in Europe:** In January and February 2017, [1,687 Nigerians](#) arrived in Italy by sea, a slight increase from the 1,618 who arrived during the same period in 2016. In 2016, 37,551 Nigerians arrived in Italy by sea, accounting for some 22% of total arrivals in Italy by sea.

**Violence against Nigerian migrants in South Africa:** In February, Nigerian migrants living in South Africa [raised concerns](#) about anti-immigrant violence after local protesters looted and torched shops and businesses belonging to Nigerian immigrants in Johannesburg and Pretoria and [violence broke out](#) at a protest against immigrants in Pretoria, resulting in [police intervention](#). The [Nigerian government](#) has called upon South Africa to act against what it referred to a 'xenophobic attacks'.

**Humanitarian repatriation:** On 14 February, IOM assisted [162 migrants](#) to return home to Nigeria from Libya, including 101 women, 43 men and 18 children. On 21 February, IOM assisted a further [172 migrants](#) to return home from Libya, including 110 women, 49 men, seven children and six infants.

**Refugees in Neighbouring Countries:** As of 28 February, there were [8,596 Nigerian](#) refugees in Chad, 85,298 in Cameroon and 106,162 in Niger.

Between 1 and 15 February, more than [10,000 displaced people](#) and refugees returned to the Damasak local government area in Borno state, the majority of them (70%) returning from Niger.

**Protection in Northeast Nigeria:** In February, ACAPS published a [thematic report](#) on protection needs in Northeast Nigeria, reporting that the number of people with protection needs has grown from 2.6 million in 2015, to 6.7 million in 2017 as areas once controlled by Boko Haram have become accessible. Women and children, who make up 55% of the

---



displaced population, are the most critically effected. Protection needs result from ongoing chronic insecurity, as well as violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

**Tripartite Return Agreement:** On 2 March, the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon and UNHCR signed a [tripartite agreement](#) for the voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees in Cameroon. The agreement outlines the conditions for repatriation, including the provision of clear information on the security and livelihood situation prevailing in areas of return to those who wish to return.

**Internal Displacement:** In February 2017, some [7,000 people](#) fled villages around the northeast Nigerian town of Chibok due to renewed Boko Haram attacks. Between 25 February and 5 March an additional [4,500 people](#) fled to take shelter in Chibok.

In February, according to IOM, the number of IDPs in the six Northeastern states of Nigeria was [1,899,830](#), with 79% of the total IDP population located in Borno state (1,506,170). In four out of the six northeastern states IOM recorded a downward trend in IDP numbers in February compared with December, as security improved in areas of origin and the price of rent increased sharply in host areas. In Borno state, however, IOM recorded an additional [135,290 IDPs](#) in February as compared with December, as IOM was able to access two new areas within the State and displaced persons moved from their locations of displacement to safer places in towns and cities.

The number of IDPs living in Maiduguri, the Local Government Area hosting the largest number of IDPs in Borno state, has dropped by 28,263 since December, as displaced people returned to their villages. [According to UNOCHA](#), as of 20 February, only 101,387 IDPs remain in camps in Maiduguri, with many IDPs having returned to their place of origin, and a large number of the remaining living with host communities.

**IDP Vulnerability:** On 16 February, Boko Haram assailants launched a [major attack](#) on a site that hosts more than 9,000 IDPs and an area that serves as an assembly point for aid convoys in Maiduguri. Security agents repelled the attack; however the number of casualties is unknown.

## Senegal

---

**Arrivals of Senegalese in Europe:** In January and February 2017, [1,215 migrants and refugees](#) from Senegal arrived in Italy by sea via the central Mediterranean route, largely consistent with the 1,168 who arrived in January 2016. In January and February 2017, arrivals included 168 unaccompanied children.

**Humanitarian Repatriation:** On 16 February, IOM assisted [172 migrants](#), including 171 men and one woman to return to Senegal from Libya.

---

## Other Regional Information

---

**Oslo Humanitarian Conference in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region:** Hosted in Oslo by the governments of Norway, Nigeria and Germany, [the conference](#) brought together 170 representatives from 40 countries as well as UN, regional and local organisations and [aimed](#) to draw political and public attention to the humanitarian crisis in Northeast Nigeria. Participants committed to urgently strengthen the principled humanitarian response to the crisis in Northeastern Nigeria and pledged over USD 672 million. The conference also saw the launch of the [Nigeria Humanitarian Fund](#), which aims to provide an opportunity for governments and donors to pool their contributions to a Fund managed in-country.

**Joint Communication on Migration on the Central Mediterranean route:** On 25 January, the EU released a [Joint Communication](#) focused on managing migration on the central Mediterranean route. The communication outlines key actions to decrease the numbers of people arriving in Europe via the central Mediterranean route and to prevent people from drowning at sea in the Mediterranean. [Key actions](#) include increasing funding and training for Libyan Coast Guard, stepping up operational action against smuggling and trafficking networks; including through the launch of the Seahorse Mediterranean Network, working towards the protection of migrants in Libya, stepping up voluntary returns and enhancing the ability of Libyan authorities to manage movements of people through Libya's southern border.

**Malta Declaration addressing the Central Mediterranean route:** On 3 February 2017, 28 EU heads of state or government adopted the [Malta Declaration](#) on external aspects of migration after an informal meeting in Valletta, Malta. The declaration re-affirms the states' determination to 'significantly reduce migratory flows along the Central Mediterranean route and break the business models of smugglers'. It also outlines EU states priorities towards these goals, in line with the EU Joint Communication, including stepping up the equipping and training of the Libyan national coast guard, enhancing operational action against smugglers and seeking to ensure adequate reception capacities and conditions in Libya for migrants, among others.

The declaration has faced some [criticism](#), and UNHCR [pointed out](#) that the Declaration does not acknowledge that movements along the central Mediterranean route are mixed, as evidenced by the fact 39% of those arriving in Italy via Central Mediterranean route receive international protection, and has called for a differentiated response for those in need of international protection.

**Human rights concerns around EU cooperation with Libya:** In February, human rights experts, including the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Migrants, [expressed concern](#) that any deal with Libya whereby migrants trying to flee human rights violations are pushed back to those same conditions, risks violating the principle of non-refoulement. In a statement they note that support for Libya to limit departures from the Libyan coast into international waters indicates the EU's acceptance of Libya as a 'safe third country', legitimating the human suffering in Libya and meaning that people will be pushed back to places where they face arbitrary detention, torture, ill-treatment, unlawful killings, trafficking and enforced disappearance.

The statement also warns that scaling up assisted voluntary return projects in Libya carries the risk of overlooking those with specific protection needs, including children and victims of trafficking, as meaningful individual assessments cannot be realistically carried out in Libya. It concludes that assisted return cannot be considered voluntary if the only

---

options are to return to a country of origin or live in detention in Libya.

**Rescues at sea off the coast of Libya:** In January and February 2017, the Libyan Coast Guard rescued [1,873 people](#) in different locations along the Libyan coast and recovered 117 bodies of those who had drowned attempting the crossing. In February, a short clip was published in the [media](#) which appeared to show Libyan coast guard workers whipping rescued migrants with plastic pipes.

**Migrant smuggler case in Italy:** The [Italian legal case](#) against a suspected Somali smuggler charged with committing multiple murder, rape and kidnapping against migrants and refugees imprisoned at the informal camp in Libya's Bani Walid, has further drawn attention to the conditions of detention in Libya's detention camps.

**Arrivals of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in Italy:** In January, 97% of the [820 children](#) who arrived in Italy by sea were unaccompanied. UASC account for some 18% of all sea arrivals in January. In January, UASC arriving in Italy were most commonly from Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia and Guinea. UASC accounted for 39% of all Gambian nationals arriving by sea in January.

**Arrivals to Spain:** Some [500 migrants and refugees](#) breached the border fence between Morocco and the Spanish enclave of Ceuta on 18 February, followed by a second breach on 20 February in which 359 migrants and refugees entered Ceuta. Authorities indicate that more 1,400 migrants are now waiting in Ceuta to be processed.

**Arrivals to Europe:** Between 01 January and 28 February 2017, [13,439 migrants and refugees](#) arrived in Italy by sea, a 48 per cent increase from the number of people who arrived in the first two months of 2016.

**Deaths at Sea:** In February 2017, [231 migrants and refugees](#) lost their lives or went missing in the Mediterranean sea

## News, Reports, Books

---

**Fransje Molenaar and Floor El Kamouni-Janssen (February 2017) ['Turning the tide: the politics of irregular migration in the Sahel and Libya'](#) Clingendael**

This report analyses the relationship between irregular migration, conflict and stability in Mali, Niger and Libya, based on a detailed analysis of the human smuggling networks operating within and across these countries. The report argues that current EU policies are misaligned with the reality of trans-Saharan migration, as they do not account for both the diversity of intra-African migration and the extent to which state actors are involved in and/or are capable of controlling irregular migration. The report is based upon a series of additional background studies, specific to each of the countries covered.

**UNHCR Bureau for Europe (February 2017) ['Desperate Journeys: Refugees and migrants entering and crossing Europe via the Mediterranean and Western Balkan route'](#)**

This short report from UNHCR examines the arrival trends of refugees and migrants through the Mediterranean and western Balkans to Europe throughout 2016. The report details arrival trends and emerging and established protection concerns, including the increased arrivals of unaccompanied children along the central Mediterranean route.

---



Edouard Elias (February 2017) [‘Avec les soldats mauritaniens, dans le maquis sahelien’](#) Photo essay for Le Monde.

This brief photo series offers insight into the role of Mauritanian soldiers patrolling the desert borders between Algeria and Mali, aiming to fight smuggling networks.

UNICEF (February 2017) [‘A Deadly Journey for Children: The Central Mediterranean Migration Route’](#) UNICEF – Child Alert

This UNICEF report examines the experiences and vulnerabilities of children traveling on the central Mediterranean route, presenting the results of a rapid needs assessment conducted by UNICEF Libya in 2016. The report explores protections risk for children on the move along the central Mediterranean route; where nearly half of the 122 women and children interviewed said they had experienced sexual abuse, the situation for children in detention in Libya, and human trafficking along the route.

International Crisis Group (February 2017) [‘Watch List 2017’](#) Special report N.3

The early warning Watch List from the International Crisis Group identifies countries in which prompt action from the EU and member states would generate stronger prospects for peace. In 2017, with relevance to West Africa, the list includes the Lake Chad Basin, Mali and the Sahel, and Libya. The report offers a detailed analysis of the conflicts and indicates the contours of possible policy response based upon this ground-up analysis.

Frontex (February) [‘Risk Analysis for 2017’](#)

The annual review from Frontex presents the trends of refugees and migrants crossing the borders of the EU in 2016 from the perspective of the European Border and Coast Agency.

Elizabeth Collett (February 2017) [‘New EU Partnerships in North Africa: Potential to Backfire?’](#) Migration Policy Institute Commentary

This article examines the recent attempts of the EU to respond the arrival of migrants and refugees across the Mediterranean and reflects upon some of the implications and the inherent problems of trying to replicate the EU-Turkey deal with North African states.

Forced Migration Review 54 (February 2017) [‘Resettlement’](#) Oxford Refugee Study Centre

Throughout some 33 diverse articles, this issue of FMR looks at some of the modalities and challenges of resettlement in order to shed light on debates such as how, and how well, resettlement is managed, whether it is a good use funds and energy, and whether it is a good solution for refugees.

---

Ruben Andersson (February 2017) [‘Europe's failed ‘fight’ against irregular migration: ethnographic notes on a counterproductive industry’](#) *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Volume 42 - Issue 7

This article examines the increasing securitisation of Europe's borders in response to the arrival of migrants and refugees, and argues that the ‘fight’ against migration produces what it is supposedly meant to curtail - more distressing forms of ‘illegal migration’. It argues that increased border security measures push migrants and refugees towards riskier entry methods thus necessitating an expansion of the security measures in a self-perpetuating dynamic framed politically as an ongoing ‘crisis’. The article concludes with recommendations to break this cycle and ‘normalise’ migration.

The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) West Africa is an independent unit hosted by the Danish Refugee Council which aims to enhance the protection of people on the move in mixed migration flows in West Africa, including refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. RMMS West Africa distributes this summary to agencies, academic institutions, donors, embassies, journalists, government officials, international and multinational organisations and related non-government organisations. Data is sourced from a wide variety of collaborators, partners, international and local organisations, media outlets and individuals in the region. RMMS West Africa makes independent editorial decisions as to what sections and what data is included in this summary.

If you would like more information about RMMS West Africa please visit our website at [www.westafrica.regionalmms.org](http://www.westafrica.regionalmms.org)

\*The term migrant/refugee is used to cover all those involved in mixed migration flows (including asylum seekers, trafficked persons, economic migrants, refugees). If the caseload mentioned refers only to refugees or asylum seekers or trafficked persons it will be clearly stated.