



# DESPERATE JOURNEYS

Refugee and Migrant Children arriving  
in Europe and how to Strengthen their  
Protection

JANUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2019

# FOREWORD BY YUSRA MARDINI

*Yusra Mardini is a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador. Yusra was selected to swim competitively at Rio 2016 as part of the first ever Refugee Olympic Team.*

In 2015, I was 17, a high school student dreaming of representing my country at international swimming events. As the impact of the war in Syria came closer, and after we were forced to abandon our home in Darayya, my older sister Sara and I took the decision to travel to Europe.

We hoped to be able to bring our mother and our younger sister, Shahed, to safety too. As we were leaving, Shahed clung to us, sobbing, and begging us not to go.

It's only around 10km from the Turkish coast to the north coast of the Greek island of Lesbos. In August 2015, Sara and I boarded a dinghy along with 18 others, including families with children. We all knew that many people had died making the journey ahead. We were all equally afraid. But we were all equally desperate to escape the violence. Like most of the boats that made that same crossing, ours was dangerously overcrowded. In that deceptively short stretch of sea, our engine failed.

The wind was blowing hard and our boat was being tossed and spun about on the waves. The light was fading. Sara and I were experienced swimmers but others on the boat were not. We took turns in the water, making the boat lighter and helping turn it to face the waves to prevent it from capsizing. We called for help but no one came.



The memory of that sea journey will remain with me always.

For over three hours we swam. Everyone was praying. At last, the engine spluttered back to life and we reached the shore.

I struggle with this story, to understand why we made it when many others didn't. Each time I hear about a group drowning at sea, it takes me back there, clinging to the boat's rope, desperately treading water.

In my role as a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, I've had the chance to meet many others who've endured their own desperate journeys while seeking safety. On a trip to Sicily with UNHCR, I heard stories from others who had crossed the sea from North Africa to Italy, stories that were full of hardship, heartbreak, grief and trauma. But ultimately, like my own, of survival.

I met a woman, Rita, who fled Nigeria with her one-year-old baby after her husband was brutally murdered. She told me about her horrific journey to Libya and then Europe. A journey on which she saw friends die along the way. I met a 12-year-old girl from Eritrea who was separated from her older sister while crossing the Mediterranean Sea and has not seen her since. She hoped to be able to join her brother in Germany. I met girls who told me they were sold during their journey.

It really broke my heart. Sometimes I can't sleep at night after what I've heard.

Sara and I arrived in Germany after a journey during which we were imprisoned by police and nearly held hostage by smugglers in a Hungarian hotel. After surviving the sea, the risks along the way somehow didn't seem so bad. The help we received in Germany allowed me to quickly move on with my life, to pursue my dream of competing at the Olympics. But, as highlighted in this new report by UNHCR, many other children are still facing incredible challenges and risks moving to and through Europe.

No one chooses to be a refugee, to leave everything behind for an uncertain future. But, while wars continue to rage, others like Sara and me will feel compelled to make similar decisions. And when people fleeing such violent situations and making such desperate journeys reach Europe we should all play our part in making sure they receive the help and support they need to quickly rebuild their lives.

This means making sure children who arrive in Europe have safe accommodation and are not kept in detention, that children are identified as children and can access the systems meant to help them, that children are well-informed of the options available to them, and that children from point of arrival onwards, are able to continue with their schooling uninterrupted.

Written by Duncan Breen, with special thanks to UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe Protection Support Unit and UNHCR staff in the region.

Designed by Fiona, Budapest

Cover image: Night falls over the refugees and migrants in makeshift shelters and tents in an olive grove next to Moria reception centre on Lesbos, September 2018. © UNHCR/Daphne Tolis



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JANUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2019

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## ARRIVALS BY COUNTRY JAN-SEP

## TOTAL ARRIVALS

(Land and Sea)

89,200 ↓ 62,200

2018

2019

### SPAIN

43,200 ↓ 19,800

2018

2019

### ITALY

21,000 ↓ 5,300

2018

2019

### MALTA

800 ↑ 2,200

2018

2019

### GREECE

23,400 ↑ 34,000

2018

2019

### CYPRUS

800 ↑ 950

2018

2019

Note: Greece and Spain figures include land and sea arrivals; Cyprus, Italy and Malta figures are sea arrivals only. The figures depicted here do not include arrivals by air or those entering regularly and then subsequently applying for asylum.

## INTRODUCTION

*More than a quarter of the refugees and migrants who arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean routes so far this year were children. Many of them arrived without their parent. Some were accompanied by other relatives while others were traveling without any adults they knew. The arrival of children in such numbers is not a new trend yet children face major difficulties in getting the protection and help they need once they arrive in Europe. This report highlights some of these difficulties and makes recommendations to address them. It also provides a short update of key developments in the movement of refugees and migrants to Europe since the start of the year.*

## 2019 TRENDS OVERVIEW

As of 31 August, some 62,200 refugees and migrants had arrived via the three Mediterranean routes<sup>1</sup> to Europe, an 18% decrease compared to the same period last year (75,100). In this period, some 34,000 people arrived in Greece, 19,800 in Spain and some 5,300 in Italy. In addition, some 950 people arrived by sea in Cyprus, along with some 2,200 people to Malta.

Many refugees and migrants continued to move overland from Greece through the Western Balkans,<sup>2</sup> with only small numbers of people remaining in the Western Balkans and seeking asylum there.<sup>3</sup> This year, as of 31 August, some 17,300 people had arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with thousands congregating in the northwest near the border with Croatia.

At the EU's external borders, hundreds of refugees and migrants continue to report having been beaten and sent back across borders (some without the opportunity to be able to claim asylum). The vast majority of reports were from those who had been pushed back from Croatia's border with Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Croatia's border with Serbia.<sup>4</sup>

## ARRIVALS TO GREECE AND CYPRUS

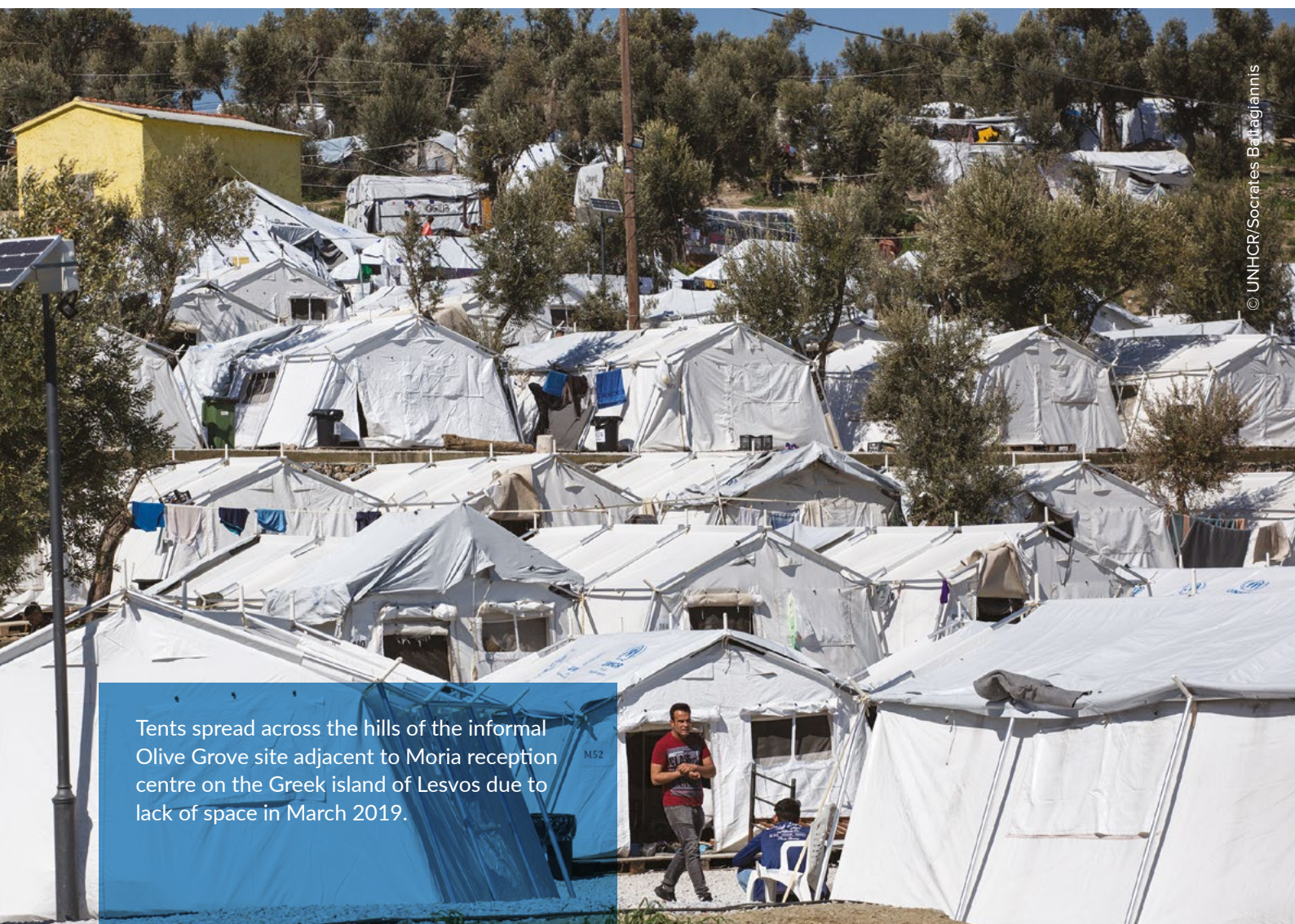
In 2019 the largest number of refugees and migrants - some 34,000 people as of 31 August - arrived to Europe after crossing from Turkey to Greece, mostly by sea. July and August 2019 saw a spike in arrivals to Greece, with more than 9,300 people arriving in August alone, mostly from Afghanistan and Syria. However, these numbers are far below the one million who reached Greek shores between January 2015 and March 2016, and most of whom travelled onwards to elsewhere in Europe.

These recent arrivals have further strained the already overcrowded reception centres on the Greek Aegean islands, especially on Samos and Lesbos. As of 31 August, more than 25,000 refugees and migrants were present on the islands of whom some 20,500 were in the five Reception and Identification Centres (RICs), almost four times more than their maximum capacity of 5,400. Conditions on the islands remain dire, and thousands of people, including many families with young children, are exposed to many risks, including those arising as a result of overcrowding and sub-standard sanitary conditions, mounting tensions

among frustrated communities, and sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>5</sup>

The number of people living in inadequate shelter conditions such as makeshift shelter and summer tents in expanded unlit and unserviced areas around the reception centres is very high, leading to increased risks for women and children in particular. Access to medical and psychosocial support in the reception centres is very limited due to the very low number of health and social worker professionals provided by the State<sup>6</sup>

Arrivals at the Greece-Turkey land border have dropped by 34% compared to last year. Reasons for the decrease appear to be increased preventative measures on both sides of the border, including push-backs from Greece.<sup>7</sup> UNHCR has repeatedly voiced concerns with the Greek authorities about the allegations of push-backs, including several incidents of possible refoulement, in which people seeking international protection were reported to have been returned.<sup>8</sup>



Tents spread across the hills of the informal Olive Grove site adjacent to Moria reception centre on the Greek island of Lesbos due to lack of space in March 2019.



A Somali couple and their baby arrive at Pratica di Mare air base near Rome after being part of a group of 146 refugees evacuated from Libya on 29 April 2019 as conflict escalated. So far this year, Italy has evacuated almost 400 refugees directly from Libya, including over 150 unaccompanied and separated children.

The majority of people arriving irregularly in Greece are fleeing conflict, persecution and human rights violations and those arriving by sea originate mainly from Afghanistan and Syria but also the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, and Palestine. Many are in need of international protection and should be given prompt access to asylum procedures so that their asylum claims can be processed fairly and efficiently.

An upward trend in the numbers of new asylum applications continues in Cyprus, meaning that Cyprus has received the most applications per capita in the EU. So far in 2019, 950 people have arrived by sea alone, while some 6,600 new asylum applications were made in the first half of the year. Around half of the new asylum applicants had resided in Cyprus on other immigration statuses and come from south-eastern Asian countries while the other half had arrived irregularly, either by boat or via air routes, mainly to the northern part of Cyprus outside the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. Amongst the latter, the majority were from Syria, Cameroon and other African countries. Reception capacity is stretched and the backlog in asylum processing continues to increase.

## ARRIVALS VIA THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE FROM LIBYA

The first eight months of 2019 saw some positive developments, including increased access to safe and legal pathways and resettlement to Europe from 15 priority countries along the Central Mediterranean route including Libya, Niger, Chad, and Egypt,<sup>9</sup> as well as increased humanitarian evacuations from Libya to Italy with almost 800 people evacuated to Italy as of the end of August.<sup>10</sup> On rescue at sea, positive steps included commitments by several European Union (EU) Member States to receive people disembarked in Italy or Malta after rescue at sea and increased rescues by the Armed Forces of Malta of boats that have departed from Libya and have reached the Maltese Search and Rescue Region (SRR).

However, this period also saw the reduction of search and rescue capacity off the Libyan coast following the withdrawal of EU naval vessels participating in EUNAVFOR Operation Sophia<sup>11</sup> in March and further restrictions on the work of NGOs engaged in search and rescue.<sup>12</sup>



So far this year, nearly 60% of people who departed from Libya by sea were later disembarked back in Libya, usually following interception or rescue by the Libyan Coast Guard. UNHCR has repeatedly stressed that due to the volatile security situation in general as well as detention in sub-standard conditions and reports of serious abuses against asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants, Libya cannot be considered a safe port, and no one should be disembarked there after rescue at sea.<sup>13</sup>

So far in 2019, some 635 people are believed to have died at sea while trying to cross to Europe from Libya. This includes a shipwreck off the coast of Al Khoms, Libya on 25 July when some 150 refugees and migrants were feared to have died in the biggest known such disaster at sea since May 2017.

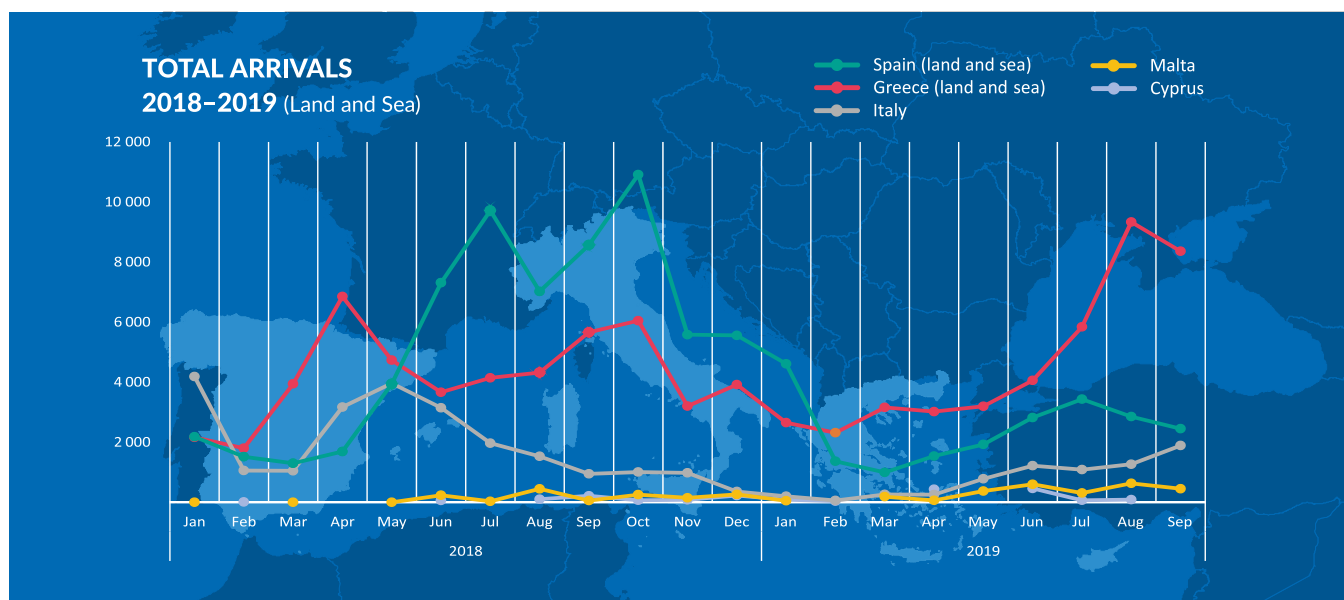
In July, UNHCR, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), reiterated its call for European State vessels to resume search and rescue operations beyond their Search and Rescue Regions off the Libyan coast.<sup>14</sup> UNHCR and IOM have also called for the establishment of a temporary regional disembarkation mechanism under which people rescued at sea would be disembarked at assigned ports of safety on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea, except Libya.<sup>15</sup> However, as of early September, disembarkation continued on a case by case *ad hoc* basis with NGO boats waiting 10 days or more at sea on seven occasions to be assigned a safe port for the people they had rescued.

## ARRIVALS TO SPAIN

In the first eight months of 2019, some 19,800 refugees and migrants arrived by sea and land in Spain, a 42% decrease compared to the same period last year. Most had crossed the sea from North Africa. January saw a peak in reported arrivals (4,600), but numbers have dropped since then following further financial support<sup>16</sup> and cooperation by Spanish authorities with Moroccan counterparts on search and rescue. Land arrivals in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla have decreased by 15% compared to the same period last year but sporadic attempts to cross the fences still continue. The majority of arrivals so far this year have originated from Morocco (30%), Mali (14%), Guinea (13%), Côte d'Ivoire (11%) and Senegal (8%).

## DEATHS ALONG ROUTES TO AND THROUGH EUROPE

So far in 2019, some 928 people are believed to have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Europe – a 42% decrease compared to the same period in 2018. The route from Libya to Europe remains the deadliest with almost 70% of the deaths at sea so far this year occurring there. A further 212 people are believed to have died at sea between North Africa and Spain and 57 people died during the short sea journey between Turkey and Greece. Some 62 deaths have been recorded as refugees and migrants tried to cross land borders into Europe or crossed borders within Europe. Of these, 32 people have died so far this year crossing from Turkey to Greece by land, including 17 deaths in vehicle accidents and 11 people who drowned in the Evros River.





Children play among makeshift tents spread across an adjacent olive grove located next to the reception centre in Moria on the island of Lesbos, due to severe overcrowding in September 2018.

# REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN ON THE MOVE AND IN EUROPE

So far this year, some 25% of those arriving in Europe via the Mediterranean routes were children, a similar proportion as last year. Many of them have travelled without other family members. Children face multiple risks, including violence, abuse, and exploitation along the way to Europe and then continue to face hardships once in Europe. The movement of unaccompanied and separated children<sup>17</sup> to Europe is not new but current conditions are such that urgent measures are needed to address serious gaps in their protection once they arrive in Europe. This part of the report focuses on the journeys to Europe by children, particularly unaccompanied and separated children, and the challenges they face in accessing help when they arrive. It also outlines the steps that need to be taken to ensure children are better protected upon arrival in Europe. In particular, those in need of international protection must be identified and assisted, while unaccompanied and separated children without international protection needs must also have their best interests determined.<sup>18</sup>

## NUMBERS OF CHILDREN ARRIVING IN EUROPE IN 2019

In Greece, more than 9,200 children have arrived by sea so far this year, including over 1,500 unaccompanied or separated children. The majority of children came from Afghanistan, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, countries characterised by conflict, violence and human rights violations. As of 31 August, 5,600 children, of whom 1,200 were unaccompanied, were housed in overcrowded reception centres on the Greek Aegean islands. Due to a shortage of appropriate accommodation, unaccompanied children in particular are often kept in overcrowded and unsafe conditions for months, as outlined below, while waiting to be transferred to appropriate shelter conditions with some resorting to negative coping strategies. UNHCR has repeatedly expressed concerns about the situation of unaccompanied children in reception centres on the islands and has urged the Greek Government to take immediate measures to transfer the children to a safe

My brother and I had to leave Afghanistan because we received threats. Some members of my family were even killed. It took us one month to reach Greece. The bad memories from this journey still haunt me. We saw people dying in front of our eyes – either because they got injured or because of exhaustion. I still remember everything very vividly. I will never forget. During the day, we stayed hidden in the woods, without any food or water, and during the night we walked along unknown roads. We met bandits along the way; they would ask about our religion and our destination and then they would take things from our bags and pockets. Whoever resisted was beaten. They also had guns.

We were put on a truck, we were 40 people. We crossed through many cities and then we were asked to hide in a small car along with eleven more people: three persons at the front, seven at the back while my brother and I, along with one more person, hid in the trunk. We had to stay there for 7-8 hours, while the car was on the move. We didn't have anything to eat or drink.

Then we had to board another truck; we had no idea where we were going. Whoever rose his head to look outside, would be beaten with a stick. After one hour and a half, the truck stopped, we split into three groups and we continued on foot. We followed a path between two big mountains, no one was guiding us. After a while, we reached a barbed-wired area. We continued to walk and this is when we heard gunshots. Everybody started to run, a person was shot and fell on the ground, just next to me! Only five of us managed to escape and after four long hours of walking, we reached a shelter where another 100 persons, squeezed shoulder-to-shoulder, would sleep inside.

A few days afterward we reached Turkey. We stayed there for a week and then we reached the shore and went inside an inflatable boat. The sea journey was very difficult. The water was dark and deep and we did not know how to swim. We had no life jackets, no belongings with us; a journey full of risks. We were told that we would be on the boat just for one hour but the journey lasted six hours. Nothing was easy, the boat engine did not work. But we had no choice. We did not control the boat any more, the sea had taken full control. At some point, large waves started to hit the boat. We were 36 people on the dinghy and we all trembled with fear. We tried to send a rescue signal, we did not want to die. Amidst the havoc, we saw a large vessel approaching and only then we realized that we would be saved. If the vessel had arrived half an hour later, the boat would have sunk.

I cannot stop thinking about those who did not even have the chance to embark on such a journey, hoping to save their life. But I also think about us, how desperate we felt when we thought that we would never make it.

J, 17, from Afghanistan.



Children run between makeshift shelters made with reeds and blankets at the Pyli Reception and Identification Centre on the Greek island of Kos in July 2019.

place and to end overcrowding.<sup>19</sup> In light of the high number of unaccompanied children and the limited hosting and care capacity in Greece, UNHCR continues to advocate for the relocation of unaccompanied children from Greece to other European countries.

In the central Mediterranean, with fewer people crossing the sea from Libya in recent months, the number of children arriving from Libya has decreased but currently constitutes 23% of arrivals to Europe from Libya, slightly higher than in previous years. So far this year, some 800 children (many of them from Sudan) have arrived by sea in Italy and Malta from Libya but a further 600 have been disembarked and subsequently detained in Libya after being intercepted or rescued, mostly by the Libyan Coast Guard. As of August, some 1,600 (93% unaccompanied) refugee and asylum-seeking children were being held in the detention centres in Libya to which UNHCR had access, in dire conditions.<sup>20</sup> UNHCR continues to advocate that children should not be detained for immigration-related purposes as detention is never in their best interest.<sup>21</sup> Between November 2017 and the end of August,<sup>22</sup> UNHCR was able to evacuate over 700 unaccompanied and separated children from Libya, most to Niger and some 100 to Italy. Most have since been resettled, mainly to the United States, Sweden and the UK, after it was determined that this solution was in their best interest.

In Spain, some 1,200 children have arrived this year, most of them unaccompanied, originating from Morocco, Guinea and Mali. According to UNICEF, a lack of basic rights in their countries of origin are among the reasons for children leaving home and taking this route, in the hope of joining relatives already in Europe; accessing the Spanish education system; or to escape difficult family situations.<sup>23</sup>

## RISKS DURING THE JOURNEY

Just like adults, children face terrifying journeys to reach Europe. Many have died during these journeys, including at least 65 who died in 2018 while trying to cross to Greece by land<sup>24</sup> and sea<sup>25</sup> from Turkey. More than 200 others are likely to have been among those drowned while trying to cross the sea from North Africa last year.<sup>26</sup> Of those who reach Europe, many have been away from home for many months. Some have survived desert crossings, detention, and torture in Libya, in addition to the perilous sea journey. A report released in March 2019 by the Women's Refugee Commission revealed that many boys and

girls who crossed the sea from Libya were exposed to sexual violence on their way to and in Libya, and even upon arrival in Europe.<sup>27</sup>

## RECEPTION AND ACCOMMODATION

Across Europe, newly-arrived unaccompanied children tend to be hosted in large accommodation centres. There is often minimal oversight and individual support, even though many experts and practitioners have pointed out that this can result in abuse (including sexual abuse), violence, and severe psychological distress, and contribute to children moving onwards or disappearing.<sup>28</sup> UNHCR encourages States to reduce reliance on large shelters and instead work towards providing increased small group residential or family-based care.

The situation on the Greek islands for children remains one of the most concerning. On Samos, severe overcrowding means children have to take turns sleeping in the limited space provided to them. Security concerns are such that girls are escorted by the police to bathrooms, while a number of children have nowhere to stay apart from makeshift shelters outside the formal reception centre, where they often remain for several months with no access to basic services or security.<sup>29</sup>

There are positive examples of best practice care models being piloted and underway in Greece, including the supported independent living approach for older unaccompanied children, as well as community-based foster care. Yet care places available far from meet the care needs and as of the end of August, age-appropriate accommodation was only available for 25% of the almost 4,400 unaccompanied children in the country, exposing the rest to risks including sexual violence<sup>30</sup> and homelessness.<sup>31</sup>

In Malta, where nearly 400 unaccompanied children have arrived from Libya so far this year, unaccompanied children continue to share overcrowded accommodation with unrelated adults in detention-like conditions. In Cyprus, where some 300 unaccompanied and separated children have applied for asylum this year, children often have to sleep on makeshift or camp beds in common areas of reception centres due to overcrowding. Similarly, children arriving in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla face long stays in overcrowded facilities with UNICEF reporting up to three children sharing each mattress in one centre.<sup>32</sup>

Inadequate care arrangements and the lack of services and support can exacerbate the psychological impact of trauma children may have experienced before

arriving in Europe. Yet, the provision of such care for unaccompanied children remains a challenge in many countries in Europe. There are, however, good examples of family-based or foster care in Ireland,<sup>33</sup> the Netherlands<sup>34</sup> and UK.<sup>35</sup>

## AGE ASSESSMENTS

Among the many challenges children may face once in Europe is actually being recognised as a child. Across the region, unreliable and inconsistent age assessment procedures are used, resulting in a number of children being considered to be adults and therefore unable to access national child protection systems and other important services.

It is widely accepted that procedures to assess a person's age should be holistic and multi-disciplinary and that scientific methods can only provide an estimate.<sup>36</sup> However, across Europe, few countries apply a holistic approach, with age assessment procedures varying significantly both within countries and across the region.<sup>37</sup> For example, in Spain, age assessment procedures differ by region. In the south, where most arrive by sea, a wrist X-ray, which has a margin of error of up to four years, is generally used without the involvement of other experts such as social workers or psychologists, even when children provide valid identity documents. In some cases, children are even examined to check the development of their sexual organs.<sup>38</sup> In Italy too, the use of wrist X-rays remains common in cases where an age assessment is still required, while the use of a multi-disciplinary approach is more limited. Similarly, in the Evros region of Greece along the land border with Turkey, children are usually referred for wrist X-rays without the necessary medical and psychological assessment prescribed by Greek law, a situation that also happens on the islands. Those wrongly identified as adults risk being placed in accommodation facilities with adults and are unable to access the mechanisms designed to protect children, including social work support.<sup>39</sup> When children move onwards to other EU countries, incorrect registration as an adult in the country where they first arrived can make it very difficult for them to receive support later on.<sup>40</sup>

## APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIANS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Individualised support for unaccompanied children through the timely appointment of trained guardians or social workers is particularly important to help ensure that children's best interests are considered. However,

across Europe, guardians and social workers are often overstretched, at times being responsible for up to 75 children. In countries where institutions designated by the government bear responsibility for guardianship, there may be a delay in assigning an individual guardian to each child.

In Serbia, where guardians were previously responsible for up to 200 children each, UNHCR, national authorities and Belgrade municipal authorities, and the NGO IDEAS have piloted a guardianship system that has set up a pool of trained and well-supervised guardians. These guardians are in daily contact with the children, helping to coordinate access to services and providing information. As of the end of August, the project provided guardians for over 900 unaccompanied children this year. In Greece, UNHCR is working with the Greek authorities and the NGO Metadrasi to pilot the implementation of the new Guardianship Law and to provide 2,000 of the nearly 4,400 unaccompanied and separated children in the country with guardians.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION, INCLUDING ON ASYLUM PROCEDURES

Children need from the outset to be given information about asylum procedures and the support services available in a language and manner which they understand. The information provided should enable children to make an informed decision about whether they wish to apply for asylum. In some countries such as Spain and the UK,<sup>41</sup> children are granted automatic residency based on their age, but may not always be offered sufficient information or the opportunity to apply for asylum as a consequence. In a recent joint study by UNHCR and Autorità garante per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza of more than 200 unaccompanied children in Italy, 80% asked for more information about how to request international protection.<sup>42</sup> In several countries, such as Belgium,<sup>43</sup> Ireland, and Spain, UNHCR and partners have developed child-friendly materials to make important information more accessible to children.

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Once in Europe, refugee and migrant children are supposed to have access to basic education in accordance with international and regional human rights law.<sup>44</sup> In practice, legal or administrative barriers mean many are unable to access schooling. These include the lack of clear provisions regarding compulsory education for children in reception centres or those without residence permits; administrative requirements such

*I was 13 when I left Somalia (in February 2017). From Somalia, I escaped by car to Ethiopia. I was with a friend. We did not have any money but someone took us. We arrived in a place in Ethiopia. It was very scary and dangerous there and then we were kidnapped, it was like trafficking. We did not have a choice. They made us cross to Sudan on foot. From there, we were taken in a truck to somewhere in Kufra, Libya. We could not see where we were going during the journey.*

*When we arrived in Libya, we were put underground in a sort of big place with many other people. The worst part was the first three days. They ask us for money from our families all the time and when we say we cannot, there is violence like beatings, rape... If we fight, they tell us they will hurt us more. We spent eight months there... After this, they took us to Bani Walid.*

*There [Bani Walid] is a very bad place. No hygiene, lack of freedom, lack of food. They only gave us food once a day, just boiled pasta with no sauce. Every day the same food. If people were sick, they had no medicine. It was a very, very bad situation... And in a few days when we got badly dehydrated, they asked us to pay \$6,000 per person to be free. I was shocked. It is a lot of money and not easy to find.*

*Then they started violating us. Beating us and punishing all of us a lot. They knew that we had no money and that we were still young children, and cannot offer that money. And some of us called our families, but our families could not give that money.*

*We spent nine more months in this place, we did not pay money. There were some people who paid \$2,000, \$3,000 something like that. That was what they asked us for. But then me and my friend, after nine months, we were transferred to another detention centre in Tripoli.*

*In Tripoli, because they let us outside, I tried to find some help and we found some people, and they took us to the UNHCR office. My friend was very sick at this time so he went there, and they examined him and they found out that he had tuberculosis. They kept him there in a place where they were treating people. But I left to try find a way to leave from Libya, to find a boat.*

*I was in Zawiya. Then I boarded a boat. It was 2,000 Dinar, and since I did not have the money, some other Somali people paid for me.*

*We spent one night on the sea. We did not see other boats. But then the Sea Eye, the German boat came and rescued us.*

*Now that I am in Europe, I want to study to be a doctor. I want to get a good job.*

*A, 15, from Somalia. Disembarked in Malta in mid-2019.*

People rescued by the NGOs Sea Watch and Sea Eye disembark in Malta in January 2019.



as inflexible registration deadlines; limited places available in schools; and the lack of additional language support.<sup>45</sup> For example, the 2,250 school-aged children living in Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos as of the end of August this year had no access to formal education. A factsheet prepared by UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM notes that the highest proportion of children and youth born outside of the EU+ region<sup>46</sup> who were not in employment, education or training in 2017 were living in Greece, Italy, Croatia, Spain and France.<sup>47</sup> In Serbia, refugee and migrant children enrolled into primary and secondary schools for the third consecutive school year with 176 enrolled as of September 2019.

Turkey is currently host to the largest number of refugees in the world, and the Turkish Ministry of National Education has continued to promote the inclusion of Syrians with temporary protection status in the national education system. As of mid-2019, 61% of school-age Syrian refugees were enrolled in schools.<sup>48</sup> Barriers persist, particularly at the middle and secondary school level, and for those who have been

out of school for many years. The provision of Turkish language classes, conditional cash transfers for education, outreach and information dissemination and accelerated learning, have all contributed to increased enrolment.

## REUNIFICATION WITH FAMILIES AND ONWARD MOVEMENT

Following arrival in Europe, some children may be eligible under EU rules to join family members in other EU countries. But when these procedures are too lengthy or access to information about the process is not clear,<sup>49</sup> some children decide to travel on their own, regardless of the risks. For example, a report by Praksis and Safe Passage this year indicated that the average length of procedures under the Dublin Regulation for refugee children from Greece to reunite with their family members in other EU countries was around 16 months.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, difficulties in accessing services including education, limited opportunities to work,<sup>51</sup> and the possible

*My family was forcing me to marry a man I did not love. With the support of my cousin, I was able to leave Dakar. I crossed Mauritania by road. In Morocco they raped me twice. I don't know if all the pain I feel will ever go away, but at least I am sure the baby I am carrying is safe now.*

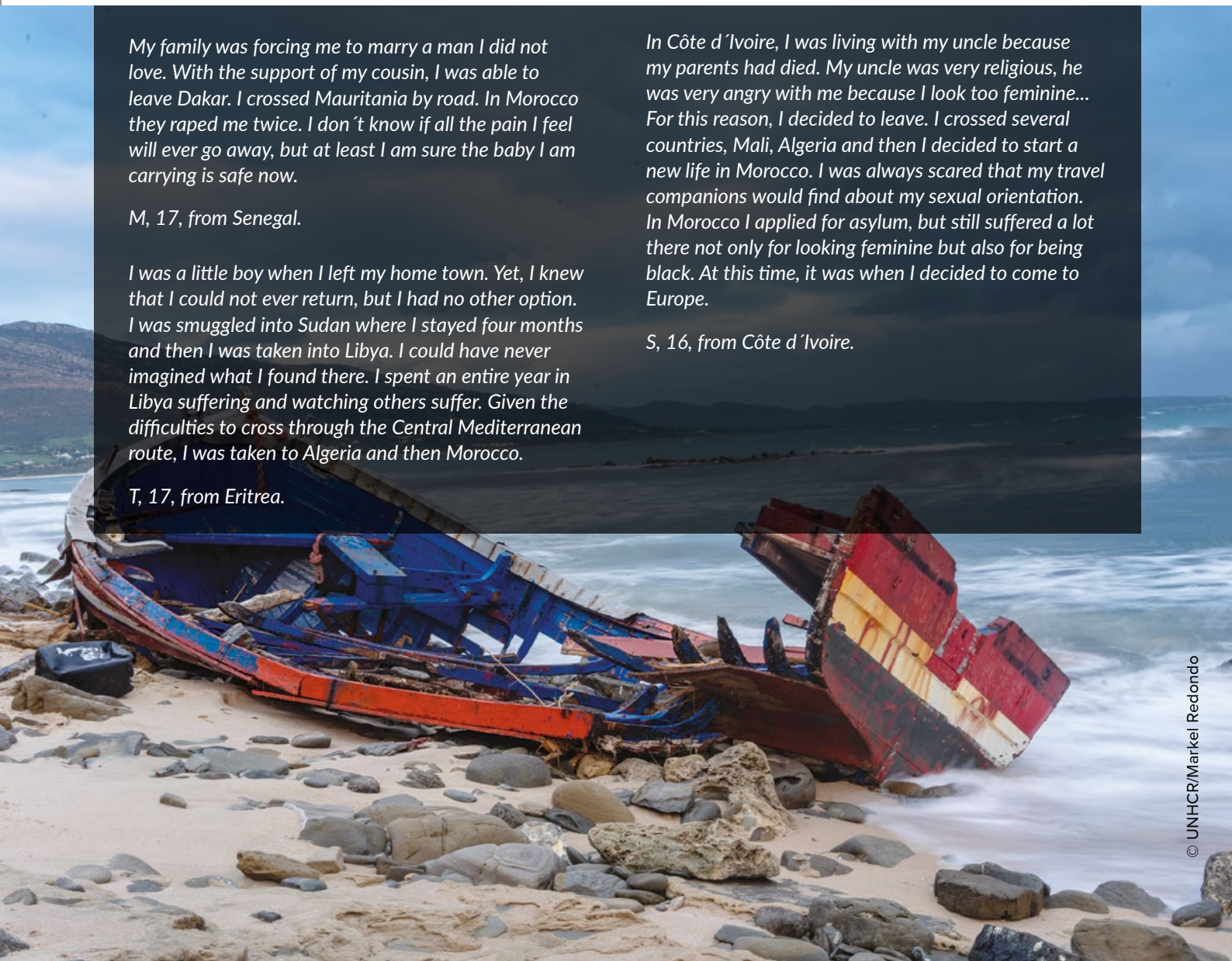
*M, 17, from Senegal.*

*I was a little boy when I left my home town. Yet, I knew that I could not ever return, but I had no other option. I was smuggled into Sudan where I stayed four months and then I was taken into Libya. I could have never imagined what I found there. I spent an entire year in Libya suffering and watching others suffer. Given the difficulties to cross through the Central Mediterranean route, I was taken to Algeria and then Morocco.*

*T, 17, from Eritrea.*

*In Côte d'Ivoire, I was living with my uncle because my parents had died. My uncle was very religious, he was very angry with me because I look too feminine... For this reason, I decided to leave. I crossed several countries, Mali, Algeria and then I decided to start a new life in Morocco. I was always scared that my travel companions would find about my sexual orientation. In Morocco I applied for asylum, but still suffered a lot there not only for looking feminine but also for being black. At this time, it was when I decided to come to Europe.*

*S, 16, from Côte d'Ivoire.*



loss of support when they turn 18,<sup>52</sup> can also contribute to children and youth deciding to travel onwards to other countries.<sup>53</sup>

While most unaccompanied children arrived in Spain, Greece and Italy last year, the majority of those who applied for asylum did so in Germany (20%), Italy (19%), UK (14%), Greece (13%), and the Netherlands (6%),<sup>54</sup> demonstrating the extent to which some children are moving onwards. For example, amongst the top five nationalities of unaccompanied children seeking asylum in Europe in 2018, Eritreans (who mostly arrive in Italy) primarily applied in the UK, Netherlands, and Italy; Syrians (who mostly arrive in Greece) primarily applied in Germany, Greece and the Netherlands; and Guineans (who mostly arrive in Spain and Italy) primarily applied in Germany, Belgium and Italy.<sup>55</sup> In France, as of the end of July, over 10,800 unaccompanied and separated children have been included under the child protection system<sup>56</sup> and many are reported to have entered France via Spain.<sup>57</sup>

Such onward movements can expose children to further risks, including abuses by smugglers and traffickers, and being sexually exploited. As many countries in Europe have introduced stricter border controls, risks have increased. Since 2015, at least 34 children are known to have died while trying to move onwards after arriving in Europe. Some children have drowned attempting to cross rivers or died while trying to hide on trucks, cars or trains to cross borders undetected. Children have also consistently been among those pushed back at many borders across Europe. For example, UNHCR in Serbia received reports that some

820 children, three quarters of them unaccompanied, had been pushed back from neighbouring countries this year up to the end of August. Many reported having been subjected to violence.<sup>58</sup>

Several countries in Western Europe have also reported high numbers of children leaving reception centres, most likely to travel onwards to other countries. In Belgium, an increasing number of unaccompanied children, among them many Eritreans, disappear following their initial referral to authorities. Reasons reported by UNHCR officers in Western Europe for children moving onwards based on testimonies from children include lack of sufficient information and interpreters, and the fear of not being correctly identified as children following age assessment procedure.

## CONCLUSION

The movement of unaccompanied and separated children to Europe is not a new trend but is one that is likely to continue given the diverse and complex reasons why children make these journeys. While there have been many positive steps across Europe towards improving protection, as demonstrated in this report, far more needs to be done to urgently address some very worrying situations that children are currently facing once they arrive in the region. By taking the steps outlined in this report, States will be able to increase the protection immediately available to children once they arrive in Europe and help determine how best their best interests can be met.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

UNHCR calls on European States to urgently take the following steps:

## Protection of Children in Europe

- End the use of immigration detention for children;
- Immediately address the severe overcrowding in reception centres where unaccompanied children are placed upon arrival in Europe;
- Age-appropriate accommodation arrangements for unaccompanied children, reducing reliance with a preference for small group residential or family-based care;
- Make use of holistic and multi-disciplinary methods when age assessments are required;
- Provide accessible information in a language and manner which children understand so that they are better informed about procedures and services, including asylum procedures, and family reunion/reunification processes;
- Appoint trained guardians and/or social workers to provide individualised support to unaccompanied children as soon as possible to help protect children's best interests and well-being;
- Remove legal and practical barriers to refugee and migrant children accessing education, including by providing clear provisions regarding compulsory education for children in reception centres or without residence permits; ensuring flexible registration deadlines; and facilitating the provision of additional language support; and



- Speed up transfers for children eligible to join family members elsewhere in the EU, including by simplifying the process, as well as through the use of discretionary powers under the Dublin Regulation.

## Rescue at Sea, Disembarkation, and Detention in Libya

- Redeploy search and rescue naval vessels to international waters off the coast of Libya for as in the past, and with a clear commitment for persons rescued to be disembarked in safe ports;
- Urgently establish a coordinated and predictable regional mechanism to strengthen rescue at sea, especially with regard to timely disembarkations at a safe port and subsequent processing, including relocations as well as access to adequate, safe, and dignified reception conditions;
- End restrictions and criminalization of NGOs involved in search and rescue operations and strengthen cooperation to ensure that available search and rescue capacity is fully utilized; and
- Urge the Libyan authorities to end detention of refugees and migrants and support the development of an action plan for release into the community of all persons currently detained or those rescued at sea through a phased transition from closed detention facilities to open collective centres;

## Access to Territory and Asylum Procedures

- End push-back practices at borders of people seeking international protection, including children.
- Train border officials in protection-sensitive border procedures to identify and refer people seeking international protection or with other humanitarian needs, including unaccompanied and separated children, at borders;
- Make use of accelerated and simplified asylum procedures to address mixed movements in order to quickly determine who is in need of international protection and requires and who is not and thus can be channelled into return procedures;

## Access to Safe and Legal Pathways to Europe

- Expand humanitarian evacuation programmes for vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees;
- Remove legal and practical obstacles to make family reunification accessible for those who are eligible;
- Introduce additional complementary pathways including community sponsorship programmes based on similar initiatives in the region;

UNHCR also recommends supporting efforts to strengthen protection space in regions of origin and countries along key migration routes so that people are not compelled to move in search of protection.

1 Arrivals via Mediterranean Routes include arrivals by land to Greece, as well as Spain land arrivals.

2 There is no obligation for asylum-seekers to seek asylum at the first effective opportunity, but at the same time there is no unfettered right to choose one's country of asylum.

3 As of 31 August, some X people have completed asylum procedures in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)) this year. In the same period, 101 people have been granted international protection within the region.

4 Since the start of the year, as of the end of August, UNHCR and partners in Serbia received reports amounting to 337 incidents involving 2,431 people who alleged they were pushed back from Croatia this year. In the same period, UNHCR and partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina received reports amounting to 96 incidents involving 739 people pushed back from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNHCR continues to raise with Croatian authorities the need to grant access to asylum procedures for those requesting international protection, along with the need to investigate allegations of push-backs. See also BBC, *'Beaten and robbed': How Croatia is policing its borders*, 29 July 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-49132735/beaten-and-robbed-how-croatia-is-policing-its-borders>; Human Rights Watch, *Croatia: Migrants Pushed Back to Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 11 December 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/11/croatia-migrants-pushed-back-bosnia-and-herzegovina>; TRT World, *Croatia's Illegal Migrant Pushbacks*, 26 July 2019, <https://www.trtworld.com/video/the-newsmakers/croatias-illegal-migrant-pushbacks/5d3aa60ab9fa6764a9a5a7b4>; Amnesty International, *Pushed to the Edge*, 7 March 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0599642019ENGLISH.PDF>.

5 See also UNHCR, *UNHCR urges Greece to address overcrowded reception centres on Aegean islands*, 31 August 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/8/5b88f5c34/unhcr-urges-greece-address-overcrowded-reception-centres-aegean-islands.html>; UNHCR, *Refugee women and children face heightened risk of sexual violence amid tensions and overcrowding at reception facilities on Greek islands*, 9 February 2018, [https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/2/5a7d67c4b/refugee-women-children-face-heightened-risk-sexual-violence-amid-tensions.html#targetText=In%202017%2C%20UNHCR%20received%20reports,SGBV%20after%20arriving%20in%20Greece.](https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/2/5a7d67c4b/refugee-women-children-face-heightened-risk-sexual-violence-amid-tensions.html#targetText=In%202017%2C%20UNHCR%20received%20reports,SGBV%20after%20arriving%20in%20Greece.;); UNHCR, *UNHCR urges Greece to accelerate emergency measures to address conditions on Samos and Lesbos*, 6 November 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/11/5be15c454/unhcr-urges-greece-accelerate-emergency-measures-address-conditions-samos.html>.

6 For example, as of September 2019, there were only two State doctors available to serve the 12,000 people in the Moria Reception and Identification Centre. Local hospitals too face considerable pressure and as a result of a change of procedures, refugees and asylum-seekers with chronic conditions including cancer and kidney conditions no longer have free access to treatment.

7 See also UN Committee against Torture, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Greece*, 3 September 2019, <https://bit.ly/33mJpV>. UNHCR, *UNHCR Greece Representative intervention in Greek Ombudsman's Conference*, 26 November 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/10919-unhcr-greece-representative-intervention-in-greek-ombudsmans-conference.html>; UNHCR, *UNHCR deeply concerned at reports of informal forced returns from Greece to Turkey*, 8 June 2017, <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/6244-unhcr-deeply-concerned-reports-informal-forced-returns-greece-turkey.html>.

8 Concerns about push-backs at the Greece-Turkey land border were also raised last year by the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights as well as the Council for the Prevention of Torture – see Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović following her visit to Greece from 25 to 29 June 2018*, 6 November 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-visit-to-greece-from-25-to-29-june-2018-by-dunja-mijatov/16808ea5bd>; Council of Europe, *Preliminary observations made by the delegation of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) which visited Greece from 10 to 19 April 2018*, 1 November 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/16808afaf6>.

9 The 15 priority countries are Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, and Tunisia, see UNHCR, *Central Mediterranean situation: UNHCR calls for an additional 40,000 resettlement places*, 11 September 2017, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/9/59b6a5134/central-mediterranean-situation-unhcr-calls-additional-40000-resettlement.html>. Between January and July 2019, 3,142 refugees were resettled from these countries to Europe compared to 1,862 in the same period in 2018.

10 As of 31 August, 295 asylum-seekers had been evacuated to Italy from Libya in 2019 compared to 253 in all of 2018.

11 In 2018, naval vessels participating in Operation Sophia rescued over 2,300 people between January and July. No rescues were conducted in the same period in 2019. See Council of the European Union, *EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia: mandate extended until 30 September 2019*, 29 March 2019, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/03/29/eunavfor-med-operation-sophia-mandate-extended-until-30-september-2019/>.

12 This includes the decree passed in Italy in June that included fines for NGOs involved in search and rescue, see UNHCR, *UNHCR urges Italy to reconsider proposed decree affecting rescue at sea in the Central Mediterranean*, 12 June 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/6/5d0124a74/unhcr-urges-italy-reconsider-proposed-decree-affecting-rescue-sea-central.html?query=Italy%20decree%20NGOs>; UNHCR, *UNHCR concerned at new measures impacting rescue at sea in the Central Mediterranean*, 6 August 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2019/8/5d49370e4/unhcr-concerned-new-measures-impacting-rescue-sea-central-mediterranean.html>.

13 UNHCR, *UNHCR Position on Returns to Libya - Update II*, September 2018, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b8d02314.html>.

14 UNHCR, *UNHCR and IOM joint statement: International approach to refugees and migrants in Libya must change*, 11 July 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/7/5d2765d04/unhcr-iom-joint-statement-international-approach-refugees-migrants-libya.html>

15 See UNHCR, IOM, *UNHCR appeal for region-wide action by EU countries over Mediterranean tragedies*, 27 June 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2018/6/5b33d8bf4/iom-unhcr-appeal-region-wide-action-eu-countries-mediterranean-tragedies.html>; UNHCR and IOM, *Proposal for a regional cooperative arrangement ensuring predictable disembarkation and subsequent processing of persons rescued-at-sea*, 27 June 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/5b35e60f4>.

16 El País, *Spain will give Morocco €30 million to curb irregular immigration*, 19 July 2019, [https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/07/19/inenglish/1563521682\\_999175.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/07/19/inenglish/1563521682_999175.html).

17 'Unaccompanied children' refers to children separated from both parents and other relatives and who are not being cared for by any other adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. 'Separated children' refers to children separated from both parents or primary care-givers, but not necessarily from other relatives. These children may be accompanied by other adult family members. See ICRC, IRC, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNHCR, and World Vision, *Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*, January 2004, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/children/4098b3172/inter-agency-guiding-principles-unaccompanied-separated-children.html>.

18 As provided for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

19 UNHCR, *UNHCR shocked at death of Afghan boy on Lesbos; urges transfer of unaccompanied children to safe shelters*, 25 August 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/12705-unhcr-shocked-at-death-of-afghan-boy-on-lesvos-urges-transfer-of-unaccompanied-children-to-safe-shelters.html>.

20 This is in relation to the detention centres UNHCR has access to. Detention centres in Libya have been described as "generally inhuman" by OHCHR and UNSMIL including due to severe overcrowding, insufficient access to washing facilities and toilets, and malnutrition, see UNSMIL and OHCHR, *Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya*, 20 December 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/LibyaMigrationReport.pdf>; In June 2019, OHCHR noted the ghastly conditions in Zintan detention centre and the meagre amounts of food supplied once a day to detainees that included over 100 Eritrean children, see OHCHR, *Press briefing note on Libya*, 7 June 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24681&LangID=E>. Six children were also amongst the victims of the bombing of Tajoura detention centre in July, see UN News, *Six children among 53 confirmed fatalities after Libya detention centre airstrikes: Security Council condemns attack*, 5 July 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/07/1041911>.

21 UNHCR, *UNHCR's position regarding the detention of refugee and migrant children in the migration context*, January 2017, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/detention/58a458eb4/unhcrs-position-regarding-detention-refugee-migrant-children-migration.html>.

22 UNHCR, *Libya-Niger: Resettlement update #76*, 27 August 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71052>.

23 UNICEF, *Los derechos de los niños y niñas migrantes no acompañados en la frontera sur Española*, February 2019, <https://www.unicef.es/sites/unicef.es/files/recursos/informe-ninos-migrantes-no-acompanados.pdf>.

24 At least 16 children were known to have died while trying to cross from Turkey to Greece by land in 2018, of which 11 drowned in the Evros River.

25 IOM, *Fatal journeys volume 4: Missing migrant children*, 28 June 2019, [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/fatal\\_journeys\\_4.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/fatal_journeys_4.pdf).

26 Deaths at sea in the Central and Western Mediterranean are usually not disaggregated by age and gender. The figure of 200 is perhaps a conservative estimate as 18% of sea arrivals in Italy were children along with 11% in Spain. Some 1,279 people were known to have drowned in the Central Mediterranean in 2018 along with 811 in the Western Mediterranean.

27 Womens Refugee Commission, *"More than one million pains"*, March 2019, <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/gbv/resources/1689-more-than-one-million-pains-sexual-violence-against-men-and-boys-on-the-central-mediterranean-route-to-italy>.

28 UNHCR, UNICEF and IRC, *The Way Forward*, July 2017, [https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58434#\\_ga=2.89202590.407342579.1563430932-1558205287.1548575017](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58434#_ga=2.89202590.407342579.1563430932-1558205287.1548575017).

29 Although IOM has established safe areas in the Reception and Identification Centres on Lesbos and Chios with space for around 135 people, there is not enough space for all the children and others who need to be placed there. For example, in July there were over 660 unaccompanied children on the islands.

30 See for example IFRC, *Alone and unsafe*, 12 May 2018, <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/12/181126-AloneUnsafe-Report-EN-web.pdf>.

31 UNHCR, *Greece: Fact Sheet - June 2019*, July 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/70447>.

32 UNICEF, *The rights of unaccompanied and separated children at Spain's southern border*, February 2019, <https://www.unicef.es/sites/unicef.es/files/recursos/Spanish-Assessment-Southern-Border2019-ExecutiveSummary.pdf>.

33 <https://www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/separated-children/>

34 UNHCR, *In de eerste plaats een kind*, April 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/nl/wp-content/uploads/UNHCR-Children-First-2019-screen.pdf>.

35 UNHCR, *"A refugee and then..."*, June 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/5d271c6a4>.

36 UNHCR, *UNHCR observations on the use of age assessments in the identification of separated or unaccompanied children seeking asylum*, 1 June 2015, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/55759d2d4.pdf>; EASO, *Practical Guide on age assessment: second edition*, 2018, <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/easo-practical-guide-on-age-assessment-v3-2018.pdf>.

- 37 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, *Child-friendly age assessment for unaccompanied migrant children*, 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20170920-Rapport%20Fiala-EN.pdf>.
- 38 UNICEF, *The rights of unaccompanied and separated children at Spain's southern border*; Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Spain\**, 5 March 2018, <https://bit.ly/2GN5IIF>; ECRE, *The Committee on the Rights of the Child Condemns Spain's Treatment of Unaccompanied Children*, 28 June 2019, <https://www.ecre.org/the-committee-on-the-rights-condemns-spains-treatment-of-unaccompanied-children/>.
- 39 Age determination is also complicated by some children trying to avoid being identified as being under 18 due to a perception that being identified as an adult may make it easier for them to move onwards, such as when the country they have arrived in is not their intended destination or for children arriving in Spain, to speed up transfers from the overcrowded centres in the enclaves to the mainland.
- 40 See for example NPO Radio 1, *Vluchtelingenkinderen op straat door verkeerde registratie*, 4 May 2019, <https://www.nporadio1.nl/argos/onderwerpen/499671-vluchtelingenkinderen-op-straatdoor-verkeerde-registratie>; Rijksoverheid, *Antwoorden Kamervragen over vluchtelingenkinderen op straat door verkeerde registratie*, 24 June 2019, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2019/06/24/antwoorden-kamervragen-over-het-bericht-vluchtelingenkinderen-op-straat-door-verkeerde-registratie>. Reasons for children sometimes being incorrectly recorded as adults in the country in which they first arrive in Europe can include some children claiming to be adults in order to not be placed in special facilities so that it will be easier to move on to other countries.
- 41 Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction: Discretionary Leave*, 18 August 2015, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/658372/discretionary-leave-v7.0ext.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658372/discretionary-leave-v7.0ext.pdf).
- 42 AGIA and UNHCR, *L'ascolto e la partecipazione dei minori stranieri non accompagnati in Italia*, July 2019, <http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Attualita/Notizie/Documents/report-agia-unhcr-finale.pdf>; See also InfoMigrants, *Migrant minors want inclusion and orientation programs*, 17 July 2019, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/18208/migrant-minors-want-inclusion-and-orientation-programs?ref=tw>.
- 43 UNHCR, *La procédure d'asile expliquée aux enfants non accompagnés au Luxembourg*, 14 June 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENNSBgIN5Ew>.
- 44 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13), Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 28 and 29), revised European Social Charter (Article 17) and – for EU MS – to Article 14(1) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- 45 IOM, UNICEF and UNHCR, *Access to Education for refugee and migrant children in Europe*, 10 September 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/71202>.
- 46 The EU+ region encompasses the 28 EU member States along with Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
- 47 IOM, UNICEF and UNHCR, *Access to Education for refugee and migrant children in Europe*.
- 48 Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, *Hayat boyu öğrenme genel müdürlüğü, Göç ve acil durum eğitim daire başkanlığı*, June 2019, [https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2019\\_06/26115239\\_14\\_HAZIRAN\\_2019\\_YNTERNET\\_SUNUUU\\_.pdf](https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2019_06/26115239_14_HAZIRAN_2019_YNTERNET_SUNUUU_.pdf).
- 49 UNICEF and REACH, *Situation Overview: Unaccompanied and Separated Eritrean Children Outside of the Reception System in Rome*, May 2017, [https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/eca-dataproduct-REACH\\_ITA\\_Situation\\_Overview\\_Eritrean\\_UASC\\_final\\_v4.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/eca-dataproduct-REACH_ITA_Situation_Overview_Eritrean_UASC_final_v4.pdf); See also UNHCR, *Left in Limbo: UNHCR Study on the Implementation of the Dublin III Regulation*, August 2017, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59d5dcb64.html>.
- 50 Praxis and Safe Passage, *Caught in the Middle*, March 2019, <http://safepassage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Caught-in-the-Middle-Unaccompanied-Children-in-Greece.pdf>.
- 51 Under EU legislation, children are able to work from the age of 15 onwards, although the age limit may be higher in some countries. See European Union, *Young workers*, no date, [https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/human-resources/employment-contracts/young-workers/index\\_en.htm#shortcut-1](https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/human-resources/employment-contracts/young-workers/index_en.htm#shortcut-1).
- 52 In many countries, care arrangements for unaccompanied children end abruptly when the child turns 18. This means having to move out of their accommodation and guardianship ceases. See European Migration Network, *Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors Following Status Determination in the EU plus Norway*, July 2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00\\_eu\\_synthesis\\_report\\_unaccompanied\\_minors\\_2017\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00_eu_synthesis_report_unaccompanied_minors_2017_en.pdf). UNHCR, UNICEF and IRC have recommended that guardianship should be available up to the age of 21, see UNHCR, UNICEF and IRC, *The Way Forward*. In Greece, UNHCR transfers unaccompanied children who turn 18 to apartments that are part of its accommodation scheme while in the Czech Republic, UNHCR, its NGO partner OPU, and the Prague Municipality run a project providing temporary accommodation for former unaccompanied children between the ages of 18 and 26.
- 53 Some have been reported to rely on survival sex in order to move on, see Harvard FXB, *Emergency within an Emergency*, April 2017, <https://cdn2.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/114/2017/12/Emergency-Within-an-Emergency-FXB.pdf>; InfoMigrants, *Save the Children denounces the 'invisible exploitation' of migrant children between Italy and France*, 10 August 2018, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/11048/save-the-children-denounces-the-invisible-exploitation-of-migrant-children-between-italy-and-france>.
- 54 EASO, *Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2018*, June 2019, <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/easo-annual-report-2018-web.pdf>.
- 55 Eurostat data accessed on 24 July 2019.
- 56 Ministère de la Justice, *Nombre de MNA confiés par décisions judiciaires du 1er janvier au 6 septembre 2019*, September 2019, [http://www.justice.gouv.fr/art\\_pix/Tableau\\_mna.pdf](http://www.justice.gouv.fr/art_pix/Tableau_mna.pdf). This compares to 17,022 unaccompanied children in 2017.
- 57 See also MSF, *Children repeatedly abused by border authorities*, 3 August 2017, <https://www.msf.org/balkans-children-repeatedly-abused-border-authorities>; Save the Children, *Refugees and Migrants at the Western Balkans Route: Regional Overview – January to March 2019*, 2019, [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/15379/pdf/refugees\\_and\\_migrants\\_balkans\\_regional\\_overview\\_q1\\_2019\\_sc\\_bmdh\\_data.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/15379/pdf/refugees_and_migrants_balkans_regional_overview_q1_2019_sc_bmdh_data.pdf).



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