



Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges

Evolution of the Journey and Situations of Refugees and Migrants in Southern Libya

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by Altai Consulting in partnership with IMPACT Initiatives (IMPACT), for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Libya. It was written in February 2017 by Marie-Cecile Darme and Tahar Benattia of Altai Consulting, with the support of Hind Kinani of Altai Consulting and IMPACT.

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We are grateful to UNHCR's Libya office for its role in designing and framing this study, as well as the organisation's offices in Algeria, Chad, Niger and Italy, and the International Organisation for Migration's Libya mission for their valuable input and assistance. We are also indebted to the numerous migrants, refugees, government representatives, humanitarian workers, academic researchers and community members who shared their time and their views with us on the various themes that this study covers.

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MIXED MIGRATION TRENDS IN LIBYA

Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges

Please note:

For the purposes of this report the expression “refugees and migrants” refers to all people on the move along the routes studied, including migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and other populations (such as victims of trafficking or unaccompanied and separated children), unless a distinction is otherwise made. This study does not include the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

When used separately, the term “refugees” encompasses all persons in need of international protection under UNHCR’s mandate. This includes refugees recognised as such following a refugee status determination procedure as well as asylum seekers.

Altai Consulting and IMPACT Initiatives prepared this report for review by the United Nations High Commissioner Refugees (UNHCR). Opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the UNCHR.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AVRR	<i>Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration</i>
CAR	<i>Central African Republic</i>
CDC	<i>Community Development Centres (UNHCR-funded centres in Libya)</i>
CMR	<i>Central Mediterranean Route</i>
CSO	<i>Civil Society Organisation</i>
DCIM	<i>Department for Combating Illegal Immigration (Libyan institution)</i>
DDG	<i>Danish Demining Group</i>
DTM	<i>Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM data collection mechanism)</i>
DRC	<i>Danish Refugee Council</i>
ECOWAS	<i>Economic Community of West African States</i>
EMR	<i>East Mediterranean Route</i>
EU	<i>European Union</i>
GBV	<i>Gender-Based Violence</i>
GITNOC	<i>Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (network of experts)</i>
GNA	<i>Government of National Accord</i>
ICMPD	<i>International Centre for Migration Policy Development</i>
ICRC	<i>International Committee of the Red Cross</i>
IDI	<i>In-Depth Interview</i>
IDP	<i>Internally Displaced Person</i>
INGO	<i>International Non-Governmental Organisation</i>
IO	<i>International Organisation</i>
IOM	<i>International Organisation for Migration</i>
ISS	<i>Institute for Security Studies</i>
KII	<i>Key Informant Interview</i>
LCG	<i>Libyan Coast Guard</i>
MENA	<i>Middle East North Africa</i>
MSF	<i>Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)</i>
NFI	<i>Non-Food Item</i>
NGO	<i>Non-Governmental Organisation</i>
PoC	<i>Persons of Concern</i>
RMMS	<i>Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat</i>
RSD	<i>Refugee Status Determination</i>

UASC	<i>Unaccompanied and Separated Children</i>
UNDP	<i>United Nations Development Programme</i>
UNHCR	<i>United Nations Refugee Agency</i>
UNSMIL	<i>United Nations Support Mission in Libya</i>
VoT	<i>Victim of Trafficking</i>
WMR	<i>West Mediterranean Route</i>

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FOREWORD

Libya has become the preferred jumping-off point for mixed migration movement towards Europe. Those travelling to Libya include refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, unaccompanied minors, persons displaced as a result of climate change, victims of trafficking and stranded migrants among others. These people travel along the same routes and resort to the services of the same smugglers to help them cross Libya.

Traffickers and smugglers continue to capitalise on Libya's fractured society and political strife for profit. Meanwhile the European community continues to grapple with the problem of mixed-migration. It is a tragedy that against all odds and on a monthly basis, hundreds of men, women and children lose their lives crossing the Mediterranean on small boats and dinghies. In 2017 so far alone, more than 1,200 people have died trying to reach Europe.

This report sheds light on the constantly changing flow of refugees and migrants into Libya and identifies their principal vulnerabilities and needs. It builds on previous studies that indicate that of the three main routes to Europe used by refugees and migrants - the Western Mediterranean Route, the Central Mediterranean Route and the Eastern Mediterranean Route – Libya has become the preferred gateway for irregular movement, despite also being the deadliest.

UNHCR is committed to working to expand protection space in Libya for those moving as part of mixed flows. This study and others to come will go a long way to providing vital information to decision makers on mixed-migration and the situation of persons of concern (refugees and asylum-seekers) and guide UNHCR's activities as part of enhanced engagement in the country.

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Chief of UNHCR Mission to Libya

15 May 2017, Tunis

Figure 1: Overview of Libya and key cities mentioned in the report





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2016, UNHCR commissioned IMPACT Initiatives and Altai Consulting to conduct research on mixed migration patterns in Libya, with a particular focus on the south of the country and on communities of concern to UNHCR.

The objectives were twofold: 1) to track the evolution of mixed migration trends and routes to and within Libya; 2) to map out refugee and migrant concentrations in southern Libya, and to determine their vulnerabilities and protection needs.

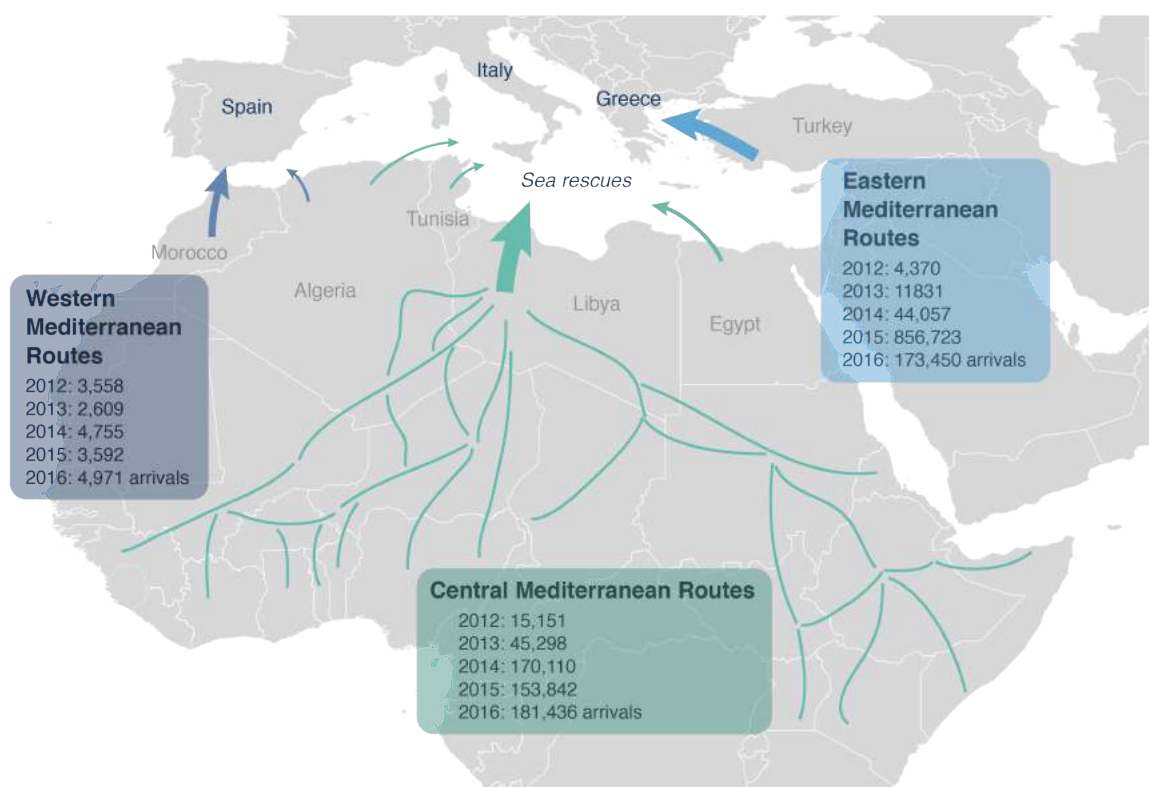
This report's findings are based on qualitative data collected between October and December 2016 in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Niger, Chad and Italy. In Libya, the research team conducted 72 interviews with key informants¹ and 140 with refugees and migrants in eight hotspots in the south of the country and in the capital Tripoli. Another 74 interviews were conducted with key informants, refugees and migrants in Algeria, Niger, Chad and Italy.

MIXED MIGRATION TRENDS ON THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE

Mixed Migration Routes and Flows to Europe

- Three main routes bring refugees and migrants to Europe: the Western Mediterranean Route (usually via Morocco to Spain), the Central Mediterranean Route (usually via Libya to Italy) and the Eastern Mediterranean Route (usually via Turkey to Greece).
- The Central Mediterranean Route is currently the most active and accounts for the largest number of people crossing by sea to Europe.
- Libya is by far the preferred jumping off point for refugees and migrants from Africa hoping to reach Europe; yet it is particularly unsafe.
- In recent years, movements by sea from Libya to Europe have increased and the indications are that it is likely to stay this way. In addition to Libya's strategic location, conflicts and instability in the country have hindered border control and created an environment where smuggling networks can flourish. At the same time, interviews established that instability has pushed refugees and migrants settled in Libya to leave, attempting to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe.
- Most refugees and migrants arrive irregularly in Libya through Sudan (for those from East Africa), Niger (for those from West and Central Africa), or, to a lesser extent, Algeria (for those from West Africa). Routes through Sudan sometimes cross into Chad and routes through Niger in some cases pass through Algeria.
- Regardless of the route used, those coming to Libya form mixed migration flows, meaning that people with different backgrounds and motivations travel together along the same routes.

¹ Key informants interviewed included smugglers, local and national-level authorities, civil society organisations (CSOs), and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) supporting refugees and migrants, diplomats, community leaders, detention centre managers, border guards and coast guards.

Figure 2: Main Migration Routes to Europe²

Profiles of Refugees and Migrants Passing Through Libya

- The total number of refugees and migrants in Libya (whether in transit or settled in the country) does not appear to have decreased in recent years. Ongoing conflict since 2014 might have pushed numerous refugees and migrants settled in Libya to leave, but increasing numbers also seem to be arriving.
- The profiles and nationalities of arrivals in Libya have evolved in the past few years. There seems to be a decrease from East Africa but an increase from West Africa.
- While Syrians used to transit through Libya on their way to Italy,³ this was no longer the case in 2016. Most Syrians now take the Eastern Mediterranean Route to reach Europe.
- Foreign nationals coming to Libya are predominantly young, single men with a low level of education. A majority reports moving to or migrating through Libya for economic reasons. However, profiles vary. Refugees and migrants can be grouped into four loose categories:
 - Nationals of neighbouring countries (Niger, Chad, Sudan, Egypt and Tunisia) mostly report travelling to Libya for economic reasons. They often intend to stay in Libya as opposed to crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe. Their migration is often temporary (a few months to a few years) and they may come and go several times.

² Data source: IOM.

³ Syrians were the first nationality to come to Libya and travel on the Central Mediterranean Route in 2015.

- Nationals of West and Central African countries come mainly from Nigeria, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Senegal, Ghana, Mali and Cameroon. Most of them report having left for economic reasons. They are young and vulnerable to ill-treatment.
 - Nationals of East African countries (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan),⁴ report having left their countries of origin because of political persecution, conflict and economic distress. They tend to transit quickly through Libya on their way to Europe.
 - Nationals from outside Africa usually originate from non-neighbouring Arab countries. They are often fleeing conflict and are more prone to travel as family units. They tend to be skilled and have a higher level of education. Syrians, Palestinians and Iraqis form the bulk of respondents from this group.
- Trafficking for sexual exploitation seems to be increasing, affecting Nigerian and Cameroonian women in particular.
 - The number of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC)⁵ travelling alone in Libya is rising, now representing some 14% of total arrivals in Europe via the Central Mediterranean Route, mainly from Eritrea, The Gambia and Nigeria.
 - Dire economic circumstances, a lack of job opportunities, the political and security situation and human rights abuses are the main reasons for refugees and migrants in Libya to leave their countries of origin.
 - Not all those coming to Libya intend to go to Europe: about half of them claim they wish to remain there either permanently or temporarily, before returning to their countries of origin. Most of those who intend to stay are drawn to the country's job opportunities. However, the lack of stability, security and rule of law, the economic crisis and widespread abuse and exploitation pushes some of these to also attempt to reach Europe.

Smuggling

- Almost all refugees and migrants coming to Libya irregularly seek the help of smugglers or criminal networks. Only migrants from Sudan, Niger and Chad travelling to Libya for seasonal work sometimes cross the border without.
- Smuggling can take very different forms, from highly-structured, hierarchical transnational organisations to loosely-connected, informal, horizontal networks.
- The smuggling industry is currently undergoing rapid expansion in Libya. Smuggling networks are dynamic, in constant evolution and, it would appear, increasingly professional.
- Smuggling networks can involve a variety of stakeholders and intermediaries. Sea crossings are often organised from coastal areas by different smuggling networks than those who help people to move up through the country on land.
- Armed groups dominate the smuggling and trafficking business. Their profiles and tribal backgrounds vary according to the region and specific leg of the journey.
- Smuggling costs for refugees and migrants fluctuate based on factors including nationalities, perceived economic status, the level of service required and the smuggling network itself.

⁴ Note that Sudan also falls into the category "neighbouring countries". Some refugees and migrants from Sudan intend to cross to Europe and can be found along the same smuggling routes as refugees and migrants from East Africa, while others come as neighbours to work in Libya for a while before going back to their country.

⁵ UASC refers to children (persons under the age of 18) who are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for them.

- Respondents indicated that smuggling prices to and through Libya have increased (reportedly by at least 30%) in the past couple of years, due in part to the clear deterioration of the security situation in Libya, the multiplication of smuggling intermediaries and the high inflation, liquidity and foreign currency crises in Libya.

The Journey

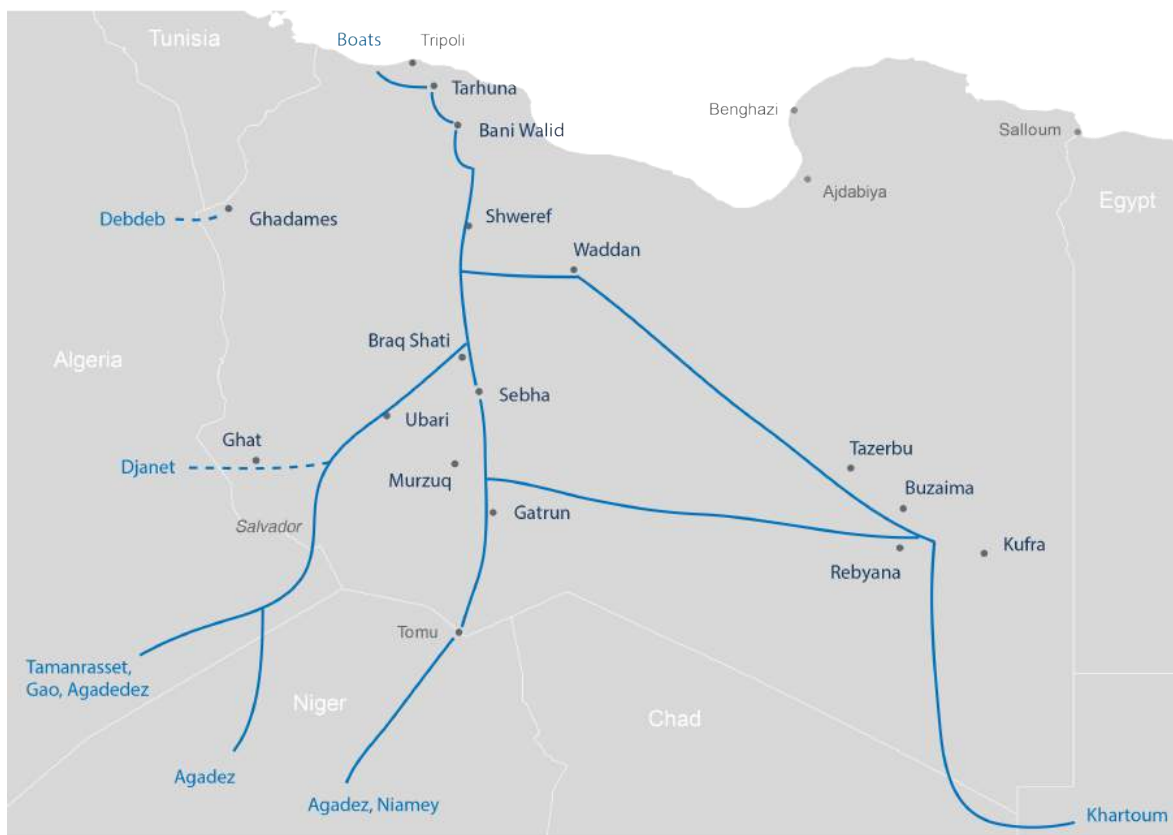
There are a wide array of routes, price scales and quality options for refugees and migrants in Libya. However, two principal types of journey are evident:

- “Organised” journeys are akin to a complete travel package deal from country of origin to country of destination.
 - The whole journey is taken care of by a transnational, structured smuggling network. Those smuggled are provided with basic accommodation and food, and do not deal directly with intermediaries.
 - Costs for this type of journey are particularly high (often around USD 5,000 from the country of origin to the Libyan coast). Refugees and migrants pay for the whole trip at once, in some cases through international wire transfers from relatives or community members in Europe or America.
 - This type of journey is mostly undertaken from East Africa.
 - People on an organised journey usually transit through Libya as quickly as possible on their way to Europe and seldom stop in Libyan cities. The trip from their countries of origin to the coast usually does not take longer than two to three weeks.
- “Step-by-step” journeys are fragmented into several legs, and are organised by refugees and migrants themselves.
 - Different smugglers are used for each leg of the journey. Refugees and migrants pay the smuggler in charge of each leg separately in cash before departure. Food and accommodation are often not included.
 - Those travelling stop between each leg of the journey to work or receive money from relatives to fund the next leg.
 - The overall journey from country of origin to the Libyan coast takes much longer than the “organised” version, often several months.
 - This type of journey is mostly undertaken by West and Central Africans.
 - Smugglers might know each other and redirect their clients to the next person they need to carry on with their journey. However, they are not part of structured and hierarchal smuggling networks.
 - Step-by-step journeys are generally significantly cheaper than organised journeys, yet prices vary widely.
- Most refugees and migrants interviewed in Libya said they learned about the route and its risks from friends, acquaintances or members of their community. Levels of information vary according to the country of origin, but overall, a significant number of respondents knew little about details such as how long the sea journey to Europe would take or how much it would cost.

Routes within Libya

- The main entry points into Libya have not changed in recent years. Refugees and migrants from East Africa usually cross the Sudanese border south-east of Kufra, while refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa mostly arrive from Niger to the south of Sebha. Other entry points include Ras Jedir at the Tunisian border, Ghat or Ghadames at the Algerian border, and Salloum at the Egyptian border.
- The routes within Libya have evolved since 2013, however, with the northeast of the country now largely avoided because of recurrent fighting. At the time of research, people rarely passed through or stopped in Benghazi or Ajdabiya, and those going from East Africa to the Libyan coast travelled through the Kufra area to Bani Walid directly, or to Sebha.
- Those transiting now stop less than they used to. They are also less inclined to stay for long periods of time in the south of Libya, due in part to the many conflicts that the region has known in the past few years.
- Tripoli remains the main city people stop in to seek work and ways to reach Europe. However, Bani Walid is emerging as a new stop-off point *en route* to the coast. In the South, Sebha is the preferred hub, while transit through Kufra city has decreased.
- The main departure points by sea across the Mediterranean are Sabratha, Surman, Garabuli, Zawiya, and to a lesser extent Tajoura and Gargaresh – all located on the north-western coast.

Figure 3: Main migration routes through Libya



MIXED MIGRATION IN THE SOUTH

Refugee and Migrant Communities

- Refugees and migrants usually only stay a few days to a maximum of two months in the South before heading for northern Libya.
- Respondents in the southern cities of Sebha, Kufra, Ghatrun, Murzuq, Ubari and Ghat reported staying in shared accommodation in specific neighbourhoods, depending on the tribal background of the smugglers used.
- Relatively few refugees and asylum seekers reside in the South.⁶ Most refugees and asylum seekers settled in Libya (as opposed to transiting through it) are Palestinians, Syrians and Iraqis who arrived many years or decades ago. They are employed and well-integrated, and usually live in northern urban centres.
- People on organised journeys transiting through the South stay for very short period of times in smuggler-controlled locations often on the outskirts of cities, and are particularly vulnerable. They are barely visible and difficult to reach.

Vulnerabilities

- People travelling along the western or eastern routes to and through Libya face harsh environmental conditions, a lack of rule of law and prevalence of criminal networks, unsafe means of transportation (pick-up trucks and rubber boats for instance), and minimal or no access to food, water and medical support.
- Along the route, they often fall victims to extortion and ill-treatment including being insulted, beaten, robbed, or detained until they paid more money. Some end up being subject to trafficking, forced labour, sexual violence and exploitation.
- The current instability in the country has raised the threat of armed violence, xenophobia and discrimination by smugglers and the local population and in particular of those of sub-Saharan origin. The conflict has also reduced job opportunities and levels of accommodation, healthcare and education as well as increasingly generalised poverty.
- In Libya, respondents cited additional issues – many of which attributable to the current instability – such as: insecurity and armed violence, racism and discrimination against people of sub-Saharan origin, lack of livelihood, accommodation, healthcare and education opportunities, as well as the degradation of the economic situation.
- Vulnerabilities vary depending on country of origin.
 - In the South, Sudanese, Nigeriens and Chadians are reportedly mostly settled, integrated and therefore less vulnerable. Syrians, Palestinians and Iraqis in the North are in a comparable situation: they are usually well settled but they do face specific difficulties such as administrative obstacles when renewing official documents.
 - Eritreans, Somalis and Ethiopians are usually only in transit through the South, in most cases using “organised journeys” offered by transnational and structured smuggling networks. They are vulnerable because they are under the constant control of smugglers during their stay in Libya and it is difficult for them to reach support organisations. They are thought to be at particular risk of trafficking, as trafficking networks that operate in North Africa tend to offer the kind of full package journeys they purchase. The high cost of the “organised journey” packages also means that large

⁶ Note that this key finding is specific to refugees and asylum seekers, as opposed to other migrants.

debts may be built up, increasing the risk of exploitation and coercion for debt repayment.

- West and Central Africans seem to be the main victims of abuse and ill-treatment by smugglers and the local population. They are usually younger than other refugees and migrants, less educated, less skilled and possess fewer resources.

Supporting Refugees and Migrants in the South

- Support to refugees and migrants is very limited in the South. Local civil society organisations (CSOs) struggle to operate and only a few provide services to refugees and migrants. Due to the multiple conflicts, most non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations (IOs) have left the region. Support by the Libyan authorities and public agencies is also scarce.
- While some refugee and migrant communities have unofficial representatives, there were only three official diplomatic missions open in the South at the time of the research.⁷ Some respondents indicated being reluctant to interact with these for a variety of reasons, including conditions in their country of origin, irregular entry or presence in Libya or reports that some official representatives might collaborate with smugglers. Of note here is that refugees would not normally seek consular protection and assistance from the authorities of their country of origin. Depending on the root causes and specific circumstances of flight, contacting diplomatic or consular authorities might put refugees at risk.
- Approximately half of respondents in Libya declared having been directly supported by other refugees and migrants in the country.
- A large majority of refugees and migrants interviewed in Libya had access to a functioning phone at all times, regardless of their country of origin, and communicated regularly with their relatives. Internet access, on the other hand, was far less widespread and more irregular.
- Numerous gaps were identified in service delivery and assistance, including direct humanitarian and medical assistance and protection against trafficking and other human rights violations. The availability of information on the rights of refugees and migrants was also severely lacking as was legal and other support with administrative processes, such as obtaining/renewing official documents.

CONCLUSIONS

Mixed migratory movements to Libya and from Libya to Europe appear to have significantly increased in 2016. While it is difficult to predict the evolution of migration flows, considerations that factor into the decision of refugees and migrants to make their way to Libya irregularly and stay in the country or leave for Europe can be categorized. Looking at these indicators, it seems likely that Libya will remain the main transit hub for refugees and migrants to reach Europe from Africa in the coming years.

Main Changes in Recent Years

With the deepening of the political and security crisis in Libya since 2013, migration dynamics in the country have known significant evolutions:

- Routes and transit hubs within Libya have changed. People no longer travel through the northeast of the country and Bani Walid has emerged as a new hub.

⁷ The only consulates functioning in the South at the time of research were those of Chad, Nigeria and Mali, all located in Sebha.

- Countries of origin and profiles of refugees and migrants have evolved. In particular, flows from West Africa have increased, involving individuals usually travelling “step-by-step”.
- Refugees and migrants are less likely to seek to settle in Libya or stop in Libyan cities for more than a few weeks (in particular in the South).
- The smuggling industry has grown increasingly professional and transnational smuggling organizations further developed.
- Armed groups play an increasingly dominant role in the smuggling industry.
- Smuggling prices have generally risen.
- Refugees and migrants making the journey to and within Libya are more vulnerable, while support services have decreased and the security situation has deteriorated. In particular, fewer CSOs, NGOs and IOs are able to continue actively supporting refugees and migrants on the ground, especially in the South.

Some aspects have remained unchanged however, including the routes people take to reach Libya, entry points into the country and the fact that all flows are mixed, involving individuals from very different backgrounds and with different motivations travelling alongside each other in search of safety, protection or livelihood opportunities.

Implications in Terms of Service Provision and Protection

The recent evolutions identified above have implications for protection and service provision from the international community, such as the following.

- Since those travelling through Libya are highly mobile, they would be best reached through mobile teams. In the South in particular, vulnerable individuals tend to be difficult to reach and to stay in the region for short periods of time only, thus a permanent centre would not be, in its own, sufficient to answer their needs.
- Smugglers of different backgrounds use different roads, tracks, transit cities and neighbourhoods within Libya, so protection interventions must cover large geographical areas, rather than just targeting specific cities.
- As routes and transit hubs within Libya may evolve quickly given the extreme volatility of the political and security context, operational locations need to be regularly re-assessed.
- Refugees and migrants have become less visible, in particular those travelling on “organised journeys”, who remain under the control of smugglers throughout their stay in Libya and are usually held in private locations on the outskirts of cities. This means cooperation with local civil society is essential to access vulnerable individuals and provide them with support – especially given that the international community is often forced to operate remotely due to the current instability in Libya.
- Refugees and migrants are often unable to reach out for support themselves, because they do not have freedom of movement, they experience a language barrier, they lack reliable information on support available, or they are concerned about the intentions of those providing support. It is therefore necessary to proactively reach out to them and supplement information centres with methods of dissemination that work with current dynamics.
- Since migration flows are mixed and specific circumstances in Libya make it difficult to distinguish refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, comprehensive response and referral mechanisms are paramount.
- Humanitarian interventions need to be coordinated across borders routes from countries of origin to destination since the risks and vulnerabilities of migrants are not particular to the countries they find themselves in.

- Given the current political context in Libya, refugees and migrants who came regularly to Libya or whose situation was regularized in the past need support renewing official documentation.

Recommendations for UNHCR and Other International Community Organisations Supporting Refugees and Migrants in Libya

Direct humanitarian assistance for refugees and migrants in Libya:

- Provide direct relief in the form of mobile joint interventions in key hubs in the South (Sebha, Ubari, Gatrún, Murzuq, Bani Walid, Rebyana, Tazerbu, and Kufra for instance), where assistance could be delivered weekly or bi-weekly.
- In addition to health care, food and non-food items (e.g. hygiene kits), direct assistance should include psychosocial support, counselling services and temporary shelter.
- Accompany border monitoring and rescue operations (after conducting due diligence checks) to provide support to refugees and migrants stranded in the desert, while raising awareness of patrols of the human rights, needs and vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants.
- Provide support to local communities/stakeholders on the management of human remains in accordance with international standards.
- Support the renewal of documentation and other administrative processes, in particular for established non-national communities in Libya and those who wish to remain in the country.

Information sharing and referrals for refugees and migrants in Libya:

- Inform refugees and migrants about support provided by the different organisations active on the issue, their rights, as well as available legal pathways to protection or migration.
- Establish referral mechanisms to CSOs, INGOs, IOs and authorities and maintain an updated roster of those actively providing support.
- Support the establishment of self-help support mechanisms and trustworthy community networks, committees and organisations of refugees and migrants in Libya.
- Provide information on the risks of irregular migration by sea or land as well as policy changes in transit countries and in Europe to allow refugees and migrants to make informed decisions.
- Engage with diaspora communities in destination countries to encourage them to communicate on available legal pathways and protection services, the risks of irregular movements and living conditions in Europe in order to manage expectations.⁸

Advocacy and awareness raising for Libyan authorities and citizens:

- Promote the development of a migration management framework that is sensitive to the protection needs of refugees and other vulnerable populations; advocate for the decriminalisation of irregular migration.
- Advocate for the development of a functioning asylum system in the country, including early identification of persons in need of international protection, adequate reception facilities, durable solutions, and clear allocation of roles and responsibilities of the different institutions in charge of migration and asylum.
- Advocate on the necessity to prosecute smugglers and enforce laws against trafficking.

⁸ Note that these recommendations can only be truly efficient if they go hand in hand with the development of legal alternatives to irregular migration and enhanced access to international protection when necessary.

- Continue efforts with authorities to ensure that the certificates⁹ given by UNHCR are respected and provide the protection that they should.
- Raise the awareness of authorities in direct contact with mixed migration flows about the legal differences between refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, and imperative of respect of the human rights of all.
- Advocate for decent conditions in detention facilities as well as for alternatives to detention, with an immediate priority being the release of those most vulnerable.
- Conduct awareness-raising media campaigns targeting the general public in Libya with information about refugees and migrants and their rights, to reduce racism, discrimination, exploitative practices and misconceptions.
- Encourage civil society to engage more with refugees and migrants, in particular in the case of CSOs already active with internally displaced persons (IDPs).

⁹ In Libya, UNHCR provides basic documentation following registration in the form of Attestation Certificates mentioning that the bearer is a person of concern to UNHCR. In 2016, a total of 1,850 individuals were registered and therefore provided with Attestation Certificates.



INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

Migration to Libya is not a new phenomenon. Since the turn of the century, the country has been an important destination and transit point for refugees and migrants alike. However, the fall of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi six years ago dramatically altered the landscape. As civil unrest took hold, opportunities grew for irregular movement often characterised by risky journeys. Meanwhile, the instability and collapse of the economy pushed refugees and migrants living in Libya to flee.

In 2016, a record number of 181,436 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR), which in 90% cases means passing through Libya.¹⁰ This represented an 18% increase compared to 2015,¹¹ compared to a decrease in people travelling along the two other main migration routes to Europe (Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) and Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR)).¹²

The rise in the number of refugees and migrants on the Central Mediterranean Route cannot, however, be solely explained as a redirection of flows from other routes to the CMR.¹³ In 2015, refugees and migrants that arrived in Europe from the EMR were mainly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan; in 2016, the representation of these nationalities did not significantly rise on the CMR.¹⁴

Irregular migration through Libya is unlikely to slow down, given the current political and security stalemate in the country and neighbouring states, the continuing drive for a better life, the increasing professionalization of the smuggling industry and the significant profitability of the route between Libya and Italy.

The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has described the situation of migrants in Libya as an acute “human rights crisis”.¹⁵ The collapse of the judicial system and widespread impunity has led many armed groups, criminal gangs and individuals to participate in the exploitation and abuse of refugees and migrants in the country. Refugees and migrants in Libya often suffer countless human rights violations including, among others, “*arbitrary detention, torture, other ill-treatment, unlawful killings [and] sexual exploitation.*”¹⁶

¹⁰ In 2016, 7,852 arrivals in Italy departed from Algeria, Greece, Tunisia, Turkey, or their departure site was not known. Source: *Desperate Journeys*, UNHCR, 2017, available at this [link](#).

¹¹ 153,842 arrivals to Italy were reported in 2015. Source: UNHCR data, available at this [link](#).

¹² See section 3.1.1 Routes to Europe for more details on the different routes and their use. The overall number of refugees and migrants entering Europe through the Western Mediterranean Route dropped by 13%, from 16,263 in 2015 to 14,094 in 2016, while the overall number of refugees and migrants using the Eastern Mediterranean Route dropped by 79%, from 860,436 in 2015 to 176,732 in 2016. Source: *Desperate Journeys*, UNHCR, 2017, available at this [link](#).

¹³ It has previously been assumed that flows shifting from the Eastern Mediterranean Route in particular might account for the increased number of migrants on the Central Mediterranean Route, as migration deals between Turkey and the European Union made journeys along the Eastern Mediterranean Route (across the Aegean Sea) more difficult.

¹⁴ Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans did not feature in the top ten nationalities among arrivals to Italy in 2016, even though there was a slight increase of Syrian and Iraqi arrivals to Italy in 2016 compared the previous year (267 in 2015 to 1,127 in 2016 for Syrians and 192 in 2015 to 1,412 in 2016 for Iraqis). Nigerians (20.7% of arrivals), Eritreans (11.4%) and Guineans (7.4%) were by far the most numerous to travel on the CMR in 2016 according to UNHCR. Source: Italy country update 2016.

¹⁵ *Detained and dehumanized, Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya*, UNSMIL, 2016, page 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Legal Framework for Refugees and Migrants in Libya

Libya is party to the 1969 Organisation of African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.¹⁷ The Libyan interim constitutional declaration of 2011 provides for the right to claim asylum.¹⁸ However, the country has yet to enact national legislation and create effective administrative structures to establish a functioning asylum system. UNHCR is presently responsible for registering asylum seekers and for refugee status determination.

Existing laws¹⁹ criminalise irregular entry into Libya and fail to recognise the differences between migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and victims of trafficking. As a result, all refugees, asylum seekers and migrants entering Libyan territory without appropriate documentation, including those disembarked following rescue or interception at sea, face detention in facilities run by the Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM). According to Articles 6 and 11 of Law n°19 of 2010, those intercepted without official documentation in Libya have two months to regularise their stay, after which they face criminal penalties including “*imprisonment with labour or [a] fine not exceeding 1,000 Libyan Dinars.*”²⁰

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

In October 2016, the UNHCR commissioned IMPACT and Altai Consulting to carry out research on mixed migration patterns in Libya, with a particular focus on the south of the country and on communities of concern to the UNHCR.

This fact-finding report aims to:

1. Track the evolution of mixed migration trends and routes to and within Libya;
2. Map refugee and migrant communities in the south of Libya and understand their protection needs and vulnerabilities.

The study not only provides cross-border analysis of refugees and migrants’ journeys from their countries of origin to Libya but also looks into their living conditions once inside the country. It builds on previous research analysing migration routes and trends in Libya, in particular Altai Consulting’s 2013 report for the UNHCR.²¹ Primary data collection was conducted between October and December 2016 in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Niger, Chad and Italy.

¹⁷ Libya is not a party to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

¹⁸ Article 10 stipulates that the state will guarantee the right of asylum in accordance to the law. There is also a prohibition of extradition of political refugees.

¹⁹ Law No 6 of 1987, “Regulating Entry, Residence, and Exist of Foreign Nationals” and Law No 19 of 2010 on “Combating Irregular Migration”.

²⁰ Source: Articles 6 and 11 of Law n°19 of 2010. The law also provides that an exemption from punishment can be granted to migrants if they actively seek to inform the authorities of their situation, and if the information provided leads to the prosecution of criminals (article 8).

²¹ *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads*, Altai Consulting for UNHCR, 2013.

The objective of this research is to inform the UNHCR's policies and programmes for Libya. It will support the UNHCR and its in-country partners by:

1. Providing up-to-date and reliable information on the challenges faced by people of concern in Libya and along their journey;
2. Providing recommendations on how to assist and protect vulnerable refugee and migrant populations settling in Libya or transiting through the country.

1.3. KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Asylum Seeker

An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualised procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker (UNHCR, Division of International Protection, Master Glossary of Terms, 2006).

Circular Migration

The fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or long-term movement which may be beneficial to all involved, if occurring voluntarily and linked to the labour needs of countries of origin and destination (IOM Glossary on Migration).

Forced Displacement or Forced Migration

Coerced departure of a person from his/her home or country due, for example, to a risk of persecution or other form of serious or irreparable harm. Such risks can exist due to armed conflict, serious disturbances of public order, natural disasters or the inability or unwillingness of a state to protect the human rights of its citizens (UNHCR, Ten Point Plan in Action, 2016).

Irregular Migrant

A person who, owing to unauthorised entry, breach of a condition of entry, or the expiry of his or her visa, lacks legal status in a transit or host country. The definition covers *inter alia* individuals who have entered lawfully but have stayed for a longer period than authorised or subsequently taken up unauthorised employment. Such migrants are also sometimes described as “clandestine/undocumented migrants” or “migrants in an irregular situation” (IOM Glossary on Migration).

Irregular Migration

Movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the state. The term is predominantly used from the perspective of host countries when referring to unauthorised entry and or stay in the country (UNHCR, Ten Point Plan in Action, 2016).

Mixed Migration or Mixed Flows

A movement in which a number of people are travelling together, generally in an irregular manner, using the same routes and means of transport, but for different reasons. People travelling as part of mixed movements have varying needs and profiles and may include asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked

persons, unaccompanied/separated children, and migrants in an irregular situation (UNHCR, Ten Point Plan in Action, 2016).

Persons of Concern (PoC) to the UNHCR

A general term used to describe someone for whom the UNHCR is mandated to provide protection and assistance. These include refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, stateless persons and, in many situations, internally displaced persons (IDPs). UNHCR's authority to act on behalf of other persons of concern except refugees is based on various United Nations General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions (UNHCR, Ten Point Plan in Action, 2016).

Prima Facie Approach

A *prima facie* approach means the recognition by a state or UNHCR of refugee status on the basis of readily apparent, objective circumstances in the country of origin (UNHCR, Guidelines on International Protection N°11, 2015).

Refugee

A person who meets the eligibility criteria for the definition of a refugee provided by the relevant international or regional refugee instruments, the UNHCR's mandate, and/or national legislation.

The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees states that the term "refugee" shall apply to any person who "*owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.*"

However, Libya is not a signatory of the 1951 Convention, and its authorities do not make a clear distinction between refugees and asylum seekers. The UNHCR in Libya currently registers nationals from seven specific countries and provides them with Attestation Certificates confirming that they are persons falling under its mandate for the purposes of resettlement.²²

Note that in this report, the term "refugees" refers to anyone in need of international protection under the UNHCR's mandate. This includes recognised refugees following an RSD procedure as well as asylum seekers.

Refugee Status Determination (RSD)

The legal or administrative process by which states or the UNHCR determine whether a person seeking international protection is or is not a refugee under applicable international, regional or national law (UNHCR, Division of International Protection, Master Glossary of Terms, 2006).

Resettlement

The selection and transfer of refugees and IDPs from a state in which they have sought protection to a third state which has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent residence status. The status ensures protection against refoulement and access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals along with the opportunity to eventually become a naturalised citizen of that country (UNHCR, Resettlement Handbook, 2011).

²² The UNHCR only carried out RSD procedures in Libya in the context of resettlement to third countries at the time of writing.

Seasonal Migration or Short-Term Migration

In this report, “seasonal migration” or “short-term migration” refers to a situation in which the migrant left his/her country of residence with the intention of coming back after a limited period of time. In contrast to other types of migration, seasonal migration usually does not involve a permanent change in residence so the migrant can mitigate the risks of moving to a new environment.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

SEA involves various terms and definitions: sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential of power, or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another; sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions; and violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (Protection Information Management, Common Terminology, 2015).

Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

Any act of violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a person on the basis of his/her sex or gender, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (UNHCR, Ten Point Plan in Action, 2016).

Smuggling (of Persons)

Smuggling takes place when a person facilitates the transportation, attempted transportation or illegal entry of another person into another country with the aim of making a profit. It is *“the procurement in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit of the illegal entry of a person into a state party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident”* (UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Article 3(a), 2000).

Trafficking and smuggling are often confused. The notion of exploitation is a key distinction between the two phenomena. By definition, trafficking is committed by fraud, deception or coercion, and with a purpose of exploitation. Smuggling, on the contrary, does not require an element of exploitation, coercion, or violations of human rights. Smuggling also entails movement across international borders, which is not necessarily the case in human trafficking. It seems however that there are increasingly connections between criminal gangs involved in smuggling and the forms of control used by traffickers and smugglers. In some situations, human smuggling may turn into human trafficking.

Stranded Migrants

Individuals who is deemed not to be in need of international protection but who cannot remain lawfully in the host state, move lawfully to another country, or return to their country of origin (UNHCR, Ten Point Plan in Action, 2016).

Trafficking in Persons

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of

a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (UN Convention Against Organised Crime, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Article 3(a), 2000).

Human trafficking is a crime and a human rights violation that can happen within a single country or across countries. According to the Trafficking Protocol quoted above, the notion of exploitation includes at a minimum “*the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organ.*” The consent of a victim of trafficking to the intended exploitation is irrelevant when the means described in the convention apply. In the case of children, the “*recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation is considered trafficking even if it does not involve the means in paragraph (a).*”

Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC)

An unaccompanied child is a child who has been separated from both parents as well as other relatives and who is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for them (UNHCR, Ten Point Plan in Action, 2016). A separated child is a child separated from both parents, or from his or her previous legal and customary primary care-giver but not necessarily from other relatives. This may, therefore include a child accompanied by other adult family members. Note that “children” in this context refers to persons under the age of 18.

Tribal and ethnic groups in Libya

This report mentions several tribes (*qabila*) that are influential across the Libyan territory. These Libyan tribes are built around a common identity based on shared ancestry, heritage and bloodlines as well as specific social structures.²³ Tribes are an important factor in Libya's governance and political landscape: they play a key role in local reconciliation initiatives, as well as in the composition of security and justice bodies, notably through networks of local elders and notables.

Tribes are referred to in this report because they are essential to comprehend and analyse Libya's social, political and security context. However, this should not lead the reader to believe that entire tribes are associated with the smuggling industry. It must be highlighted that not all members of a same tribe think or act the same way.

Terminology used through this report is described below:

Ahali: Arabic for “natives”, a term used across southwest Libya to designate local Arab communities of mixed Arab and sub-Saharan African descent without tribal affiliation. They are also sometimes referred to as Al Fazzazna.

Awlad Suleyman: Arab tribe present in Sebha and Sirte.

Gaddadfa: Arab tribe historically present in the region of Sirte and currently mostly concentrated in Sebha. They are a branch of the larger Houara tribe.

Magarha: Smaller Arab tribe primarily based in Braq Shati.

Tebu: Saharan cross-border and non-Arab ethnic group found in southern Libya, Chad, north-eastern Niger and, to a lesser extent, Sudan. They are found in south-eastern towns in the district of Kufra (Rebyana and Tazerbu in particular), as well as in the areas of Murzuq, Gatrún, Ubari and Sebha in the southwest.

Tuareg: Saharan Berber ethnic group organised in various confederations and spread through much of the Sahara and Sahel region, including southwestern Libya, Mali, Niger and Algeria. Tuareg are mostly found in Ubari, Ghat, Ghadames, Sebha, Al Aweinát, Awal and Dirj.

Zwey: Prominent Arab tribe in the southeast, in particular around the city of Kufra.

Warshefana: A group of seven tribes that populate and are particularly influential in a large area between Sabratha and Tripoli.

²³ The tribe is the strongest form of identity in the country, and 77% of Libyans identify with one particular tribe (closer to 90% in the east and south). Source: *Tribe, Security, Justice and Peace in Libya today*, Altai Consulting for USIP, 2016, available online at this [link](#).



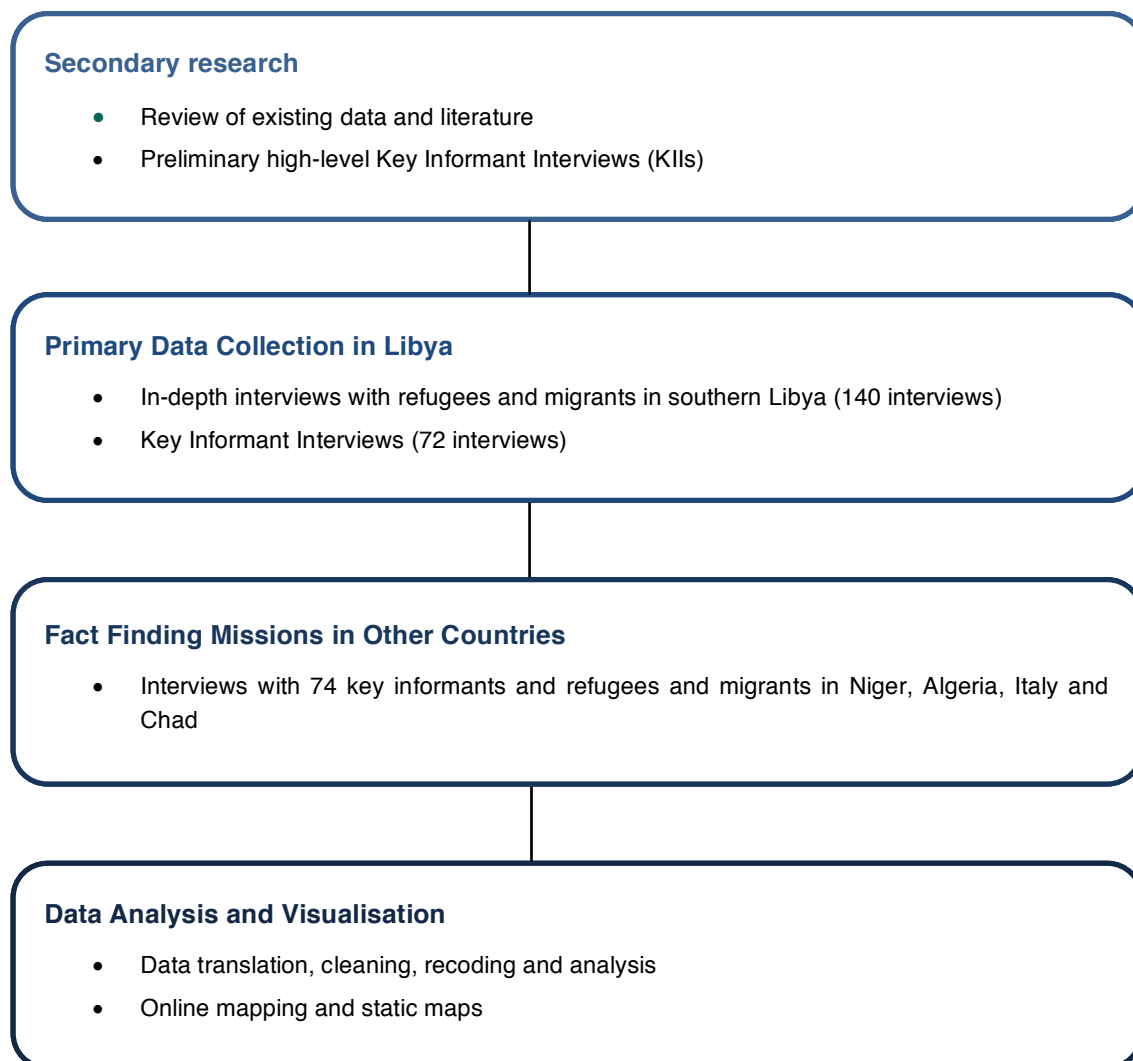
METHODOLOGY

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. APPROACH

To develop this study, Altai and IMPACT undertook four complementary research activities across six countries. Figure 4 outlines these activities, which are described in greater detail in the following sub-sections.

Figure 4: Research modules



The initial research scope for this study focused exclusively on mapping out asylum seekers and refugees from the following communities living in the South of Libya: Syrians, Palestinians, Eritreans, Somalis, Sudanese, Ethiopians and Nigerians.²⁴

²⁴ In Libya, UNHCR considers nationals from these seven refugee-producing countries (Syria, Palestine, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Sudan if from the region of Darfur) as people of concern under their protection.

However, after the first weeks of data collection, it became evident that 1) the refugees from these communities only represented an extremely small proportion of foreign nationals in the South, 2) individuals from targeted communities did not stay in the South but travelled through the region as quickly as possible, 3) the refugees from the targeted communities who did stay in the South had largely settled there long ago, were well-integrated and less vulnerable, and 4) migration routes and trends were significantly different from those identified by the UNHCR's last study in 2013.

Given these initial findings, UNHCR and the research team expanded the scope of research to gain a broader and deeper understanding of current mixed migration trends in Libya and communities in the South:

- We broadened our sample to interviews with migrants, with the aim of understanding the dynamics of mixed population movements in Libya. Although the focus remained on nationals from the seven target countries, we also interviewed individuals from Iraq, Senegal, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and South Sudan.
- We conducted a small number of interviews with people arriving in Tripoli and Italy. This allowed us to reach those who had traversed southern Libya but who were difficult to access there, such as Eritrean and Somali nationals.
- We looked at the evolution of migration routes and patterns and conducted fact-finding trips to Niger, Algeria, Chad and Italy, as well as conducting additional Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) across Libya.

2.2. SECONDARY RESEARCH

The research team completed an extensive **review of literature**, including news articles, UN and NGO reports, statistical data and academic publications. The purpose of this exercise was to allow for a comprehensive framing of the study and a deeper understanding of the historical context, as well as to ensure that the study was complementary to existing efforts. A list of the literature consulted is included in Annex 1 of this report.

In addition, **key informant interviews** were carried out in Tunis (in person or by telephone) with 11 subject-matter experts among academics, journalists, activists, members of relevant international agencies and INGOs.

2.3. PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION IN LIBYA

Field research was conducted in Libya between October and December 2016, and was led by Istishari Research, Altai's local partner, involving a team of seven locally-recruited researchers, a Tripoli-based fieldwork manager and a coordinator.

2.3.1. IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

A total of **140 qualitative interviews with refugees and migrants** were conducted in eight locations in southern Libya: Sebha, Gatrún, Ubari, Murzuq, Um Al Aranib, Rebyana, Kufra, Ghat, and in Tripoli. Figure 5 shows the number of interviews in each location.

Figure 5: In-depth interviews conducted with refugees and migrants in Libya

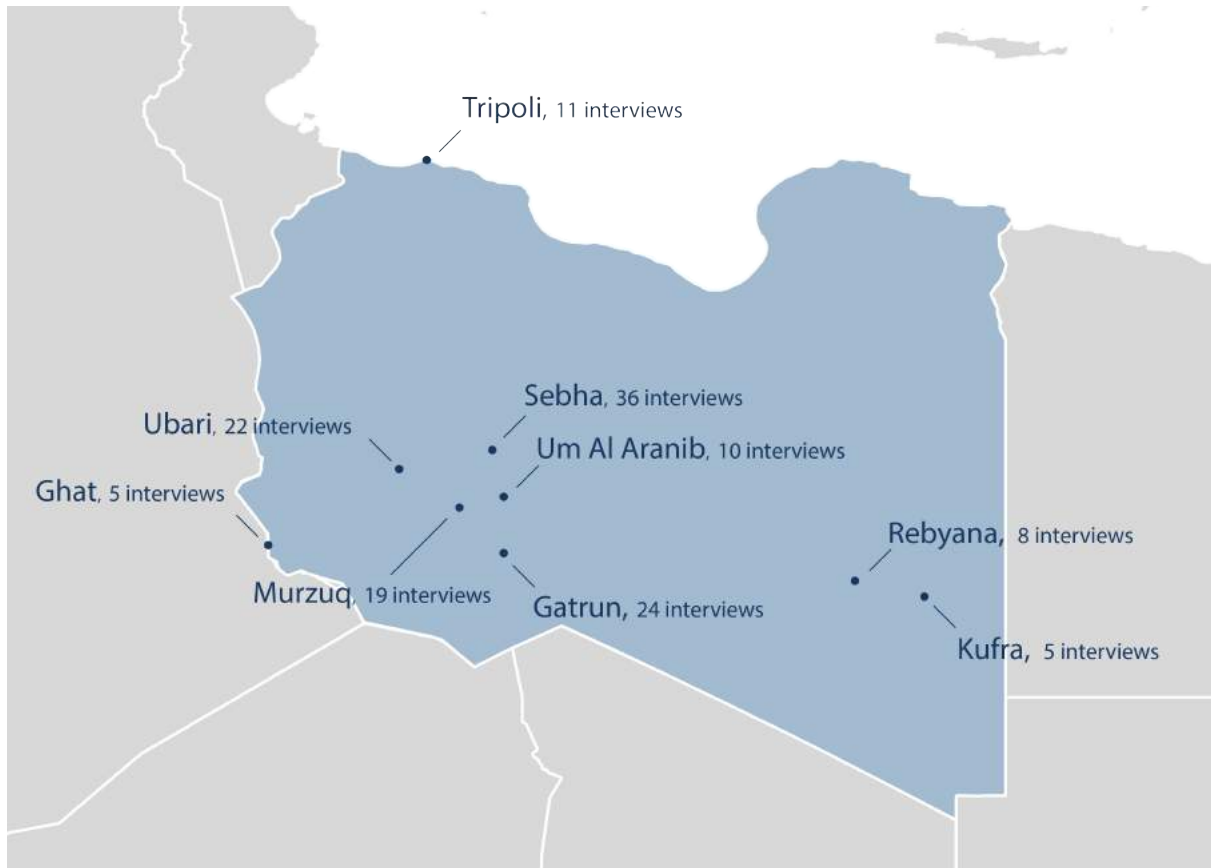
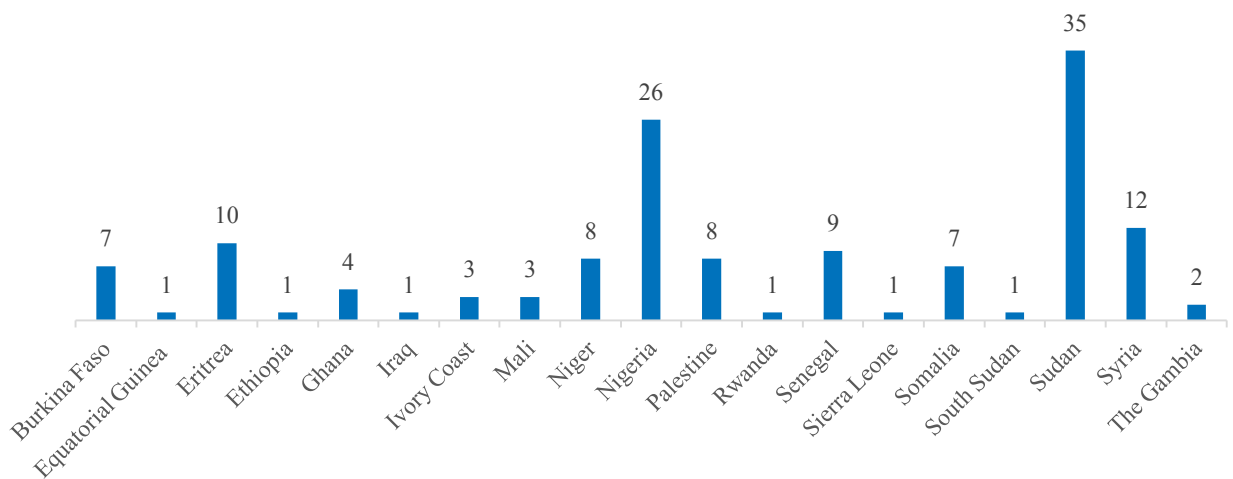


Figure 6: Countries of origin of migrants interviewed



No sampling quotas were used to select interview respondents, as no reliable sample framework exists for refugees and migrants in the south of Libya. However, the researchers made a strenuous effort to build a diverse sample group in terms of locations,²⁵ nationalities, gender²⁶ and age. Respondents were relatively representative in gender and age of what is thought to be the profile of refugees and migrants in Libya. The overwhelming majority was male (94%) and young (60% of respondents were aged under 30). The age and gender breakdown is presented below. As we prioritised interviewees from the UNHCR’s focus countries, the average age is probably higher than that of the general migrant population in Libya.²⁷

Figure 7: Breakdown of refugees and migrants sample by age

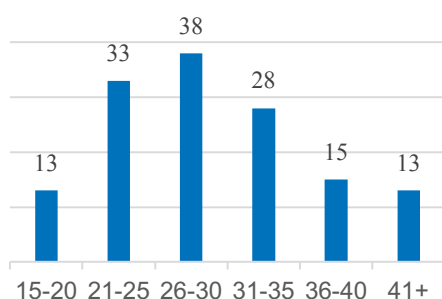
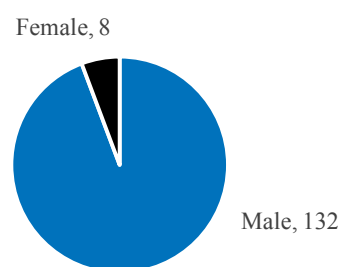


Figure 8: Breakdown of sample by gender



All interviews were conducted face-to-face and on average lasted approximately one hour. The research team used smartphones equipped with SurveyToGo (STG) to collect and upload the data. A qualitative questionnaire used open-ended questions that determined the following: the respondents’ profiles; the push and pull factors and drivers of their migration/displacement; their vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms; their contacts within the local community and with other refugees and migrants; their knowledge of support mechanisms and existing NGOs/CSOs, their decision-making processes around staying in Libya or moving on, the routes taken and their vulnerabilities along these routes.

Prior to data collection, interviewers attended training by Istishari field research managers and Altai Consulting experts. This included seminars on the project and key concepts around refugees, migrants and mixed migration trends in Libya, technical courses on the methodology and data collection software, presentation of the questionnaire, practice exercises and 15 pilot interviews.

2.3.2. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS IN LIBYA

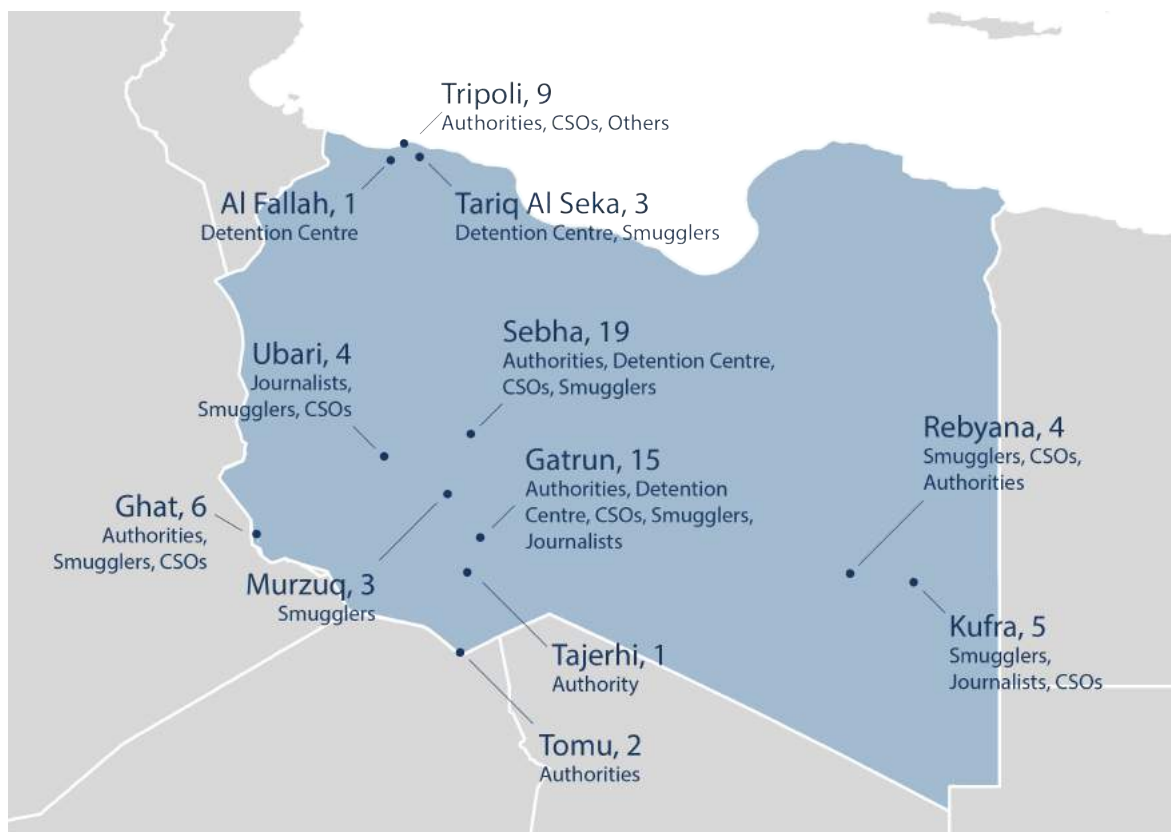
A total of **72 qualitative interviews with key informants** were carried out in Libya, in several locations as seen in Figure 9.

²⁵ Within each city, migrants were interviewed in a variety of neighbourhoods.

²⁶ Of all migrants interviewed for this research, including in Italy, 10 were women: four Palestinians, three Nigerians and three Eritreans.

²⁷ See section 3.2.1 Refugees and Migrants Profiles for more details.

Figure 9: Key informant interviews conducted in Libya



The purpose of these interviews was to speak to individuals with knowledge of migration trends, routes, flows, and refugee and migrant communities, in order to supplement information provided by the communities themselves. Informants included smugglers, local and national-level authorities, CSOs, NGOs and INGOs supporting migrants, diplomats, community leaders, detention centre managers, border guards and coast guards.

Table 1: Key informant interviews conducted by type

Type	Number	Description of interviews conducted
Authorities	18	Local authorities in Gatrun, Sebha, Tripoli, Tajerhi, Tomu, Ghat, Rebyana, including: DCIM; City Halls; Local Councils, Border Control Guards; Coast Guards; Medical Centres; Communal Chamber; Census Committee of Workers and Migrants.

NGOs & CSOs	23	INGOs and local CSOs in Ghatrun, Sebha, Tariq Al Seka, Tripoli, Kufra, Ubari, Ghat, Rebyana, including: Aljanoub; Ana Muhajjer; Arkan; Caritas; CDC; DRC; IOM; Libya Health CSO; Rassemblement des Maliens à Sebha; Red Crescent; Sanadohom; Widad for Women and children's rights; Taher Elzawi; Tamzin; Sada Alhaqq; Attahar Zawi; Endahmal; Yad Bi Yad; Zaitouna; Organisation of Decision Makers and Development; Toumass.
Smugglers	18	Smugglers currently operating in Sebha, Murzuq, Tariq Al Seka, Ghatrun, Kufra, Ubari, Rebyana as well as two smugglers currently detained in Tariq Al Seka
Detention centres	6	Managers of the detention centres of Ghatrun, Sebha, Tariq Al Seka, Abu Slim and Al-Fallah.
Journalists	4	Local journalists working on migration from Kufra, Ubari, Ghat and Ghatrun.
Community leaders	3	Member of the Somali Embassy in Tripoli; Eritrean Community Leader; Sudanese Community Leader.

KIIs conducted in Libya were based on semi-structured questionnaires suitable for qualitative data collection. Four different questionnaires were developed for individuals in detention centres, smugglers, members of the local authorities, CSOs/NGOs and other activists.

2.4. FACT FINDING MISSIONS

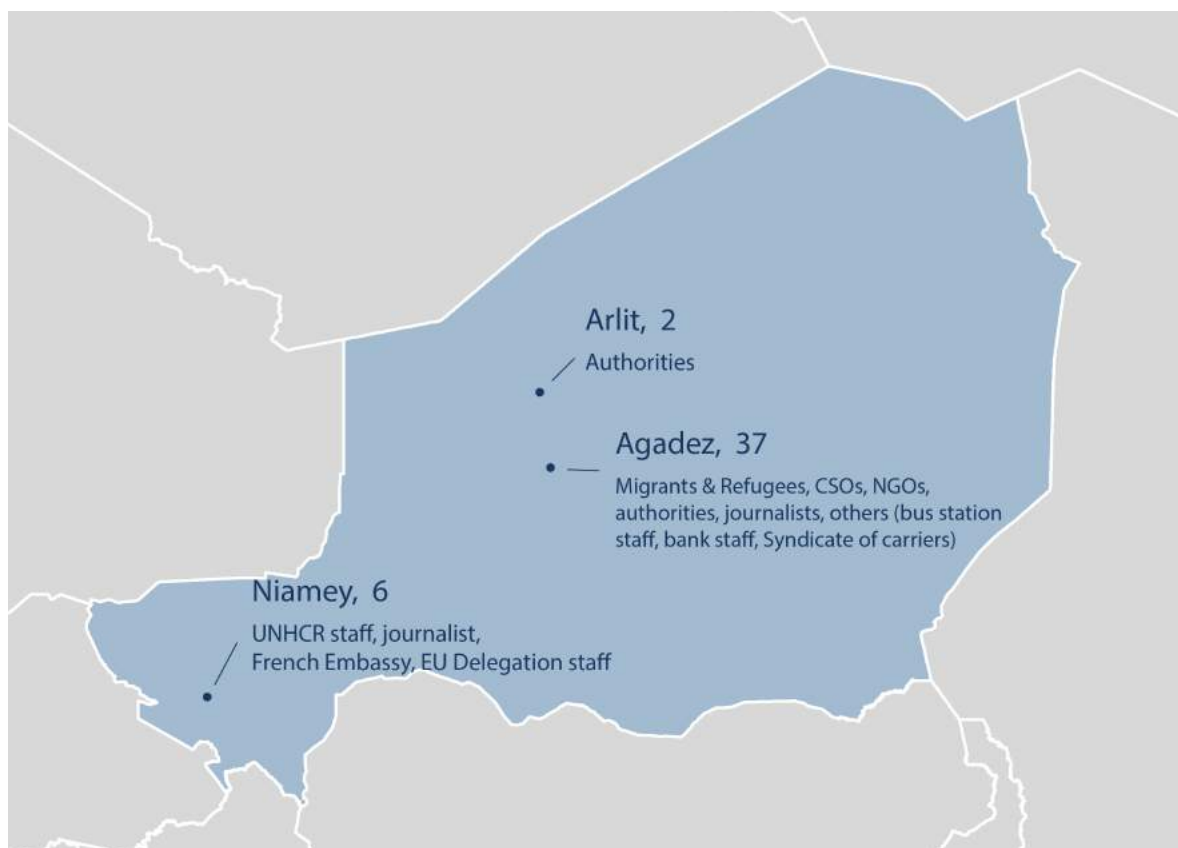
The research team conducted fact-finding visits to Niger, Algeria, Chad and Italy in December 2016. These countries were chosen in agreement with the UNHCR based on the preliminary results of field research in Libya and pre-identified knowledge gaps. The visits consisted of interviews with well-placed informants who provided valuable context to the literature review and to the primary research conducted inside Libya.

2.4.1. NIGER

Altai Consulting conducted 45 interviews in Niger, outlined in Figure 10. The country, and in particular the area of Agadez, was selected because:

- Niger was a major transit hub on the road to Libya at the time of research;
- The situation in Niger and routes through it shifted in 2016, following the enforcement by the Nigerien authorities of a new national law against smuggling;
- Carrying out field research in the area of Agadez, the last urban centre before the border with Libya, helped identify potential common vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants on both sides of the border, something for UNHCR and other actors to consider in terms of cross-border responses.

Figure 10: Interviews conducted in Niger



Qualitative, face-to-face and in-depth interviews were carried out in multiple cities in Niger with a variety of migration stakeholders, detailed below.

Table 2: List of interviews conducted in Niger

Type	Number	Description of interviews conducted
Authorities	6	Mayor and prosecutor of Arlit; Mayor of Agadez; Sultan of Air; Regional Director of the Civil Status Registry, of Refugees and Migration; Head of the police checkpoint outside of Agadez.
NGOs & CSOs	7	INGOs and local CSOs working with foreign national, in Agadez, including: French Red Cross; Nigerien Red Cross; Alliance Française d’Agadez (local CSO, not the French agency of the same name); Association Nigérienne de Défense des Droit de l’Homme (ANDDH, also known as CNDH); Espace Alternative Citoyen.
Smugglers	3	Smugglers based in Agadez: one driver, one head of “ghetto” (accommodation owned by a smuggler, where those transitioning stay until they can depart for the next leg of the journey), one smuggler who quit smuggling after recent smuggler arrests.

Refugees and Migrants	12	Interviews held in various areas of Agadez (streets, bus stations, banks).
Journalists	3	Local journalists investigating migration issues in Agadez and Niamey.
Others	4	All in Agadez: staff of two bus stations, head of the Ecobank agency, head of the Syndication of Carriers.
International Community	10	In Agadez: EuCap Sahel; UNDSS; ICRC; IOM. In Niamey: UNHCR staff; French Embassy Defence Attaché; EU delegation Equipe Conjointe d'Investigation.

2.4.2. ALGERIA

Seven informant interviews were conducted in Algiers, with UNHCR and IOM staff, journalists, and local CSOs active in the southern city of Tamanrasset. All interviews were qualitative, face-to-face and lasted an average of an hour and a half.

Algeria was chosen for a fact-finding mission for the following reasons:

- The south and the city of Tamanrasset in particular is a major transit hub;
- Preliminary findings suggested migration routes to Libya through southern Algeria might have changed in recent years;
- Increased controls in Algeria in recent months, leading to arrests of smugglers, refugees and migrants, might have impacted on migration patterns and protection needs;
- The literature review highlighted a research gap, in large part due to the difficulty of accessing the region;
- As Algeria borders Libya, the research team was able to identify potential common vulnerabilities faced by refugees and migrants in both countries which might be of future relevant to UNHCR and other actors' cross-border programmes.

2.4.3 CHAD

Eight interviews with key informants were conducted in the cities of N'Djamena and Abeche with IOM and UNHCR staff, migration and legal authorities, customs staff, and community leaders. Chad was selected because relatively little research on mixed migration has been conducted there in recent years.

Table 3: List of interviews conducted in Niger

Type	Number	Description of interviews conducted
NGOs and CSOs	3	Interviews with IOM, UNHCR and MSF staff in Abeche and N'Djamena.
Community leaders	5	Interviews in Abeche with community members knowledgeable on migration routes.

2.4.3. ITALY

The research team conducted 14 face-to-face, qualitative interviews with key informants, refugees and migrants in three locations in Sicily.

Figure 11: Interviews conducted in Italy



The team visited Italy to interview key stakeholders but also persons of concern to the UNHCR upon their arrival, in particular those of specific nationalities who proved difficult to reach in southern Libya due to their low visibility and fast transit.

Table 4: List of interviews conducted in Italy

Type	Number	Description of interviews conducted
Authorities	2	Prosecutors in Palermo.
CSO	1	Centro di Ricerche Economiche e Sociali per il Meridione (CRESM) in Palermo.
Academic & Journalist	3	University of Palermo researcher working on migration; investigative journalist working on migration from Palermo.
Refugees and Migrants	8	Eritrean, Gambian refugees and migrants in Agrigento, Palermo and Catania.

2.5. ANALYSIS

Primary data collected for this study was predominantly qualitative and the result of open-ended questions. Therefore, the research team manually recoded, transcribed and categorised interviewees' answers to determine how often the same issues came up. Descriptions of the main categories developed and their definitions are available in Annex 6.2 Recoding Open-Ended Answers.

The analysis in this report relies on both the recoded answers and field researchers' debriefings. The analysis also forms the basis for the interactive dashboards and maps produced by the research team and made available online at this [link](#).

2.6. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

2.6.1. CHALLENGES

Repeated changes in the research scope: Throughout the study, the scope, methodology and focus were reviewed on several occasions in coordination with the UNHCR to reflect the situation as it emerged during the initial research phase. Initially, the study intended to focus on asylum seeking and refugee communities living in southern Libya, but over time it was expanded to encompass an overview of migration routes, flows and trends, along with a look at smuggling dynamics across the country. In the inception phase, the researchers noted that relatively few asylum seekers and refugees actually settled in the South, prompting them to review and expand the target population to include a range of nationalities. These changes meant that the tools designed during the inception phase and used to collect data in Libya required adaptation to the expanded scope of the report. To overcome this challenge and prevent potential information gaps, the secondary research component was expanded and additional key informant interviews and fact-finding missions were included.

Difficulty in reaching target populations: Refugees from the initial countries of focus, such as Eritreans and Somalis, proved difficult to reach in southern Libya as they are usually on an "organised" journey and therefore transit quickly through the region under the constant control of smugglers. Most visible refugees and migrants in this area are from West Africa. They are usually on a "step-by-step" journey and, as a result, tend to work in southern cities to save money to pay for the next leg of the journey. Regardless of nationality, women are particularly difficult to come across in public spaces, in part because they represent a smaller percentage of those moving as part of mixed flows. Similarly, interviewers in Italy faced challenges connecting with refugees and migrants from Eritrea and Syria as they are highly mobile.

Costs and prices estimation: During data collection, the prices paid to people smugglers were expressed in a variety of currencies and sometimes paid several years before the interview was conducted.²⁸ The resulting currency fluctuations and inflation rates made determining costs and aggregating estimates very difficult. Furthermore, exchange rates can vary dramatically between official rates, rates actually applied in Libyan banks and black-market rates, the latter being the one used most often by smugglers.²⁹ To mitigate these discrepancies, the study only considered prices paid within the past two years for the bracket cost estimates presented. Prices expressed in US dollars are indicative

²⁸ Some of the respondents had been in Libya for many years at the time of the interview and therefore indicated prices that they paid to smugglers many years ago.

²⁹ Difficulties in accessing cash in Libya, exacerbated by the general crisis, rendered the official rates completely irrelevant on the ground.

only. In most cases, they originate from a conversion of prices mentioned by respondents in Libyan dinars (LYD). Prices in LYD were converted into USD according to the estimate black-market rate on 31 January 2017 in Tripoli.³⁰ Thus throughout this report one LYD is equal to 0.167 USD, whereas the official exchange rate was one LYD to 0.7 USD. Other local currencies (e.g. CFA) were converted into USD using the official rate stated on 31 January 2017. This official exchange rate, however, could be significantly different to the exchange rate that refugees and migrants would get on the ground.

Operational context in Libya: The breakout of fresh conflict in Sebha and Tripoli in 2016 interrupted field data collection for more than two weeks. Additionally, frequent power cuts and interruptions in telecommunication coverage in fieldwork locations such as Kufra hindered the ability of the research team to communicate, delayed data centralisation³¹ and complicated quality control and debriefing. These risks were anticipated but nevertheless worth noting, given the magnitude of the problems during the field research.

2.6.2. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The following limitations in the methodology were identified:

Data collected is primarily qualitative and, in the case of in depth interviews (IDIs) with refugees and migrants, based on self-reporting. The phenomenon of irregular migration in general, and smuggling in particular, are hard to quantify and analyse. It is extremely difficult to aggregate reliable data of the number of refugees and migrants passing through an area and even more difficult to compare data collected over several years to examine the evolution of flows. Most of the data available is based on estimates (data from the IOM DTM and the North Africa Mixed Migration Hub for instance), and there are very few that are reliable of the number of people in an irregular situation in Libya, and of numbers entering the country. Equally the profiles of refugees and migrants in the South, their vulnerabilities, needs and intentions is drawn from their own perspectives and this can lead to implicit bias as a methodological risk. We addressed this by triangulating the information with secondary research and KIIs.

Sample representativeness of interviews conducted with target populations. In-depth interviews conducted for this exercise are not representative of the refugee and migrant population in Libya. As the research focused on specific communities of concern to the UNHCR, people from these target communities were overrepresented in the sample. Similarly, the research focused on a specific region, the South, and therefore findings should not be extended as representative of the whole country. Conducting a survey representative of the entire refugee population in Libya would in any case have been challenge in the absence of a reliable sample framework available across Libya for this purpose.

Volatility of the environment. The data collected for this report reflects a specific point in time in Libya, as the environment is constantly in a state of flux. The situation evolves rapidly, requiring consistent monitoring. Some of those interviewed in Libya have been in the country for some time and routes, costs and risks associated with the journey may have changed since. To mitigate this bias, only answers from individuals who travelled to and through Libya in the past two years were considered when information was time-sensitive (for instance with regards to questions about costs).

Access to target populations. Access to refugees and migrants in the orbit of smugglers requires negotiation with the smugglers and/or intermediaries, thus limiting access. Similarly, interviews with

³⁰ The website <http://libyanbusiness.tv/table-currency/> provides indications of black market rates.

³¹ The lack of Internet access for extended periods of time led to interruptions in the upload of electronic surveys to the cloud server, causing a delay in data centralisation as the devices had to be brought to Tripoli to ensure effective uploading.

smugglers depended on the independent research team's contacts³² and a subsequent snowball effect. Best efforts were made to maintain sufficient diversity within the Libya research staff, for example in terms of tribal backgrounds, to avoid over-representation of a specific community.

³² Note that the "research team" refers here to Altai Consulting and Istishari Research staff and not to UNHCR staff.



MIXED MIGRATION
TRENDS ON THE CENTRAL
MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE

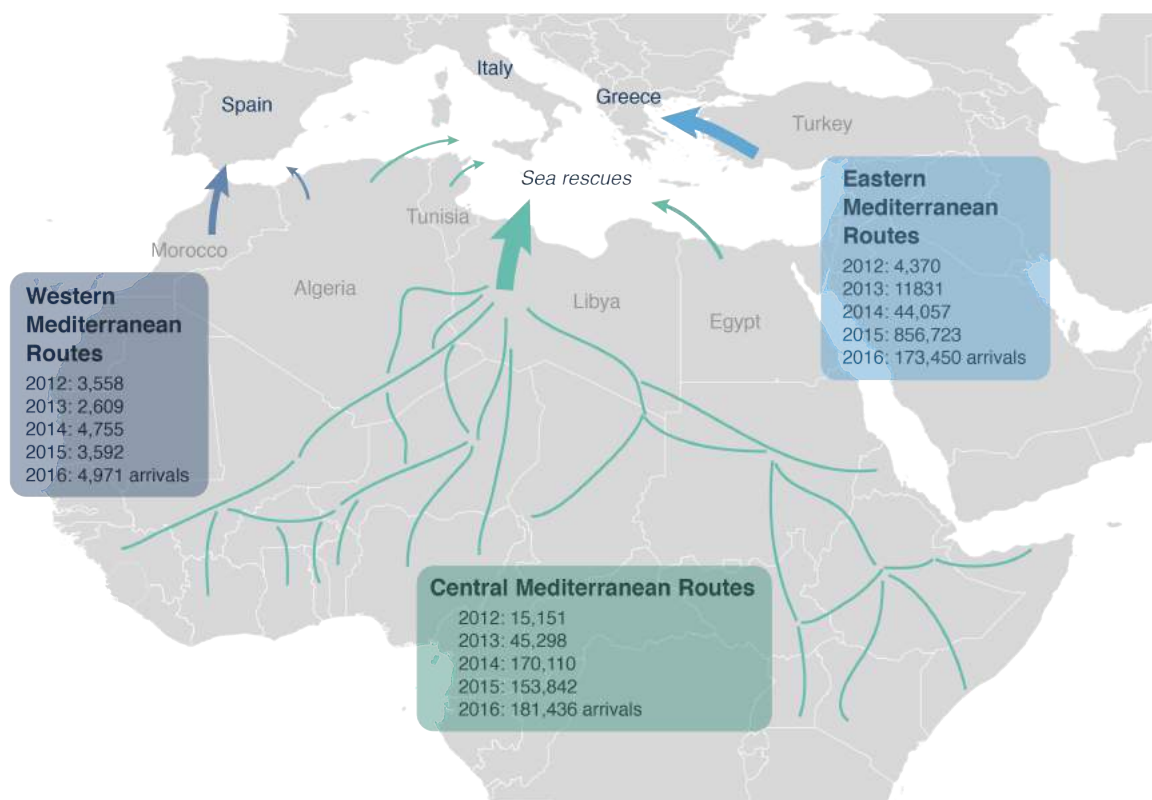
3. MIXED MIGRATION TRENDS ON THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE

3.1. OVERVIEW

3.1.1. ROUTES TO EUROPE

Three main migration routes are used by refugees and migrants to reach Europe – Western Mediterranean (WER), Central Mediterranean (CMR) and Eastern Mediterranean (EMR). The CMR is particularly deadly and sees the largest migration flow to Europe.

Figure 12: Main routes to Europe³³



Central Mediterranean Route

In 90% of cases, the CMR involves passing through Libya and arriving on Italy's shores (although there are instances of boats leaving from Egypt,³⁴ Tunisia or Algeria during 2016). Flows along the CMR have grown drastically in the past few years. In 2016, 181,436 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy via this

³³ Data from IOM. See also: *Migration Trends across the Mediterranean: connecting the dots*, Altai Consulting for IOM MENA, 2015, page 12.

³⁴ Note that despite remaining a very marginal flow, the numbers of boats leaving from Egypt seems to be on the rise, with reports of boats sailing from Egypt along the Libyan coast until Tripolitania, before then turning north towards Sicily.

route, an 18% increase compared to 2015 and a record.³⁵ The CMR is the main route for refugees and migrants coming from Africa, as other routes used by this population to get to Europe in the past have largely been closed off.

Refugees and migrants on the CMR tend to be young men (80%), aged 22 on average and travelling alone (72%).³⁶ They come from a wide array of countries of origin, far more diverse than those travelling via the EMR. As a result, flows are more complicated to map: they originate in dozens of countries, and shift based on smugglers' contacts and networks.

Those travelling on the CMR mainly reported leaving their home countries because of war, conflict, politics, joblessness and poverty.³⁷ On arrival in Italy, increasing numbers lodge asylum applications.³⁸ A minority of them will be recognised as refugees: out of all asylum claims examined in Italy in 2016, 5% of asylum seekers were recognised as refugees, while 14% were granted subsidiary protection and 21% were given humanitarian protection – the rest were rejected.³⁹

Eastern Mediterranean Route

The EMR is used by refugees and migrants transiting through Turkey to Greece. In 2015, it temporarily replaced the CMR as the most popular route to Europe when the number of refugees and migrants using it soared. However, in 2016 the EMR witnessed a sharp decrease in migrant and refugee numbers⁴⁰ and the CMR again became the chief gateway to Europe. The EMR reduction can be attributed to the implementation of an agreement between the EU and Turkey that came into effect in March 2016 as well as the closure of the Balkans route. The EU-Turkey Statement allows the return to Turkey of some of those that arrived in Greece irregularly.⁴¹

The EMR is mainly used by people fleeing war and political instability – including refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Relatively low numbers of Africans, largely Algerians, arrive in Europe via the EMR. On the EMR, refugees and migrants tend to be older, on average 28 years old.⁴² They usually travel as a family with women and children. More than half of those on the EMR are married or divorced. Only 22% travel alone.⁴³

³⁵ Data from the UNHCR, available at this [link](#).

³⁶ Source: UNHCR data on arrivals in Italy.

³⁷ When self-reporting causes for departure, refugees and migrants who arrived in Italy via the CMR tend to emphasise war and political reasons, in order to be able to claim asylum. According to the latest IOM Monitoring Flow Survey, 78% of respondents interviewed in Italy self-reported having left because of war or political reasons, while only 15% said they left for economic reasons. Source: IOM Flow Monitoring Survey, December 2016, page 8, available at this [link](#).

³⁸ In 2016, 123,600 asylum claims were submitted in Italy, compared to 83,970 in 2015 and to 63,456 in 2014. Asylum seekers' most common countries of origin were Nigeria, Pakistan, The Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Eritrea, Mali, and Bangladesh. Data source: *Italy Update #10*, UNHCR, December 2016, available at this [link](#). The consolidating data from the Italian Ministry of Interior is available at this [link](#).

³⁹ Outcome of the RSD decisions in Italy in 2016. A total of 91,102 claims were determined by Territorial Commissions across Italy that year. Data source: data from the Italian Ministry of Interior (available at this [link](#)) consolidated by UNHCR (see *Italy Update #10*, UNHCR, December 2016, available at this [link](#)).

⁴⁰ From 856,723 arrivals in 2015 to 173,450 in 2016. Data from UNHCR, see this [link](#).

⁴¹ The agreement makes provisions for returns from the Greek Islands to Turkey as well as resettlements of Syrian refugees from Turkey to Europe. It took effect as of 20 March 2016 and the first returns occurred in April 2016. More information on the agreement can be found in a press release from the European Commission available online [here](#).

⁴² Source: IOM Flow Monitoring Survey, December 2016, page 8, available at this [link](#).

⁴³ Source: IOM Flow Monitoring Survey, October 2016, page 8, available at this [link](#).

Western Mediterranean Route

With less than 15,000 arrivals in 2016, the WMR carries marginal flows compared to the CMR and the EMR.⁴⁴ Fences between Morocco and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla and sea surveillance by the Spanish Coast Guard, Moroccan authorities and Frontex limit the number of irregular crossings by sea or land.

Overall, the number of refugees and migrants entering Europe by land through Spain dropped between 2015 and 2016. This is primarily due to a decrease in crossings into Melilla. Those entering Spain via the Straits of Gibraltar or the Alboran Sea, increased however. In the past, large numbers of refugees and migrants would also travel by sea to the Canary Islands. For example, 30,000 people travelled from Nouadhibou, Mauritania, to the Canary Islands in 2006. This is no longer the case. As a result of heightened coastguard patrols in West Africa, no more than a few hundred people have attempted this route in the past few years.⁴⁵

The WMR attracts sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants with similar profiles to those travelling on the CMR, excluding nationals from the Horn of Africa and Central Africa. In 2016, the main nationalities arriving in Spain via the WMR were Guineans (19%), Algerians (17%), Syrians (14%) and Ivoirians (14%).⁴⁶ Preferred modes of crossing vary by nationality: Algerians and Ivoirians mostly entered Spain by sea, while Guineans and Syrians mostly crossed land borders.

Perspectives

As other routes are gradually closed off, Libya's poor security situation and lack of rule of law presents an opportunity for refugees and migrants despite the dangers and high risks. More than 5,000 people died at sea while travelling the CMR in 2016⁴⁷ but the "*incidences of death in overland locations are also a major risk for those on the move,*" according to a Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) report. There, the deaths of at least 1,245 people travelling through Libya (870), Sudan (295) and Egypt (80) were recorded between 2014 and 2016.⁴⁸

In conclusion, the CMR is more active than ever and the indications are that it is likely to remain so in the short term. As long as the root causes of migration and displacement go unaddressed in countries of origin, refugees and migrants will continue to search for safety and better economic opportunities. Travelling through Libya, despite the perils, still seemed, at the time of writing, to be their best hope for achieving such dreams.

3.1.2. TYPES OF JOURNEYS ON THE CMR

Two types of journeys can be identified as linked to the region of origin of refugees and migrants.

Organised Journeys

"Organised" journeys are a form of package travel deal, where highly-structured smuggling networks offer to take clients from their country of origin to the Libyan coast or even to their destination of choice

⁴⁴ Number of arrivals in Spain: 14,094. Data from the UNHCR, available at this [link](#).

⁴⁵ A total of 672 individuals travelled irregularly to the Canary Islands in 2016. Data source: *Refugees and Migrants Sea Arrivals in Europe*, UNHCR, December 2016, available at this [link](#).

⁴⁶ Data source: *Desperate Journeys*, UNHCR, 2017, available at this [link](#).

⁴⁷ Data from the UNHCR, available at this [link](#).

⁴⁸ *Mixed Migration Trends Q2 2016*, RMMS, 2016.

in Europe. They are mainly used by refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa (in particular Eritreans and Somalis) as well as by Nigerian women being trafficked.

A large amount of money is paid to the smuggler in advance (or in some cases upon arrival in the destination country). Clients are considered to be under the protection of the smuggler who is responsible for their safe arrival, not unlike a regular reputation-based travel company. This means that while individuals may change hands many times before reaching Europe, they do not deal directly with intermediaries or hosts along the way. They also do not stop to live and work in one of the cities pass through, as those travelling “step-by-step” do. As a result, refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa tend to transit through Libya quickly and largely unnoticed.

With this type of smuggling, the lines are becoming increasingly blurred between the methods of smuggling networks and the forms of control used by traffickers, meaning that smuggling can turn into human trafficking along the way. Smugglers’ “clients” can become the “property” of whoever transports them. They are sometimes traded between smugglers and are at their mercy with little protection against being robbed or asked for more money at any time - this often occurs as they wait in farms or warehouses between legs of the journey.

Step-by-Step Journeys

Most refugees and migrants from West and Central Africa reach Libya through “step-by-step” journeys which are longer, more fragmented and cheaper than “organised” journeys.

Each smuggler, driver or intermediary is paid individually and is only in charge of a segment of travel from one location to another. Journeys are usually minimally planned before departure and are heavily influenced by encounters along the route (with smugglers, other groups using the same route, or established members of the traveller’s community). They stop multiple times along the route to organise the next leg and potentially work to fund it. Those undertaking “Step-by-step” journeys are also vulnerable to extortion, but they have more freedom of movement. They plan their stopovers (for instance Sebha, Bani Walid or Tripoli), accommodation and routes themselves. On the other hand, they are not under the “protection” of a particular smuggling organisation: independent smugglers have less incentive to look after the safety of those on “step by step” journeys than organised networks.

3.1.3. MAIN EVOLUTIONS

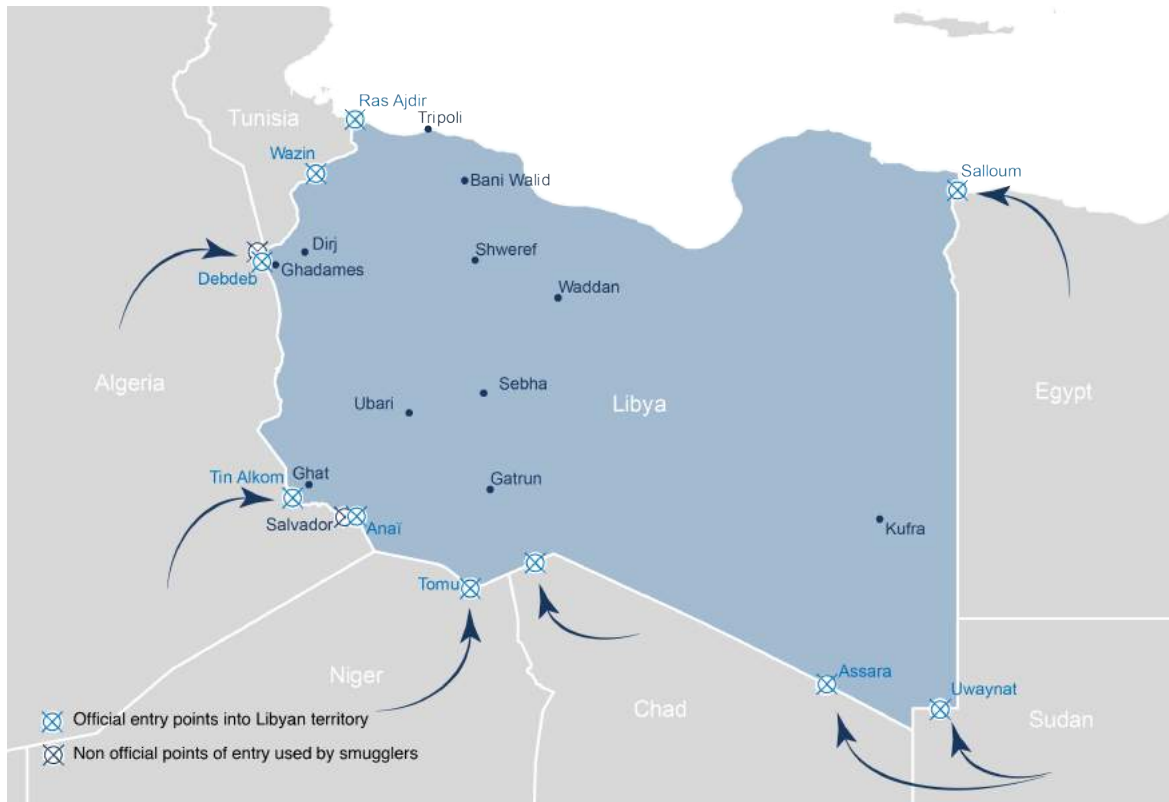
Arriving to Libya

The main entry points to Libya have not changed since Altai’s last study for the UNHCR in 2013.⁴⁹ The south-eastern desert in the region of Kufra is still the main gateway for refugees and migrants coming from Sudan and the Horn of Africa; Tomu-Gatrun for people entering through Niger; and Ghat or Ghadames-Dirj for those coming from Algeria. Crossings through the Tunisian and Egyptian borders continue to be marginal in terms of irregular entry into Libya.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads*, Altai Consulting for UNHCR, 2013.

⁵⁰ Flows from Sallum-Umsaad at the Egyptian border are minimal at this stage See section 3.5.5 on the route through Egypt.

Figure 13: Main entry points and routes into Libya



For West and Central Africans, the main entry point to Libya continues to be the Nigerien border. However, this route (from Agadez in Niger to Gatrun in Libya) is no longer as straightforward as it used to be. With support from the EU, Niger recently started enforcing anti-smuggling legislation passed in May 2015.⁵¹ While the impact on crossings into Libya is yet to be fully measured, the shift has already pushed the local smuggling industry to adapt. Smugglers now bypass the main road leading to the border post of Tomu to avoid the increasingly frequent controls. Drivers take greater risks along multiple new routes, sometimes driving at night and through the desert, and crossing into Algerian territory. The cost of this trip has risen to reflect the greater risks taken by smugglers. Flows through the border between Niger and Libya may fall as the law continues to be enforced and resources on the ground are scaled up with EU support.

The popularity of the route through Ghat has continued to tail off, with very little activity in 2016, in large part because of instability in the Tuareg-controlled area. While still marginal, entries via Ghadames seem to have slightly increased for those arriving from Algeria.

Inside Libya

Mixed migration trends within Libya have also shifted. Refugees and migrants seem to stop less during the journey than they used to and costs have generally increased for all legs.⁵² As many, if not more,

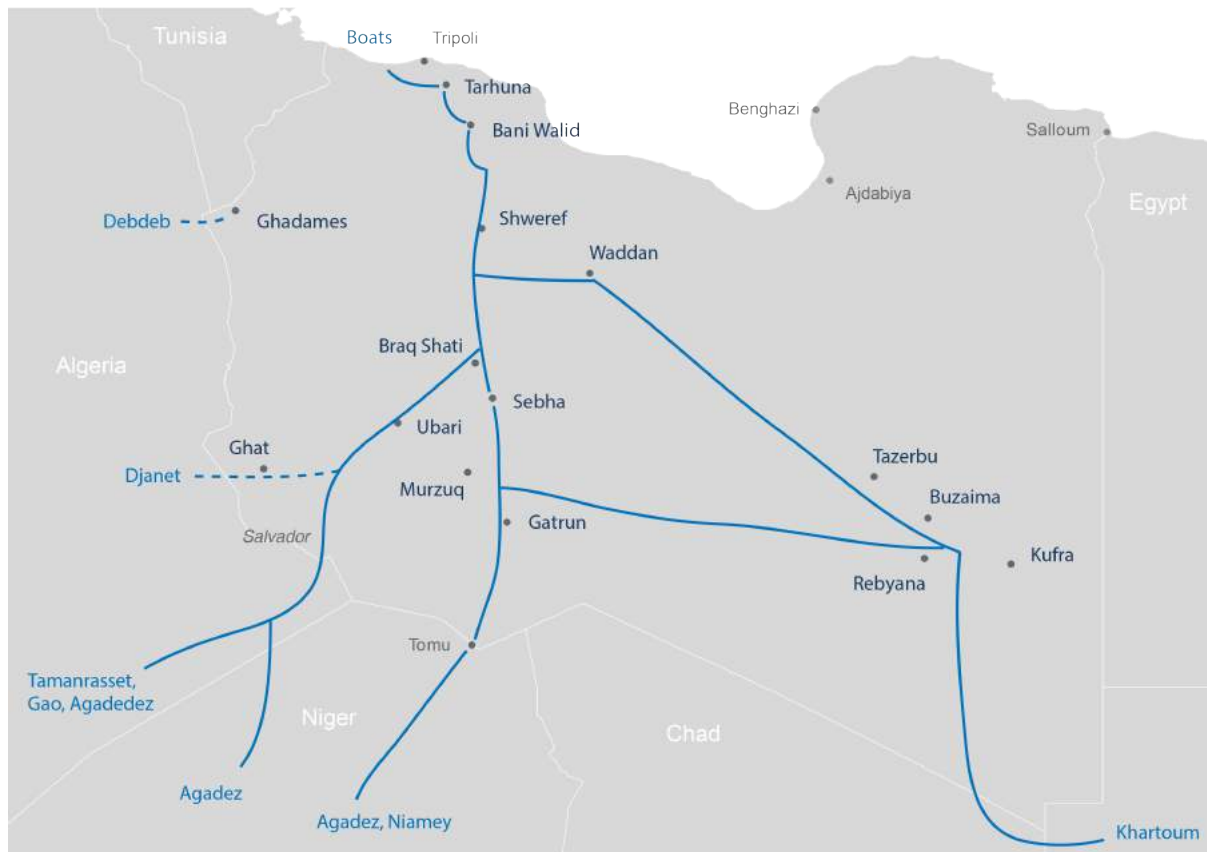
⁵¹ See section 3.6.2 Routes through Niger. For details on the EU involvement in Niger, see the January 2017 joint communication of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Migration on the Central Mediterranean Route*, available at this [link](#).

⁵² For more details on costs, see section 3.3.2.

are arriving in Libya compared to 2013, but job opportunities have diminished.⁵³ The strip of coastline between Misrata and the Tunisian border continues to be the main departure point for boats although specific locations have changed.⁵⁴

For the purposes of this report, we refer to routes entering Libya from the east or southeast (from Egypt, Sudan or Chad) as “eastern routes” and to routes entering Libya from the west or southwest (from Tunisia, Algeria or Niger) as “western routes”. These categories are not to be confused with the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Mediterranean Routes, which do not pass through Libya⁵⁵.

Figure 14: Main hubs and routes within Libya



All of southern Libya has been blighted by tribal armed conflicts and refugees and migrants are generally less inclined to stop there for longer than absolutely necessary as a result. Sebha, and to a much lesser extent Gatrun and Murzuq, nonetheless remain hubs where people gather, stop, work and get in contact with smugglers if they travel “step-by-step”. As for Kufra, far fewer refugees and migrants stop there than was the case a few years ago: smugglers prefer to bypass the city, where conflict is still ongoing between Zwey and Tebu tribes.

⁵³ In 2013, Libya witnessed a slight economic recovery from the 2011 crisis. Three years later, the economic situation is depressed. Although Libyans still need handy workers, the inflation is high and liquidities scarce.

⁵⁴ See section 3.7.2 on departure points.

⁵⁵ See section 3.1.1 Routes to Europe for more details.

The new hub before the coast appears to be Bani Walid, a remarkable change from 2013 when smugglers avoided the area.⁵⁶ Today, Bani Walid, which is less than 200km southeast of Tripoli, offers a number of advantages, detailed in section 3.7.1 Northern Leg of the Journey. Many interviewees reported passing through the city, although they would not normally stop to find work and would largely remain in the hands of the smugglers. Smugglers around Kufra now travel directly to Bani Walid through Jufra district instead of heading to Ajdabiya and Benghazi as previously. Similarly, smugglers in the area of Sebha drive north through Shweref and on to Bani Walid instead of going through the Nafusa Mountains.

The northeast of Libya is no longer an important area for migration due to recurrent fighting in the area in recent years. The road along the coast from northeast to northwest is also considered too dangerous and some travelling from southeast to northwest reported crossing the southern desert from Kufra to Sebha before heading north. Others pass through Bani Walid, as mentioned above.

Tripoli remains the principal stop for those undertaking “step-by-step” journeys to look for work and make contacts to help them get to Europe. However, the city has become something of a bottleneck as conflicts made key roads impassable between the city centre and boat departure points. Therefore, those who can afford it tend to avoid the capital and head straight to the main points of departure.⁵⁷

3.2. REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS PASSING THROUGH LIBYA

3.2.1. NUMBER AND NATIONALITIES OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN LIBYA

Estimating the Number of Refugees and Migrants in Libya

Figures on the total number of refugees and migrants in Libya are hard to come by. It has been suggested that between 1 and 2.5 million migrants settled in or travelled through the country in 2013,⁵⁸ but the subsequent conflict has meant that these have not been updated. Key informants interviewed in Libya for this study were generally of the opinion that the numbers had increased in the last two years, saying that although the conflict had pushed those settled to leave, greater numbers appeared to be arriving, even if just to travel through to the coast.

Current estimates from the international community range between 300,000 and one million refugees and migrants. The *2017 Libya Humanitarian Needs Overview* produced by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), mentions “an estimated 357,259 refugees and migrants currently in Libya”.⁵⁹ According to IOM, “Based on estimates provided by embassies, the total population of migrants in Libya is about 700,000 –1 million people.”⁶⁰ The IOM DTM matrix identified 351,382 migrants in Libya as of March 2017, but this figure might not be comprehensive of all migrants

⁵⁶ In 2013, the main route from the south west crossed the Nafusa Mountains, to the west of Bani Walid, to get to the coastal area of Tripolitania, while the main route coming from the west and south-west passed through the coastal cities of the Gulf of Sirte.

⁵⁷ This is the case for refugees and migrants travelling on an “organised” journey and of those on a “step-by-step” journey who have already gathered enough money to pay for the boat trip and do not need to stop and work again.

⁵⁸ Note that these estimates included both refugees and migrants settled in the country and those in transit. See *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads*, Altai Consulting for UNHCR, 2013.

⁵⁹ *2017 Libya Humanitarian Needs Overview*, OCHA, 15 November 2016, page 10. Report available at this [link](#). Out of the estimated 357,259 refugees and migrants currently in Libya, the report concludes that 295,652 are in need of humanitarian assistance.

⁶⁰ *Libya Brief*, IOM, September 2016, available at this [link](#).

passing through and/or settling in Libya.⁶¹ According to Dimitris Avramopoulos, the EU Commissioner on Migration, “*The country is still open as a corridor to all the ones who exploit the desperate people and right now, according to reports, more than 300,000 people are on the shores of Libya*”.⁶²

For an indication of a minimum number of migrants who transited through Libya, it is also possible to refer to statistics on arrivals to Europe through the Central Mediterranean Route, as most boats along this route depart from Libya. The UNHCR estimates that 181,436 refugees and migrants arrived by the CMR in 2016, in addition to which 4,578 were reported to be dead and missing along the route, by the most conservative estimates.⁶³ Ninety percent of these refugees and migrants would have passed through Libya on their way to Europe.⁶⁴ These figures however by their nature only take into account those who left Libya for Europe, and not those who settled in the country. As analysed in section 3.2.3 (Decision-Making Process Regarding Staying or Leaving Libya), a significant number of refugees and migrants in Libya are not looking at making their way to Europe but hoping to stay in the country instead.

Nationalities

Refugees and migrants on the CMR come from diverse backgrounds but can be grouped into four different categories:

- **Nationals of neighbouring countries:** from Niger, Chad, Sudan, Egypt and Tunisia. Most of them report travelling to Libya for economic reasons, and many engage in circular or repetitive migrations.
- **Nationals of West and Central Africa countries:** mainly from Nigeria, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Senegal, Ghana, Mali and Cameroon. Most of them report having left largely for economic reasons. Some are victims of trafficking (VoT), in particular Nigerian and Cameroonian women, and some might be in need of international protection.
- **Nationals of Eastern Africa countries:** from Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan.⁶⁵ They reported making the journey for a range of reasons including political persecution, conflict, and economic distress in their countries of origin.
- **Individuals from other regions:** Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis, Moroccans, Bangladeshis and others. Syrians, Palestinians and Iraqis flee conflict and violence while others are looking for livelihood opportunities.

⁶¹ This figure was extracted from the most recent DTM Libya round at the time of printing (Round 9 from March 2017), available online at this [link](#). The data collection methodology for DTM in Libya can be found [here](#). The methodology involves a) regularly identifying locations with migrant populations and estimating the numbers of migrants currently residing in each one, and b) regularly identifying and mapping transit points where migrants are observed/known to pass through. In Libya, 13 Flow Monitoring Points were active as of December 2016.

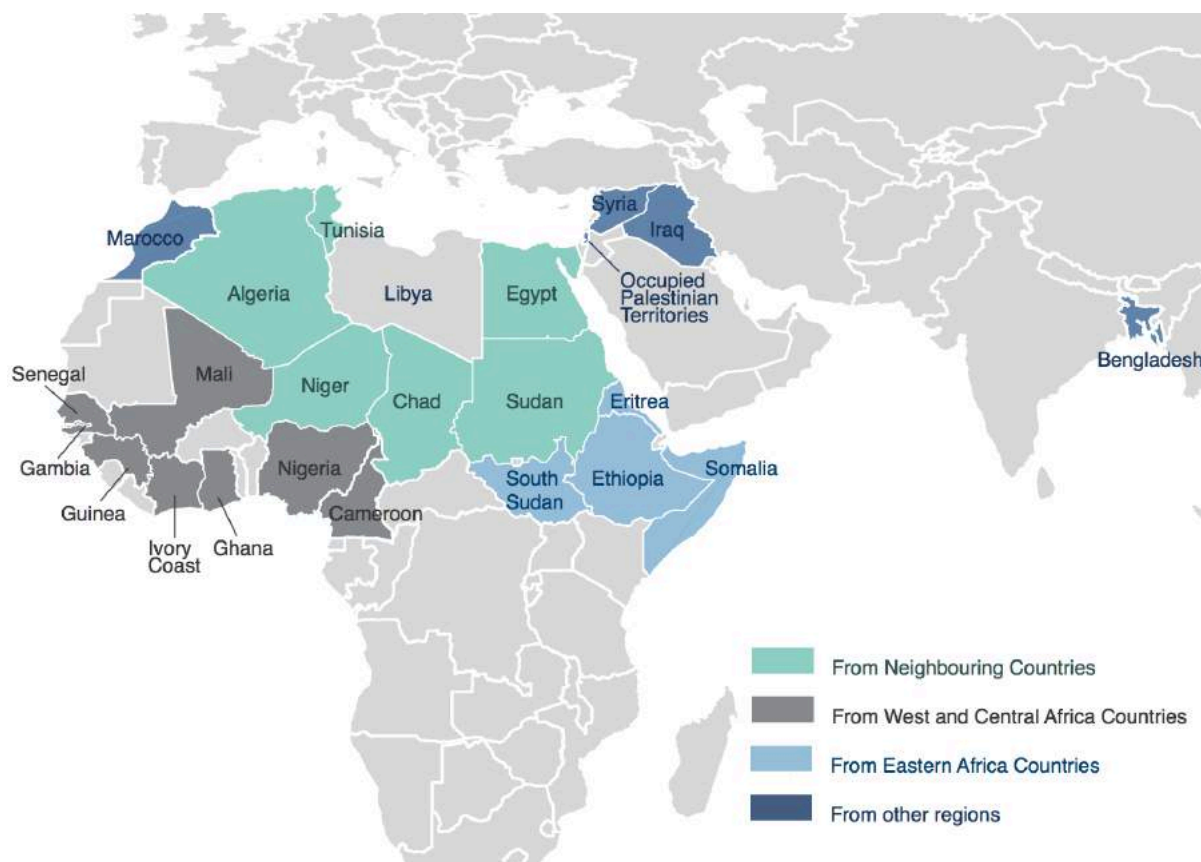
⁶² *No Turkey-type migrant deal with Libya, says the EU commission*, EuObserver, 24 January 2017.

⁶³ Source: UNHCR data, available at this [link](#).

⁶⁴ In 2016, 90% of refugees and migrants who arrived in Italy by sea departed from Libya, while the remaining 10% departed from Algeria, Greece, Tunisia, Turkey, or their departure site was not known. Source: *Desperate Journeys*, UNHCR, 2017, available at this [link](#).

⁶⁵ Note that Sudan also falls into the category “neighbouring countries”. Some refugees and migrants from Sudan intend to cross to Europe and can be found along the same smuggling routes than refugees and migrants from East Africa, while others come as neighbours to work in Libya for a while before going back to their countries.

Figure 15: Countries and regions of origin of refugees and migrants in Libya

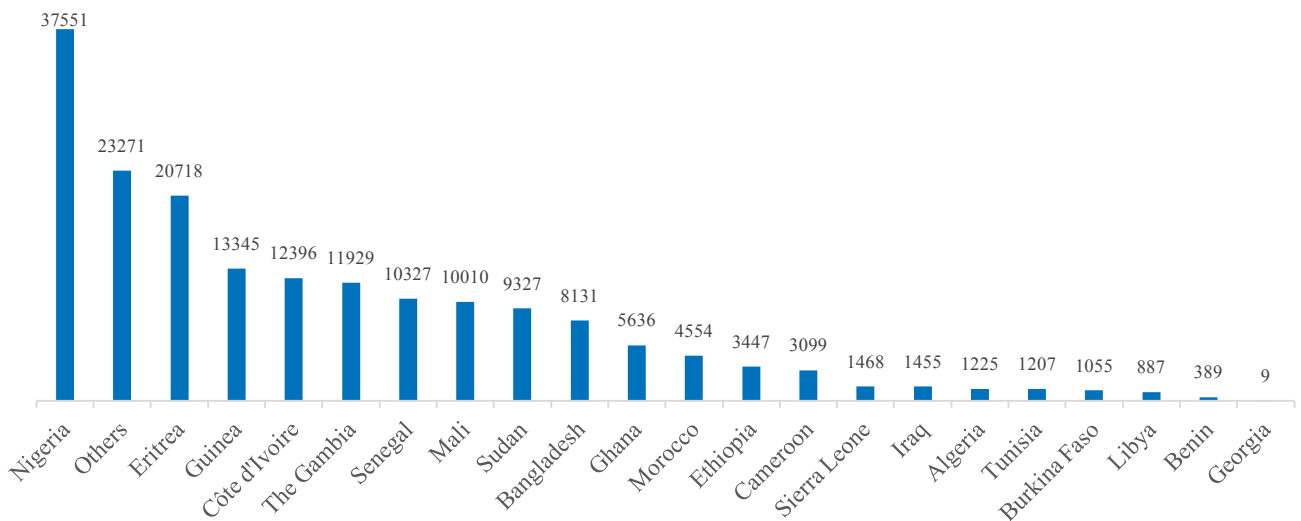


Important changes in the nationalities of refugees and migrants using Libya as a launching pad to Europe were observed over the past years. In 2014, Syrians were the most dominant nationality arriving in Italy by boat (42,000 arrivals),⁶⁶ followed by Eritreans (34,000 arrivals) and Malians and Nigerians (both around 9,000 arrivals). In 2016, Nigerians were by far the most numerous to arrive (37,551 arrivals), followed by Eritreans (20,718), Guineans (13,345), Ivoirians (12,396) and Gambians (11,929).

The first major change is that **Syrians do not seem to transit through Libya anymore**, most of them enter Europe through Turkey and Greece, a closer and less risky journey. The EU-Turkey agreement contributed to a sharp reduction of in EMR flows, but had not resulted in a visible diversion of flows to the CMR at the time of writing. However, there remains the possibility that some Syrians might attempt to reach Europe via Sudan and Libya in the future as this might be the only accessible option for crossing to Europe.

⁶⁶ The source for figures in this section is UNHCR data. See this [link](#).

Figure 16: Arrivals via the CMR in 2016⁶⁷

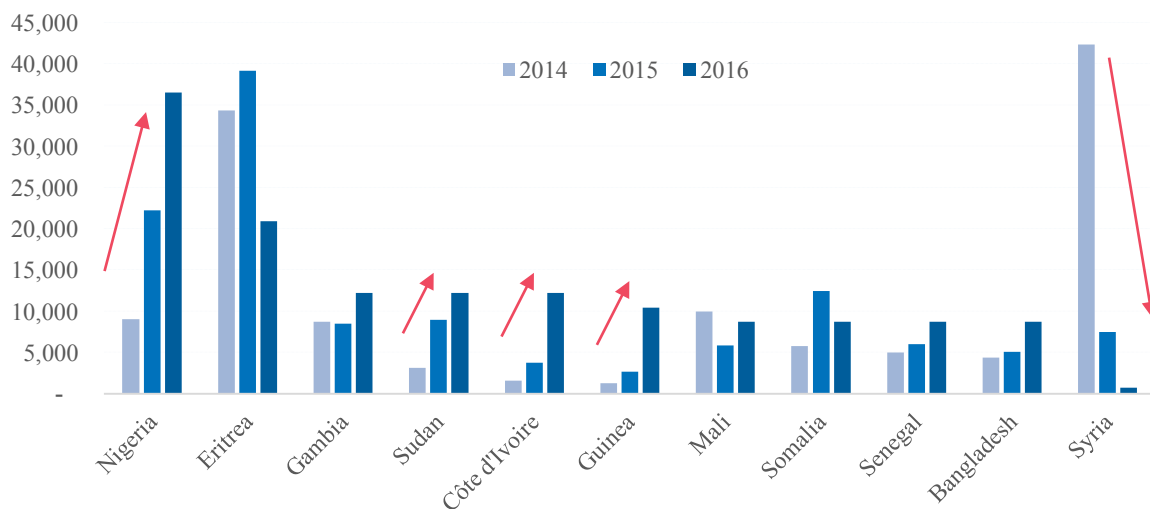


Another significant change is the **significant increase of the number of West and Central Africans**, who now represent well over half of all arrivals to Europe through the CMR (over 100,000 arrivals in 2016). In addition to Nigerians, now the most dominant nationality in terms of arrivals, Guineans (13,345), Ivoirians (12,396), Gambians (11,929), Malians (10,010) and Senegalese (10,327) were all amongst the top 10 countries of origin of arrivals in Italy in 2016. Reasons for this increase of West and Central Africans are multiple, but the current context in Libya could be one of the triggering factors, as the lack of livelihoods and security issues in the country pushed migrants away.⁶⁸

“There are more West Africans than East Africans in Libya now”

Key informant interviewed in Libya

Figure 17: Evolution of nationalities arriving in Europe from Libya⁶⁹



⁶⁷ Source: UNHCR data, accessible online at this [link](#).

⁶⁸ See section 3.2.4, Decision-Making Process Regarding Staying or Leaving Libya.

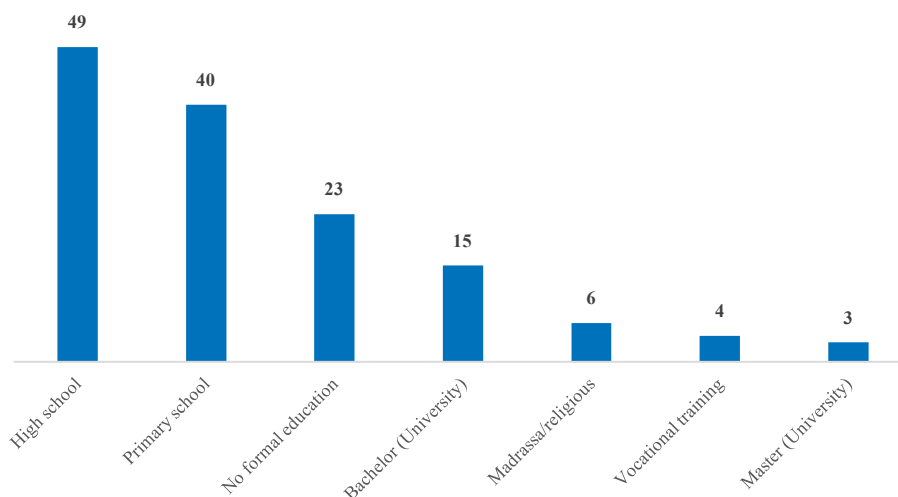
⁶⁹ Arrivals in Italy via the CMR. Source: UNHCR data, accessible online [here](#).

3.2.2. REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS PROFILES

Most refugees and migrants in Libya are young single men.⁷⁰ Women are usually from East Africa and transit to Europe over a short period of time (see next sub-section on Refugees and Migrants on the Eastern routes through Libya), with the addition of some from West and Central Africa who are more likely victims of trafficking. Families travelling as a unit are rare, except among Syrians and Palestinians.⁷¹

Most refugees and migrants in Libya are unqualified. Figure 18: Self-reported level of education of migrants interviewed in Libya shows the level of education of respondents interviewed in the South and Tripoli: 49% had little or no education; 35% went to high school, and only 16% received vocational training or attended higher education institutions. There were a significant number of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC), particularly teenagers and mainly from Eritrea, The Gambia and Nigeria.⁷² They represented 14% of total arrivals in Europe on the CMR in 2016, double those of the previous year⁷³

Figure 18: Self-reported level of education of migrants interviewed in Libya



⁷⁰ See following sub-sections with detailed profiles of refugees and migrants per route. For reference, 71% of refugees and migrants arriving to Europe by the Central Mediterranean Routes between 1 January 2016 and 31 January 2017 were men, 13% women and 16% minors. Source: UNCHR data, see this [link](#).

⁷¹ Only 21% of respondents were travelling with at least one member of their family, while 79% travelled alone, with a group of people from their country that they did not know before or with a friend (40% were travelling alone, 31% with other members of their community, and 9% with a friend).

⁷² Data source: *Italy Update #10*, UNHCR, December 2016, available at this [link](#).

⁷³ In 2016, 25,846 UASC arrived to Italy by sea (14% of all sea arrivals), compared to 12,360 in 2015 (7% of arrivals), Data source: *Italy Update #10*, UNHCR, December 2016, available at this [link](#).

Refugees and Migrants on the Eastern Routes⁷⁴

Refugees and migrants using eastern routes through Libya come from four main countries: Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. Of these, Sudanese represented the highest proportion.⁷⁵

There are two categories of Sudanese nationals: those who seek to move to Libya to work for a limited period of time, and those who intend to cross Libya to reach Europe. Most Sudanese in Libya belong to the first category: they intend to stay in Libya to work before returning home and travel along well-trodden routes between their two countries. There has however been a change in the pattern of movements by Sudanese nationals in recent years. Sudanese arriving in Italy via the CMR increased almost fourfold, from 3,139 in 2014 to 12,166 in 2016. In the same year, Sudan became the second country of origin in the East Africa region for asylum seekers in Italy, behind Eritrea but before Somalia and Ethiopia.⁷⁶ The flows of Sudanese are mixed and include both refugees and migrants.

Eritreans represent the second largest group on the eastern routes through Libya. A RMMS report⁷⁷ states that “*An estimated 5,000 Eritreans flee their country every month,*” with most first passing through refugee camps in eastern Sudan⁷⁸ or northern Ethiopia first. In 2016, there were 101,751 Eritrean refugees and in Sudan and 155,862 in Ethiopia.⁷⁹ In 2016, Eritreans were the second largest nationality group arriving in Italy via the CMR. Unlike Sudanese, almost all Eritreans enter Libya through Sudan with the intention of travelling on to Europe, often encouraged by diaspora members. Those wanting to remain in the region usually stay in Sudan or Ethiopia. Eritreans tend to travel as part of “organised” journeys paying upfront after working in Sudan if necessary.

Ethiopians form the largest foreign community in Sudan and follow similar routes as Eritreans. They are generally less likely to be found crossing Libya or on boats to Europe. In 2016, 20,176 Eritrean arrivals to Italy were registered, against only 3,385 Ethiopian arrivals. Those who do attempt to get to Europe, usually do so through organised smuggling packages like Eritreans.

Although **Somalis** continue to use the eastern routes through Libya, they no longer have a **significant presence in the country**. Stakeholders interviewed on the ground reported that Somalis were less visible than Eritreans in both Sudan and Libya.⁸⁰ While the numbers arriving in Italy decreased sharply in 2016 (from 12,433 in 2015 to 7,138 in 2016, a figure close to 2014 levels), Somalis still represented 4% of total arrivals to Italy on the CMR.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Note that for the purpose of this report, we chose to refer to routes entering Libya from the East or South East (i.e. from Egypt, Sudan or Chad) as “Eastern routes”. “Eastern routes” through Libya are not to be confused with the “Eastern Mediterranean Route” (CMR), which brings migrants from Turkey to Greece but does not pass through Libya.

⁷⁵ A number of them likely from Darfur, although no reliable data on the percentage of Darfuri among Sudanese refugees and migrants could be found.

⁷⁶ A total of 11,390 Sudanese nationals applied for asylum in one of the 28 European Union member states in 2016, against 3,235 in 2013, 6,245 in 2014, and 11,175 in 2015 (source: Eurostat, country of origin of first time asylum applicants, data available at this [link](#)). Only 503 of these asylum claims were submitted in Italy in 2016 (source: data from the Italian Ministry of Interior available at this [link](#)). In the UK, 3,018 Sudanese nationals applied for asylum in 2015, and 1,436 in 2016 – compared to 834 in 2013 (source: Home Office Immigration Statistics, available online at this [link](#), table as-02).

⁷⁷ *Eritrea Country Profile*, RMMS, June 2016, page 1.

⁷⁸ Sudan has an encampment policy for refugees.

⁷⁹ As of May 2016. Source: *Eritrea Country Profile*, RMMS, June 2016.

⁸⁰ Interviews conducted by Altai Consulting in April 2016 in Sudan and November 2016 in Libya.

⁸¹ Somalis remain amongst the top 10 nationalities of arrivals in Italy on the CMR. See: *Mixed migration flows in the Mediterranean and Beyond*, IOM, 2016, available at this [link](#).

Refugees and migrants from other nationalities such as South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen and Syria sometimes emerge in Sudan, but relatively few of them continue north to Libya and Europe via the CMR. Some Syrians settled in Libya between 2013 and 2014 and mostly now live in Tripoli or in small communities in Sebha and the Jebel Nafusa mountains (about 250-300 members).

Syrians in Sudan

At the time of writing, Sudan was the only country in the region that allowed Syrians to enter without a visa. As a result, in April 2016, there were approximately 105,000 Syrians in Sudan, forming a very heterogeneous community concentrated in Khartoum.

They enter the country via the airport and are registered jointly by UNHCR and the Sudanese Commissioner for Refugees (COR) as Persons of Concern (PoC). The Sudanese government considers Syrians as “Arab Brothers”, granting them residency, freedom of movement, the right to work, free education in public schools and free health care in public hospitals. These rights are not available to members of other refugee communities in Sudan. Nonetheless, many Syrians in Sudan find themselves in a precarious situation, often having arrived there as a last resort, having exhausted their personal financial resources or having been separated from their families. Some, including women and young children, can be seen begging in the streets, around mosques, in marketplaces or at the airport.

At the time of writing, Syrians coming to Sudan were planning either to settle in the country or to ask for resettlement. However, relatively scant livelihood opportunities in Sudan and the length of the resettlement procedure might see some of these Syrians looking for other options. In 2014, Syrians were the largest community arriving in Europe on the CMR, with 42,323 arrivals that year. This figure dropped to 7,448 in 2015 and only 1,064 in 2016.

Most people on the Eastern migration routes through Libya are young, with high numbers of UASC reported.⁸² While a majority of them are men, the overall proportion of women is higher, than on the Western migration route according to respondents. Sudanese, however, are almost exclusively male. Women come from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, and are usually aged between 18 and 25. Previous work by Altai in the region⁸³ found that 46% of people interviewed were single, while the remainder were married and moving with their family. There were three children per household on average.

Refugees and Migrants on the Western Routes

Unlike refugees and migrants on the Eastern routes,⁸⁴ **there are many different nationalities travelling to Libya along the Western routes**, with almost all countries from West and Central Africa represented.

⁸² Source: *Addressing Mixed Migration Flows in East Africa*, Altai Consulting for Expertise France, 2016, page 83.

⁸³ Ibid, page 83.

⁸⁴ Refugees and migrants on the Eastern routes come almost exclusively from only four countries (see previous section).

Nationals of **ECOWAS countries (in particular Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Guinea and The Gambia)**,⁸⁵ as well as **Cameroon** and **Central African Republic** arrive in Libya on the Western routes. Interviews conducted for this study indicate that nationalities previously unseen on the migration routes can be encountered here, such as nationals from **Gabon** or **Guinea Bissau**. Some Moroccans were identified on the Western routes in 2016 (travelling through Algeria to Libya with the intention of crossing to Europe by sea). Small flows of Tunisians were also recorded as crossing into Libya with the same intention.⁸⁶

Arrivals by boat to Italy in 2016 included high numbers of nationals from Nigeria, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Benin⁸⁷. Similarly, according to IOM, the principal nationalities travelling to Libya from Niger (the main transit country on the Western routes) in December 2016 were Nigerians (22%), Nigeriens (19%), Gambians (15%), Senegalese (13%) and Ivoirians (7%).⁸⁸

Almost no refugees and migrants from East Africa or other regions were reported on the Western routes in 2016.⁸⁹ While Syrians used to take this route, it no longer seems to be the case. Until early 2016, Mauritania did not require a visa for Syrians, who would fly there before crossing Mali, Niger or Algeria to get to Libya. These requirements changed however, removing this option for Syrians,⁹⁰ although there might be pockets of Syrian refugees and migrants still in Mauritania who arrived some time ago.

People travelling along the Western routes are **primarily in search of economic opportunities**, although some come from refugee-producing countries and might have left due to conflict, instability, human rights violations or for political reasons – Gambians,⁹¹ Malians, Nigerians and Central Africans for instance. They tend to be single men between 15 and 25 years old.⁹² Unlike on the Eastern routes, families are almost never seen. It would be more common to see extended families gathering the money necessary to support one member's attempt to reach Europe in the hope they might will find work and remit money back. Very few women were reported on the Western routes to and through Libya, and those who were, were usually victims of trafficking.

⁸⁵ The ECOWAS member countries include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo.

⁸⁶ Note that this report does not look into the significant flows of Moroccans and Tunisians who come to Libya for work, most often entering the country regularly through the airport or the Ras Jedir border post with Tunisia. Although many people left Libya because of the degradation of the security situation after 2014, these communities are still very much present.

⁸⁷ See section 3.2.1.

⁸⁸ Source: DTM Niger Flow Monitoring Report 1-31 December 2016. Available online [here](#).

⁸⁹ Research teams working on this study in Libya confirmed that Eritreans, Somalis and Ethiopians do not travel on Western routes. Although a few Eritreans and Somalis could be found in Sebha, Murzuq and Ghatrun, they had arrived there from Kufra. None were found in Ghat or Ubari.

⁹⁰ The Mauritanian government imposed a visa on Syrians in March 2016, meaning Sudan is now the only African country that admits Syrians without the need for a visa. Algeria started requiring visas for Syrians in 2015.

⁹¹ Note that most respondents interviewed in Agadez (the main hub before Libya on the Western routes) highlighted that a majority of Gambians there had left their country for economic reasons. Gambian migrants interviewed in Niger also did not express a desire to go back to their country of origin despite long time ruler Yahya Jammeh's announcement a few days earlier that he would accept his loss at the December 2016 presidential election and step down.

⁹² This section was informed by data from previous Altai fieldwork on migration in the region, for the studies: *Irregular Migration between West Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean*, Altai for IOM Nigeria, 2015; *Identification Mission to Support the Development of Migration Profiles in West Africa*, Altai for IOM Nigeria, 2016; *Labour Market Assessment, Reintegration of Returnees: Senegal, The Gambia, Nigeria, Mali, Niger*, Altai for IOM Niger, 2015.

The majority of refugees and migrants on Western routes have no qualifications, having dropped out of school early, often because their parents could not afford it or because of plans to try to reach Europe. However, some are graduates who were not able to find work in their country despite their diplomas. Most have little to no previous work experience. Data gathered in 2016 in Agadez, which remains the main hub on the route from West Africa to Libya, confirms these trends: only about 5% of respondents waiting in smuggler-owned “ghettos” for their ride to Libya were female.⁹³ Most were younger than 25, and many of them were UASC who had not finished their education.

Refugees and Migrants from Neighbouring Countries

People from countries neighbouring Libya have been coming for decades to work since it offered the best employment opportunities and highest salaries in the region. Despite a decrease in the last few years, Nigerians, Chadians, Sudanese,⁹⁴ Egyptians⁹⁵ and Tunisians still immigrate for economic reasons. Although not neighbours per se, some Moroccans could be included in this group as they have traditionally made their way to Libya, usually by entering regularly, in search of jobs, particularly in the hospitality sector or as domestic workers.⁹⁶

Nourou – Nigerien in Gatrún

Nourou⁹⁷ is a 27-year-old Nigerien man who left his home town in 2012 to seek better employment opportunities in Libya. His family helped him organise the trip and put him in touch with a Nigerien man there who helped him find a job. Nourou made his way first to Agadez then to the city of Gatrún in Libya, by way of a three-day car journey. He currently lives and works there, on a farm with other members of the Nigerien community.



Nourou said he had faced various difficulties since arriving in Libya: he was beaten, threatened, insulted and extorted. He said he had not received any support from community leaders, Libyan authorities or international organisations. His main complain, however, was that his low salary was not enough to cover his expenses. Nourou said he was planning on returning to Niger this year, after spending four years in Libya without seeing his family.

⁹³ According to members of the French Red Cross interviewed in Agadez in December 2016. The French Red Cross had access to over 50 smuggler-owned ghettos in the city at the time of research, where they provided medical assistance and hygiene kits. As the only organisation to have gained such access, they were able to gather precious information on migrants and smuggling logistics.

⁹⁴ With the exception of Sudanese crossing Libya with the sole intention of making their way to Europe, as described in previous subsection “Refugees and Migrants on the Eastern Routes”.

⁹⁵ Note that this report does not look into the significant flows of Egyptians who go to Libya for work, most often entering the country regularly at the Salloum border post with Egypt and staying in the north of Libya. Although many Egyptians left Libya because of the degradation of the security situation after 2014, these communities are still very much present.

⁹⁶ Like the Sudanese refugees and migrants travelling to Libya, some Moroccans travel to work in Libya while others join the flows on the CMR to get to Europe.

⁹⁷ Notes that names were modified for all case studies presented in this study in order to protect respondents.

Most nationals of neighbouring countries come to Libya to find short-term work (staying a few months to a few years). They use age-old routes and do not necessarily enter the country with the help of smuggling networks. They often engage in circular migration as they are able to come and go relatively easily through porous borders, in particular in the South. Unlike Sudanese, Nigerian and Chadian nationals, seldom attempt the sea crossing to Europe.

This group has historically been better integrated in Libya, particularly the Sudanese, due in part to cultural similarities (same language and religion).⁹⁸ They are integral to the country's labour force and some have sought permanent asylum in Libya.

Refugees and Migrants from Other Regions

People from non-neighbouring countries travelling to Libya include Syrians, Palestinians and Iraqis. Some Afghans and Pakistanis were also reported by a key informant who we interviewed. Bangladeshis continue to arrive in Italy via the CMR from Libya.⁹⁹ The number of Syrians has reduced of late (see previous section).

Most of this group are fleeing war and conflicts. Among those interviewed, almost all entered the country regularly without the help of a smuggler.

Eman – Palestinian in Sebha

Eman is a 54-year-old Palestinian women who first arrived in Libya in 1969, setting in Sebha in 1971 where she, her husband and their four children currently live with a Libyan family. She holds a Bachelor's degree and used to work as a mathematics teacher.

Eman would like to stay in Libya for the rest of her life. She left Palestine because of the poor security and economic situation and does not have any remaining family there. Although she initially wanted to join some relatives in Denmark, she abandoned her hopes of one day crossing to Europe because she was too scared of the risks it entailed. She told the research team her most urgent need was to find a house for her family.



Those coming from Arab countries tend to be particularly well-integrated with the local population. They are also more likely to be travelling in family units than other nationality groups. For instance, among the 21 Syrians, Palestinians and Iraqi interviewed, 16 (76%) travelled with their immediate family (husband or wife and/or children). Overall, Palestinians and Iraqis were very different to the other communities examined for this report. Most have been settled in Libya for a long time and are far more

⁹⁸ Sudanese are usually better accepted than other sub-Saharan African migrants in Libya, according to local community members and migrants themselves.

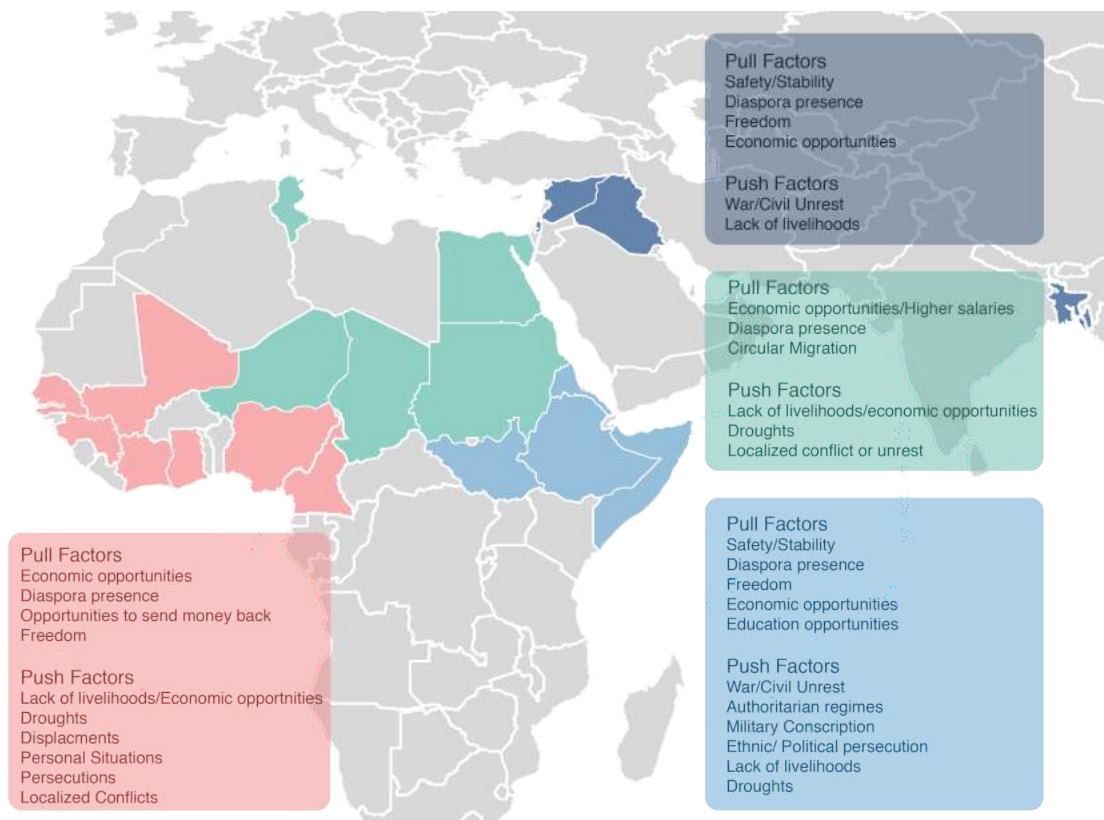
⁹⁹ Note that the Bangladeshi Foreign Affairs Ministry banned citizens from going to Libya in 2016 for security and safety reasons (after Bangladeshi nationals were victims of assaults and abduction by armed groups and IS militants). Source: "Bangladesh Foreign Ministry bans nationals from working in Libya", Libya Observer, 17 October 2016, available at this [link](#).

educated than other nationals (out of nine Palestinian and Iraqi respondents, seven had received higher education at a university – obtaining at least a Bachelor’s degree).

3.2.3. CAUSES AND INTENTIONS OF MOVEMENT

Refugees and migrants travelling to Libya reported doing so because of both push and pull factors or drivers. They reported leaving their countries for economic, political, security, social and environmental reasons. All of them hoped for freedom and a better life.

Figure 19: Push and pull factors per countries of origin



Main Pull Factors

Pull Factors to Libya

Reasons for wanting to travel to Libya related mainly to work opportunities, higher salaries and the accessibility of Europe using smuggling networks. Other pull factors included:

- The presence of diaspora communities and/or relatives that could provide support upon arrival.
- For those looking at remaining in Libya, the education system (including higher education through public universities).
- Porous borders and limited monitoring activities (border guards or coast guards), facilitating irregular entry and movement facilitated by smuggling networks.
- In the case of migrants from neighbouring countries, geographical proximity and the possibility to travel back and forth in circular migration patterns relatively easily.

Pull Factors to Europe

Reported pull factors attracting people on the CMR to Europe included stability and freedom, and the promise of a better life, with greater economic opportunities and employment prospects.

Stability, rule of law and religious and political freedom were factors highlighted by those coming from conflict-affected regions, areas suffering from terrorism or communities specifically targeted for ethnic, political or religious reasons. These pull factors to Europe became increasingly relevant with the intensification of the crisis in Libya and the resulting instability and insecurity.

The **dream of a better life in Europe**, largely peddled by the diaspora, plays a decisive role in the decision-making process of those on the move, particularly the youth. Diaspora members often encourage friends and relatives to follow their path by emphasising their success rather than detailing the difficulties and risks they encountered. In many cases, they feel compelled to embellish the reality of their experience in Europe to meet the expectations of their family and community who have sometimes contributed financially to the cost of the journey. Respondents explained that everyone had a story about an acquaintance who went to Europe and made enough money there to build large houses for their family back home. As a 40-year-old Eritrean refugee¹⁰⁰ put it: *“Diaspora members are responsible for pulling youth out of Eritrea as they share stories of material assistance and benefits given to refugees, freedom of movement, freedom of work and other advantages granted upon arrival. They tend to give a better picture than the actual reality of their situation.”*

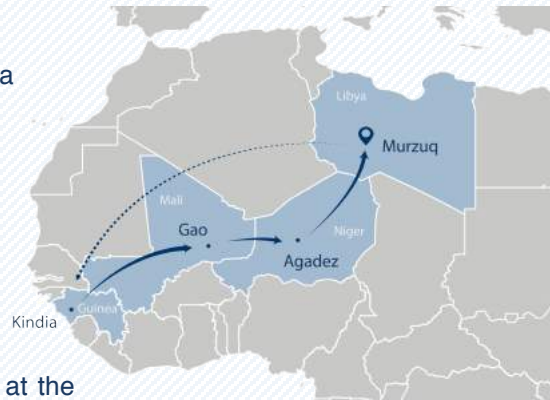
“My relative lives in Norway. He told me that life there is like heaven, everything there is available, shelter, food, work, clothes and even money. Their life is much better”

Male, 22 years old, Eritrea

Omar – Guinean who returned from Libya

Omar is a 16-year-old man from Guinea Conakry.¹⁰¹ He tried to make his way to the Libyan coast to cross to Europe, but returned to his own country voluntarily with support from IOM after smugglers in Libya stole all his money and demanded a ransom from his family.

Omar told interviewers that he decided to leave for Europe after a friend posted a picture of himself on Facebook watching a football game at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium in Madrid. He said it made him think: “What am I doing here when I could be there leaving my dream like him?” The next day, Omar hitchhiked to the border of Mali, to embark on the CMR. His trip ended in southwestern Libya.



¹⁰⁰ Interviewed by Altai Consulting in Sudan in April 2016.

¹⁰¹ Omar was interviewed by Altai in Kindia, Guinea, in June 2016. See *Voluntary Return and Reintegration: Community-Based Initiatives*, Altai Consulting for IOM Morocco, 2016.

The presence of these diaspora communities and/or relatives in Europe is in itself a pull factor since they support newcomers.

This allure of Europe and the clarion call of a safer, better life underscores why, despite the reports of people drowning or being mistreated or murdered, refugees and migrants still attempt the journey. Many of them explained it as a need to “try their luck” and a belief that it would be different for them, that it was somehow in their destiny to reach Europe. For this reason, many along Western routes refer to the journey to Europe via Libya as “going on an adventure” (“partir à l’aventure”).

Prospects of employment and higher salaries and the possibility of sending money home were other pull factors. A number of the young men on Western routes hope to become professional football players, while women are often told that they will get jobs as hairdressers or models.

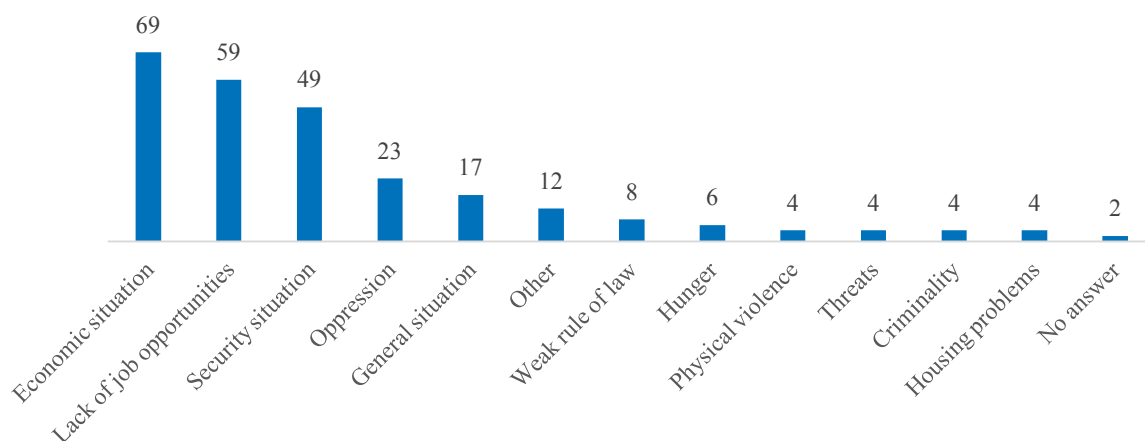
Main Push Factors

Political and security crises, as well as economic downturns and a lack of job opportunities were the main reasons that pushed respondents to leave their country. Environmental, social and cultural factors were also reported.

Most refugees and migrants interviewed for this study mentioned at least two different push factors or drivers. For instance, even when people were primarily leaving for reasons other than economic ones, they would still often mention a wish for better economic prospects as a factor in their decision.

Figure 20 presents respondents’ answers to the question “What are the main problems you encountered in your life in your country of origin?” This was an open text, unprompted, multiple-choice question: refugees and migrants could name as many issues as they wished¹⁰².

Figure 20: Main issues faced by respondents in their countries of origin¹⁰³



Economic Factors

Some of the key issues pushing respondents to travel to Libya are economic: lack of livelihoods, the difficulty of finding income-generating activities, the necessity of providing for their family and improving

¹⁰² For the full description of push factors recoded see Annex 6.2 Recoding Open-Ended Answers.

¹⁰³ Note that “other” includes: “colonization”, “Islamic regime”, “ignorance”, “forced labour”, “mandatory national military service”, and “lack of education”, “lack of health facilities”, “invasion”. The two “no answer” come from a Syrian who was born in Libya (this question was therefore not relevant in his case) and a Sudanese from Darfur who said he never wanted to go back to his region of origin but refused to answer questions about life there and push factors.

their material situation. This applies to refugees and migrants along the Western as well as the Eastern routes through Libya.

The economic situation / lack of job opportunities was by the most frequent factor or driver cited by respondents (66% of them mentioned either the lack of job opportunities, the economic situation or both). Out of 140 respondents, 99 were from refugee-producing countries,¹⁰⁴ of whom 76 included “lack of job opportunities” or “economic situation” as push factors. This concurs with the results of previous research.¹⁰⁵

However, as mentioned above, economic factors or drivers were frequently combined with other push factors, and were not the sole reason people choose to leave. Refugees from countries where conflicts and oppression cause many social ills often cite economic push factors but that should not in any way minimise the validity of actual threats to their life, physical integrity or freedom in countries of origin.

“The main problems we face in our country are poverty, unemployment, absence of job opportunities, hunger, lack of education and health care, among many others”

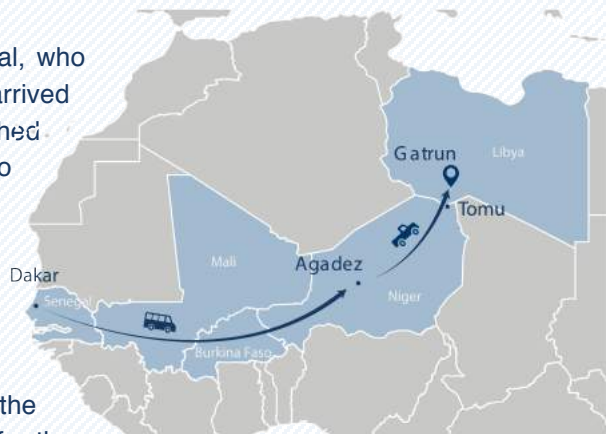
Male, 25 years old, Sudan

Individuals arriving in Libya reported facing a double challenge at home: high unemployment (in particular for youth) combined with underemployment and low salaries. A total of 20% of those interviewed in Libya did not have income-generating work in their country of origin. Another 19% were farmers, shepherds or cattle breeders. Other common jobs reported included: electrician, painter, plumber, salesman, construction worker, blacksmith, mechanic, carpenter, and daily worker, taking any type of work available. Low wages in these countries are pushing young people away while comparatively high wages are pulling them to Libya and European countries.

Moussa – Senegalese in Gatrun

Moussa is a 16-year-old man from Senegal, who left his country for economic reasons and arrived in Libya in September 2015. He never finished primary school because he was forced to drop out to sell vegetables in the local market to support his family, whose economic situation he described as “very bad.”

Moussa left home without telling his family. With the help of a friend he organised the journey and packed enough money to pay for the entire trip to Libya. He first made his way to Agadez in Niger, where he spent three days at a smuggler’s ghetto. To reach Gatrun in Libya, he then travelled for almost a week through the desert by car with 26 other migrants. He had nothing with him but water and the cash he had left. They were attacked on the road by bandits and beaten.



¹⁰⁴ The sample of respondents has an over-representation of nationals from the following refugee-producing countries: Palestine, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. See section 2 Methodology for more details.

¹⁰⁵ See *Addressing Mixed Migration Flows in East Africa*, Altai Consulting for Expertise France, 2016, page 45.

Now Moussa lives with other Senegalese in Gatrun, where he works at a laundry. He would like to move to the bigger city of Sebha to look for a better-paying job.

He plans to collect enough money to go back home, complete his education and start his own business. He estimates it will take him another year to reach his savings goal. His family is asking him to return home and he has promised them that he will soon.

Since arriving in Libya, he has heard nothing about support mechanisms for minors or migrants, nor received any assistance from NGOs or community leaders. *“Our situation here is very bad, because there is no one to protect us and protect our rights,”* he said.

Political and Security Factors

Significant factors or drivers for refugees arriving in Libya include political intolerance and repression, armed conflicts, general insecurity, violence, threats, criminality and a lack of a rule of law. One or more of these reasons was mentioned by 51% of questionnaire respondents in Libya. Overall, these factors represented 36% of all answers given by respondents (as mentioned above, this was a multiple answer question, where respondents could name as many issues faced in their country of origin as they wished).

The majority of Eritreans reported fleeing their country due to the political situation and claimed they faced political and/or religious persecution. Since 1998 and the war with Ethiopia, military service has been compulsory in Eritrea for all men and women over the age of 18 and can reportedly last for up to 15 years. The political and human rights situation has led Eritrea to be considered a refugee-producing country, and approximately 93% of Eritreans arriving in Italy are granted some kind of protection.¹⁰⁶

In Ethiopia, tensions escalated in the summer of 2015 following the government’s decision to expand the Federal Administration into Oromia region. The decision sparked a wave of protests by the Oromo people. These demonstrations triggered violent crackdowns by the government which saw hundreds killed and pushed thousands to flee the country.

In Darfur, the security situation continues to be dire according to UN Security Council reports from January 2017.¹⁰⁷ Decades of conflict between the government and rebel armed groups, as well as intercommunal violence between nomadic and pastoral communities over access to land, cattle and water, have displaced approximately 2.5 million Darfuris, 100,000 of them in 2016 alone. Most are internally displaced, but some also cross to Libya with the intention of reaching Italy. Some Darfuri Sudanese on the move fear political persecution.¹⁰⁸

Somalia is another conflict-affected and refugee-producing country. Many Somalis from the South Central region are fleeing protracted violence caused by clashes between the Islamist al Shabaab and other armed groups. Rural areas as well as urban centres such as Mogadishu, Baidoa and Kismayo are embroiled in the fighting. Push factors related to the political and security situation reported by Somalis include: the control of their region by al Shabaab, ongoing conflicts between clans and families, clashes between, and harassment by, different armed groups and the arbitrary arrest of young people who are accused of links to al Shabaab.

¹⁰⁶ *Eritrea Country Profile*, Regional Mixed Migration Directorate and Danish Refugee Council, June 2016, page 1.

¹⁰⁷ *January 2017 Monthly Forecast*, Security Council, January 2017, page 1.

¹⁰⁸ The central government of Khartoum has been fighting separatist movements in the region since the 1990s.

In north-eastern Nigeria, ongoing attacks by terrorist group Boko Haram forced 200,000 people into exile in Niger, Cameroon and Chad and internally displaced 1.84 million more.¹⁰⁹

Refugees from other countries also flee instability, conflict oppression or violence, including Syrians, Rwandans, Ivoirians, Central Africans and Gambians.

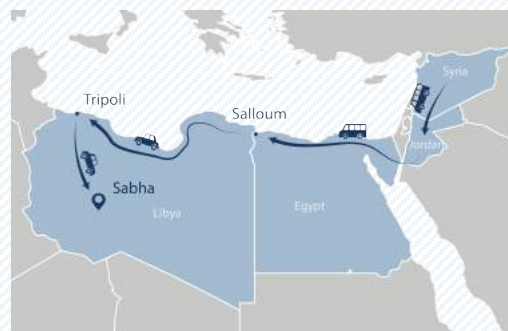
Anas – Syrian in Sebha

Anas is a 25-year-old Syrian man who moved to Libya in December 2012 to escape mandatory military service with the Syrian Army, the general deterioration of the security situation in Syria, the lack of job opportunities and generally poor living conditions.

His father, believing Libya would be safer for his son and might offer a better prospect of work and better living conditions, helped him organise the journey.

Anas travelled with his wife to Sebha where they settled in a rented house. He has however continued to struggle because of the economic crisis in the country. The current high inflation rate means he has trouble affording the rent and is concerned that he may lose their house. He regularly interacts with Libyans through work, but says that he does not have any links to other Syrians in Sebha. He has not received any external support since coming to Libya and is not aware of any support available to Syrian refugees in the country. He has never heard of the UNHCR or any other international organisations helping refugees and migrants in Libya.

Although Anas is in contact with Syrians in Europe, who share positive experiences about their new life, he wants to stay in Libya until the situation in Syria improves and he can go back.



Social and Cultural Factors

Family pressure to migrate, although not directly reflected in answers to the question “What are the main problems you encountered in your life in your country of origin?” (See Figure 20), is recurrent in respondents’ stories, and generally a common thread in discussions with refugees and migrants from both Western and Eastern Africa. Even without necessarily expressing it, many young people feel compelled to provide for their families and replicate what siblings, relatives and other members of the community have done by moving to another country. They often mentioned the shame they felt when they were unable to contribute to their family’s financial wellbeing, and would regularly compare themselves to members of the diaspora who were able to send remittances. This pressure was particularly high amongst those whose parents were not productive because of old age, being disabled or having passed away.

Other societal and cultural aspects, such as extreme religious contexts, constraints on freedoms for women, repression of homosexuality or other forms of discrimination were reported as additional push factors.

¹⁰⁹ Nigeria Situation Update, UNHCR, March 2017, available online at this [link](#).

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors were blamed for pushing thousands of people away from their homes and onto the CMR, in particular among pastoralist and nomadic populations whose livelihoods had been affected by drought. In the Sahel, agriculture and livestock farming remain the primary sources of livelihood but there is a lack of cultivable land, levels of productivity are low,¹¹⁰ and droughts and localised flooding are increasing in frequency and severity. In addition to climate change and desertification, various factors account for the Sahel's environmental crisis and food insecurity. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), "*Over the last half century, the combined effects of population growth, land degradation (deforestation, continuous cropping and overgrazing), reduced and erratic rainfall, lack of coherent environmental policies and misplaced development priorities, have contributed to transform a large proportion of the Sahel into barren land, resulting in the deterioration of the soil and water resources.*"¹¹¹ The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) reports that over 80% of the region's land is degraded.¹¹² In Ethiopia, some parts of the Tigray, Somali and Afar regional states suffered from three consecutive failed rainy seasons.¹¹³ The recent droughts have been compounded by the *El Nino*¹¹⁴ phenomenon causing food insecurity in an area that has a population of 30 million people.

Decision-Making Process Regarding Staying or Leaving Libya

Not all refugees and migrants arriving in Libya intend to make their way to Europe. A recent IOM DTM survey found that 61% of respondents interviewed in Libya were not planning on going to Europe.¹¹⁵ Interviews conducted in Libya for this study¹¹⁶ yielded similar results, with 58% of respondents reporting Libya as their country of intended final destination and the remaining 42% planning to go to Europe either as soon as possible or after staying in Libya for some time. A minority (22%) was willing to settle in Libya indefinitely, while 33% intended to stay in Libya for a limited amount of time before going back home.

¹¹⁰ See for instance: Omar A. Abdi, Edinam K. Glover, Olavi Luukkanen, "Causes and Impacts of Land Degradation and Desertification: Case Study of the Sudan", *International Journal of Agriculture and Forestry*, Vol. 3 No. 2, 2013, available at this [link](#).

¹¹¹ *Climate Change and Variability in the Sahel Region*, United Nations Environment Programme, 2006, page 18.

¹¹² *Land and environmental degradation and desertification in Africa*, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 1995, available at this [link](#).

¹¹³ *Addressing Mixed Migration Flows in East Africa*, Altai Consulting for Expertise France, 2016.

¹¹⁴ In the Horn of Africa region, a drought exacerbated by El Niño has directly affected the region, leading to an increase in food insecurity and malnutrition. For more on the impact of El Niño on East Africa, see OCHA's brief "El Niño in East Africa", available at this [link](#).

¹¹⁵ *DTM Libya Round 9*, IOM, March 2017, available at this [link](#).

¹¹⁶ Note that our sample cannot be considered as representative of the migrant population in Libya in terms of nationalities, locations, gender and age of respondents (see section 2.6.2 on Limitation of the Research).

Figure 21: Do you plan on staying in Libya or continuing your journey to Europe?¹¹⁷

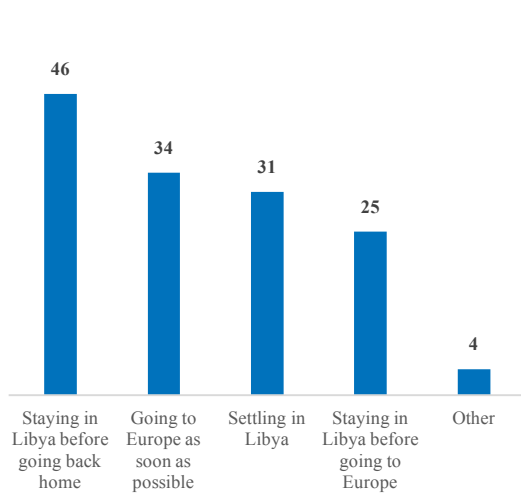
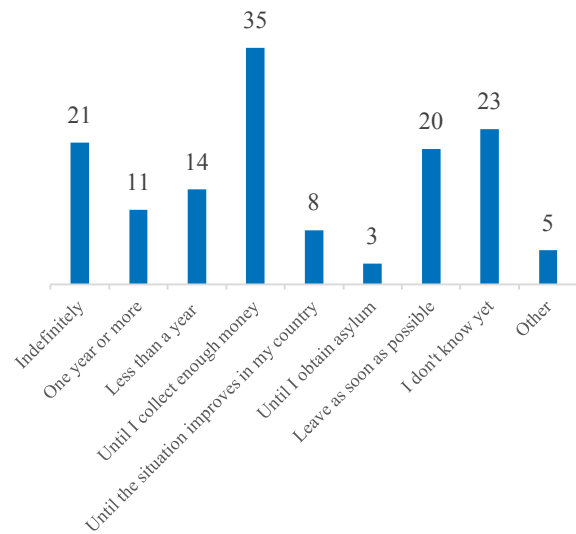


Figure 22: How long would you like to stay in Libya?¹¹⁸



The majority of **people from neighbouring countries** (in particular Niger, Chad, Sudan and Egypt) said they **intended to stay in Libya to work, often in the farming, trade and construction sectors, and send money back home**. Over 80% of IOM DTM respondents from Niger, Egypt, Chad and Sudan reported that they planned to go no further than Libya.¹¹⁹ Nigeriens, for instance, are the largest group recorded leaving their country for Algeria and Libya, but are seldom found among those arriving on the Italian coast. Malians exhibit similar tendencies, with a 2014 Malian government study concluding that *“the majority of Malians abroad seek opportunities in emerging economies on the continent. Fewer are entering Europe”*.¹²⁰ Among those interviewed for this study, 100% of Nigeriens and Malians and 63% of Sudanese (22 respondents) declared that they planned to settle in Libya permanently, or temporarily before going back home. In addition, 75% of Palestinians (six respondents) said they intended to stay in Libya (with only one planning to leave for Europe).

“Nigeriens, Sudanese, Chadians often go back to their countries after working here for a while: there are still opportunities for easy work in the region for them. People from Nigeria on the contrary don’t usually stay more than a month.”

Border Post Chief, Tomu, Libya

Those from neighbouring countries reported finding it easier to settle in southern Libya, where populations share closer cultural ties with them and are more accepting of temporary, work-related migration. According to one 36-year-old man from Sudan interviewed in Sebha: *“I prefer to settle in the*

¹¹⁷ “Other” answers include: “going to Canada, Australia or the USA”, “going back to my country as soon as possible”, “I wanted to go to Europe but now I am changing my mind”, and “I do not know yet, I will decide according to the situation in the area”.

¹¹⁸ “Other” answers include: “Until I get the opportunity to leave”, “as long as necessary”, “until it is convenient”, and “for a bit”.

¹¹⁹ When disaggregated by nationality, the majority of Nigeriens (88%), Egyptians (62%), Sudanese (91%) and Chadian nationals (85%) cited Libya as their country of intended destination. Source: *DTM Libya Round 9*, IOM, March 2017, available at this [link](#).

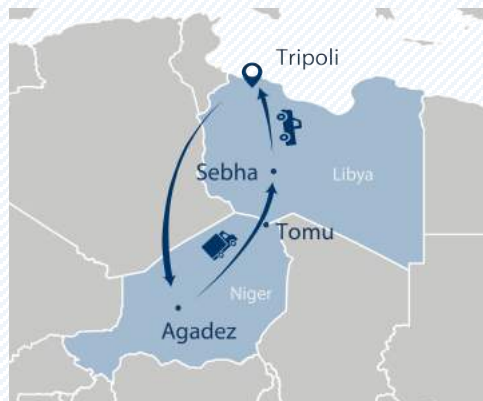
¹²⁰ Source: *Turning the tide. The Politics of Irregular Migration in the Sahel and Libya*, Cligendael, 2017, available at this [link](#), and *Tableau Synoptique de Re conduite des Maliens de l’Extérieur par Pays au Titre de l’Année 2013*, Ministère des Maliens de l’Extérieur, 2013, available online at [here](#).

south of Libya: it is better than the North because there is no discrimination here.” Another 31-year-old Sudanese man agreed: “I want to live in the south of Libya... There is no racism here, there are many Sudanese brothers and you can easily move from here to Sudan.”

Mamane – Nigerien travelling between Agadez and Tripoli

Mamane is a young man from Agadez, Niger who was interviewed in his home town. Since 2001, Mamane has been to Libya six times, using the “traditional route” via the Tomu border post.¹²¹ He usually stays two to three weeks in Sebha before heading north to Tripoli to seek work.

Mamane is a qualified “tyre mechanic,” meaning that he fixes and sells tires. He says he usually finds good work in Libya and has no intention of going to Europe, even though he knows smugglers who organise boat trips across the Mediterranean. He says from his brief trips to Libya over the years, he has saved enough money to open a small restaurant in Agadez.



Refugees and migrants from **West and Central Africa and the Horn of Africa currently favour leaving Libya for Europe.** Eritreans and Somalis in particular tend to want to move through Libya as quickly as possible. All Somalis (seven respondents), 70% of Eritreans (seven respondents) and 50% of Nigerians (13 respondents) interviewed in Libya intended to continue their journey to Europe. Individuals from West and Central Africa often seek job opportunities in Libya when they can, but a large majority aim to go to Europe. According to IOM DTM, only 8% of Nigerians interviewed intended to stay in Libya.¹²² The shift in favour of heading to Europe by this group was put down to the collapse of the Libyan economy, with many saying that they would be happy to stay in Libya if there were good economic opportunities.

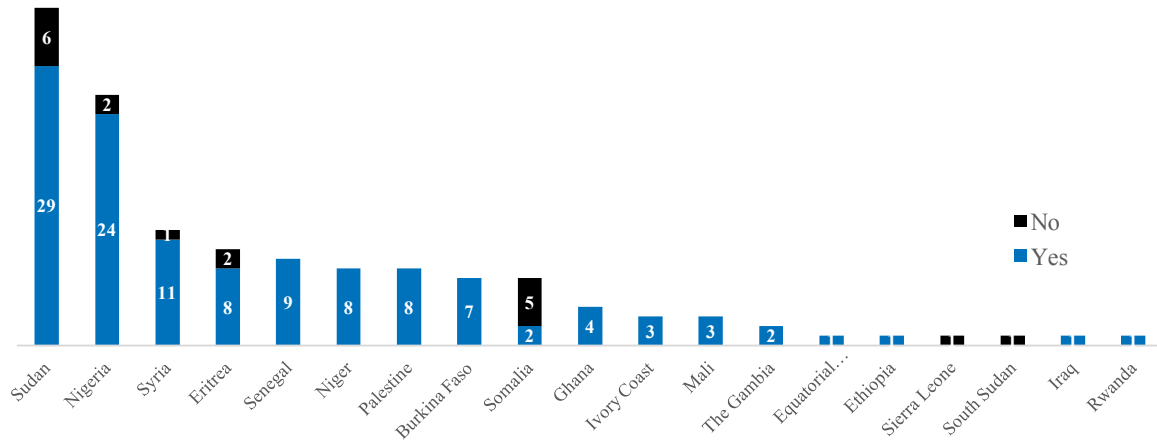
A vast majority of respondents interviewed for this study worked at some point since arriving in Libya (87%), most of them in daily or occasional work (83%),¹²³ and only 22% of respondents intended to settle in Libya permanently. The eighteen respondents who had not worked since arriving in Libya were predominantly from East Africa (seven Somalis, five Sudanese and two Eritreans).

¹²¹ See section 3.6.2 on routes through Niger.

¹²² *DTM Libya Round 9*, IOM, March 2017, available at this [link](#).

¹²³ It is worth noting that we oversampled refugees and migrants of specific concern to UNHCR, and therefore our sample cannot be considered as representative of the migrant population in Libya in terms of nationalities, locations, gender and age of respondents (see section 2.6.2 on Limitation of the Research).

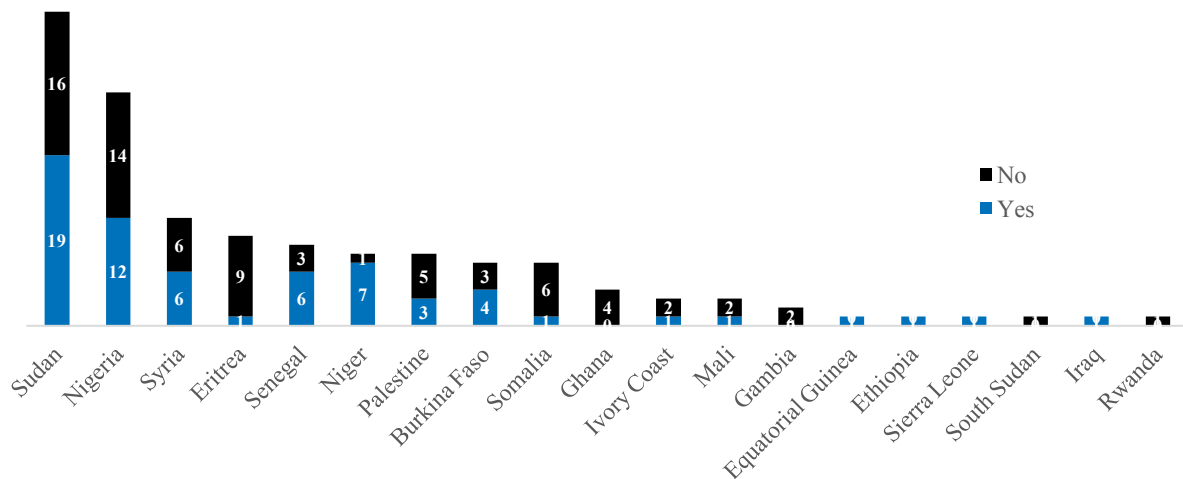
Figure 23: Have you worked since you arrived in Libya?¹²⁴



A number of respondents reported that they initially wanted to stay in Libya and not go to Europe, but were either forcibly detained and put on boats by smugglers, or reconsidered after traumatic incidents in Libya. A recent study conducted by the Cligendael institute found that “*the hardened migration climate in the region combined with practices of migrant exploitation in Libya also forces migrants to travel on to Europe – even if they never intended to go there in the first place.*”¹²⁵

In terms of returning to their country of origin, almost half of those interviewed in Libya (46%) said that they would go back home, either now or under certain conditions. The conditions almost all included: a) improvement of their personal financial situation (“when I have enough money / when I am rich”) or b) when the situation in their country improved (“when my country is stable” / “when there are laws and a strong government enforcing these laws”).

Figure 24: Do you want to go back to your country of origin?



¹²⁴ Note that Eritrean respondents interviewed in Libya might not be representative of this community (as most of them transit quickly through Libya, without stopping in cities where interviews were conducted, and therefore could not be reached). Interviews conducted with Eritrean migrants in Italy as well as KILs show that a majority of Eritreans in Libya do not work.

¹²⁵ *Turning the tide. The Politics of Irregular Migration in the Sahel and Libya*, Cligendael, 2017.

3.2.4. COMMUNICATING

Communicating with the Country of Origin

Almost three quarters of those interviewed in Libya (71%) have access to a functioning phone all the time, regardless of their country of origin. Fewer had access to the Internet, with no significant variations across nationalities: 17% had Internet all the time, but 22% had never had access to it since arriving in Libya.

Figure 25: How often do you have access to a phone?

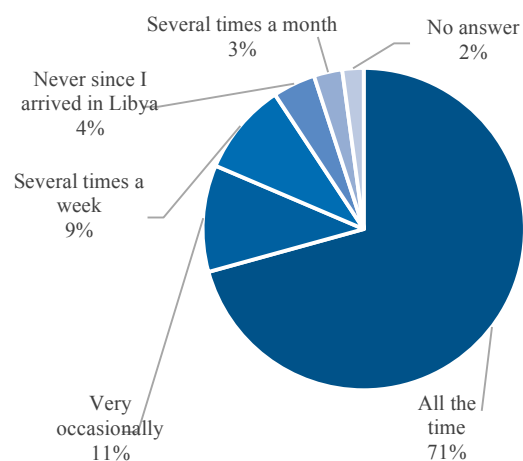
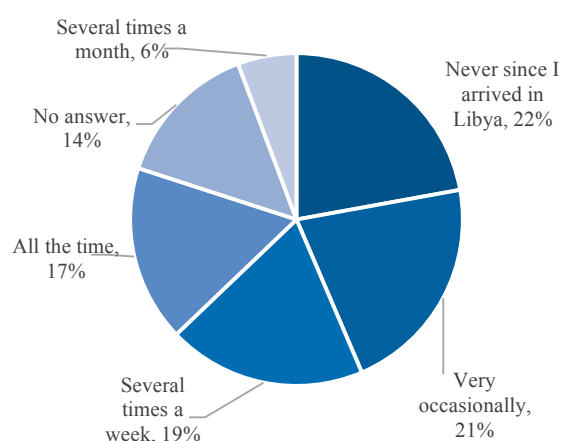


Figure 26: How often do you have access to Internet?



Most interviewees reported being in regular contact with their families in their country of origin, with some mentioning they received money from their family back home while in Libya to continue their journey or to pay for their release from traffickers.¹²⁶

Level of Information on the Journey

In most cases, respondents indicated that they learned about the journey before starting it from friends, acquaintances or members of their communities, meaning that most were well-informed about the risks the journey entailed. In the words of a 33-year-old woman from Eritrea: *“I was told by friends in Europe about the risks of dying at sea and being killed by the smugglers or the police before getting to the sea”*. A 34-year-old man from Syria said: *“People I know who reached Europe told me that their boat broke down and they nearly died. They stayed at sea for 48 hours. The Italians didn’t treat them well when they arrived.”* A number of respondents, however, complained that those they communicated with had embellished the positives and diminished the negatives of the journey. A 30-year-old man from Nigeria said: *“People who made it to Europe told me that there aren’t any problems but the opposite occurred”*.

Some key informants in Libya suggested that the level of information and awareness people had about the risks of the journey varied depending on their nationality. One claimed: *“Nigerians for instance are well informed, whereas Gambians are not at all.”* Interviews indicated that those from neighbouring countries (Niger, Chad and Sudan) tended to be better informed on the routes to and through Libya and the risks associated with them. A 28-year-old man from Sudan summarised: *“We called friends who*

¹²⁶ See section 4.2.1 Risks and Vulnerabilities Associated with the Journey.

arrived in Libya before us and they informed us about the route and the costs: it is not difficult to prepare the journey.”

Overall, a significant number of respondents did not know how long it would take them to reach Europe (55%) nor how much it would cost (44%).

Figure 27: Do you know how long it takes on the boat from Libya to Europe? If yes, how long?

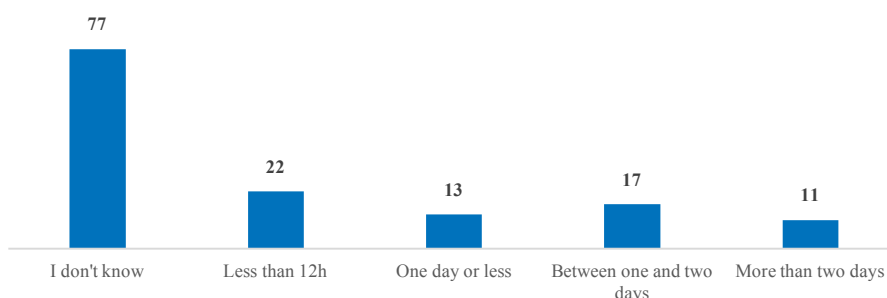
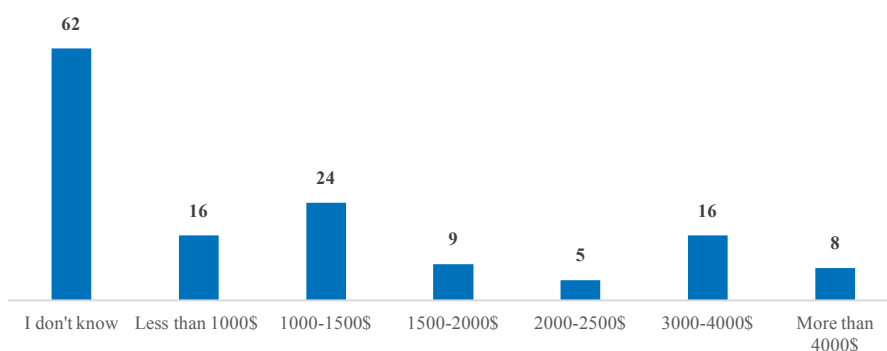


Figure 28: Do you know how much it costs to go to Europe? If yes, how much?



3.3. SMUGGLING

3.3.1. SMUGGLERS INVOLVED ALONG THE ROUTES

The smuggling industry is booming in Libya. According to smugglers interviewed by the independent research team, the number of refugees and migrants coming to Libya and departing for Europe is increasing.¹²⁷

In this study, the word “smuggler” refers to someone who assists people in an irregular situation to move from a country to another without the required documentation in exchange for money. People usually pay smugglers because they know the routes and have the connections to help them transit. Without local knowledge, the migration routes through the region would be near impossible to navigate

¹²⁷ A total of 19 interviews with smugglers in Libya were conducted for this study.

as they traverse inhospitable landscapes like the Sahara Desert. As such, smugglers are almost always used for at least part of the journey.

Smuggling is different from trafficking¹²⁸. Whereas trafficking involves the use of fraud, deception or coercion for the purpose of exploitation, smuggling, does not necessarily involve exploitation, deception, coercion, or any violation of human rights. Nevertheless, smugglers in Libya and along the CMR often take advantage of peoples' vulnerability by imposing high prices, restricting their freedom of movement and knowingly using unsafe modes of transportation to maximise profits, such as rubber boats and pick-up trucks. In some situations, smuggling becomes trafficking.

Types of Smuggling Networks

Smuggling can take different forms, from highly-structured and hierarchical transnational organisations to loosely-connected informal and horizontal networks. Networks can involve varying numbers of stakeholders and intermediaries.

Above all, smuggling in North Africa and along the CMR has evolved in recent years. The dramatic increase in the number of people moving through the region since 2013 has led to a general professionalization of the industry and the appearance of more organised, hierarchical, transnational networks. According to interviews conducted for this study, "generational turnover" among smugglers seems to have taken place since 2013 and the harrowing Lampedusa boat disaster in 2015 that caused more than 360 deaths.¹²⁹ "Historical" smugglers have largely handed their operations over to intermediaries or assistants and opted for a lower profile, likely a result of the rising international attention. This new generation of smugglers is reported to adopt a more cautious approach than their predecessors in the way they market and organise their business.

Smuggling services in the region are either mapped from origin to destination, the "organised" journey, or a succession of short legs, the "step-by-step" journey. Depending on the route taken, and the clientele base targeted, the smugglers use different methods.

Combined Services (Organised from Origin to Destination)

Some structured hierarchical transnational networks offer a combination of services, a "full package" from country of origin to country of destination¹³⁰. Only relatively sophisticated groups can afford to offer such services as they require a complex coordination of logistics over several countries and the financial capital to procure transport and pay bribes.

These structured organisations emerged in response to demands for a more professional, "all inclusive" smuggling service, in particular from refugees and migrants from Syria and the Horn of Africa. These organisations usually cater to people "express" transiting through East Africa to Libya. This route has minimal stopovers and payment transactions. Smuggling networks from the Horn of Africa were already particularly professional, organised and profitable before the crisis in Libya, "*thanks to the consistent flow of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing from the repressive regime in Eritrea and conflict in*

¹²⁸ See section 1.4 Key Concepts and Definitions.

¹²⁹ "In one incident alone, in early October 2013, more than 360 persons lost their lives off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa. In response, Italy launched the Mare Nostrum operation to reinforce patrols and rescue capacity in the Mediterranean Sea." Source: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Cover the Period 1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014, page 13, available at this [link](#).

¹³⁰ See section 3.1.2 Organised Journeys.

Somalia” according to a 2015 ISS report.¹³¹ The same report quotes an RMMS survey claiming that there are “1,000 unregistered agents or brokers in Addis Ababa alone.”

A member of a large smuggling network interviewed in Rebyana (southeast Libya) described his organisation in the following terms: “*My three partners and I have been working on migrant transportation since 2012. At the time of the previous regime, I used to work as a truck driver on the route to Sudan. After the revolution, I took advantage of my contacts in Sudan to get started in the migrant transportation business. We collect groups of people from Sudanese smugglers at the border and transport them until Rebyana where we accommodate them on farms. The journey can take up to four days. We provide them with food and water. We do up to 500 trips a year, and the company can earn more than 1 million LYD a year.*”¹³² *We pay the authorities well so our work can be facilitated.*”

Trafficking networks (distinct from smuggling networks) that move people to or through North Africa tend to also offer a “full package” service and thus to be more transnational and hierarchical in character. The high cost of this type of trip means that large debts may be accrued, which in turn increases the risks of coercion and exploitation.

Loose Networks (Step-by-Step Journeys)

Step-by-step journeys¹³³ are particularly common along Western routes, with people paying individual smugglers and intermediaries as they go. Often smugglers on one leg of the journey will connect the refugees and migrants with people to take them on the next stage.

As the OECD points out: “*Unlike in other regions, the smuggling of West Africans has not generated enough profit to warrant proper transnational criminal networks. [...] Smuggling [in West Africa] is also facilitated by free mobility within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region, weak border controls and the fact that several Western African countries have visa-free programmes with North African countries.*”¹³⁴

Smugglers and Their Roles

This section outlines the various actors and roles encountered within smuggling networks operating on routes to and through Libya. However, it is essential to note that smuggling networks can take many forms and involve varying numbers and types of stakeholders. Smuggling is a multifaceted phenomenon and in constant evolution. For these reasons, it is difficult to generalise findings and formally categorise stakeholders involved.

“Transporters”

Some smugglers focus on transportation from one destination to another. These “transporters” are responsible for a specific leg of the journey – often only a small segment of the route that they know well. They can work individually or as partners within a group.

They possess the equipment, knowledge of the terrain, and, whenever relevant, connections with official and unofficial security providers. However, they do not necessarily have strong contacts within

¹³¹ *Survive and Advance: the economics of smuggling refugees and migrants into Europe*, Institute for Securities Study, 2015, page 9. “*Of all of the networks that have flourished in the current crisis, the smugglers operating in the Horn of Africa were the most professional, organised and profitable before the crisis, thanks to the consistent flow of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing from the repressive regime in Eritrea and conflict in Somalia.*”

¹³² One million LYD would be worth 166,667 USD using the estimate black market rate on 31 January 2017 in Tripoli (see section 2.6.1 Challenges).

¹³³ See section 3.1.2.

¹³⁴ “Can we put an end to human smuggling?” *Migration Policy Debates*, OECD, 2015.

the refugee and migrant communities themselves. In most cases, “transporters” do not market or sell smuggling services: refugees and migrants are brought, passed along, or sold to them, either by other “transporters” or by brokers/intermediaries.

A Libyan smuggler interviewed in Gatrun explained: *“Intermediaries are in charge of gathering a minimum number of passengers before reaching out to the “transporters”. Most intermediaries are in the country of origin or transit (mainly Niger and Sudan) and are not directly employed by smugglers/transporters, but have a professional relationship with them.”* Another smuggler from Kufra town added: *“The intermediaries know me and they contact me directly; I never contact them.”* “Transporters” maintain contact with other smugglers/“transporters” to organise the handing over of refugees and migrants to those responsible for the next leg of the journey, or to trade their charges.

Small scale, individual, smugglers/“transporters” reported they could carry out an average of 15 to 25 trips per year with one 4x4 vehicle. One smuggler working on the Sebha to Shweref leg of the Western route through Libya said he took 20 migrants at a time and made LYD 14,000 per trip (USD 2,333) using the estimate black market rate on 31 January 2017 in Tripoli. He organises two to three trips a month.

Smugglers/“transporters” in southern Libya reported increased competition in the market: *“Youth want to make more and more money, they increase the number of people per journey, and they drive faster. They use better cars, more modern and powerful to cope with the difficult terrain crossed”*. Usually, smugglers/transporters use 4x4 vehicles such as the Toyota Tundra or Toyota Hilux, and Thuraya satellite phones on the way.

Perception of Smugglers

Smugglers inside Libya frequently self-identify as “transporters” or “service providers” rather than “smugglers.” They choose these titles to emphasise the utility of the services they provide. One smuggler who is active in Ghat and Ubari regions, said: *“I am not a trafficker. I am just transporting Africans. They are mere passengers for me. I help them find a better job, I also sometimes help them find new clothes. I help them.”*

Key informants suggested that the term “smuggler” is a very “Western” concept. Those involved in smuggling often tend to consider themselves as “facilitators” or even “saviours” rather than criminals (Eritreans and Ethiopians smugglers/intermediaries in particular).¹³⁵

Smugglers often attribute acts of violence and torture to other actors present along the CMR, such as armed groups or bandits. They sometimes present themselves as protectors of refugees and migrants from these groups. However, many people are victims of brutal treatment by smugglers on their journeys¹³⁶. Increasing violence by smugglers has been reported by respondents as linked to the intense competition in the sector and the search for higher profits.

Some “transporters” might provide occasional, small-scale accommodation to those they transport when necessary. This was confirmed by smugglers interviewed in Sebha, Ghat and Ubari. One of them, from Ghat said: *“I focus on transportation but I sometimes accommodate a few people for one or two*

¹³⁵ See *Migrant, Refugee, Smuggler, Saviour*, Peter Tinti and Tuesday Reitano, 2016: “Smugglers are revered as saviours by many of those they move”.

¹³⁶ As detailed in section 4.2 Protection Issues and Vulnerabilities.

nights before departure. I have a house in the Sharika Al Siniya neighbourhood of Ghat. They are provided with food and water when they stay.” In southern Libya, in the district of Kufra, smugglers often have to combine transportation and accommodation as most people travel on “package” journeys (see above).

Coordinators / Wholesalers

“Coordinators” manage networks (that might be structured organisations or loose, rather horizontal networks) and organise human resources to provide transport, accommodation and/or food to those using their services.

Some of smugglers head large-scale organisations that employ more people (both Libyans and foreign nationals) than most private companies in Libya.¹³⁷ Ultimately, these organisations view refugees and migrants as a commodity to be bought and sold. They purchase them and resell them for a bulk price as market dynamics dictate. Coordinators/wholesalers in Libya can sell their group of people for LYD 50,000 – 250,000 (USD 8,333 – 41,667). In some cases, they buy them from foreign smugglers and sell them to Libyan smugglers. In Sebha, smugglers explained that they could buy a group of people for LYD 150,000 (USD 25,000) and resell them for LYD 250,000 (USD 41,667). Prices vary depending on nationalities and the perceived financial means of those smuggled. Eritreans are considered a particularly lucrative commodity and “can fetch up to LYD 5,000 each (USD 833),” according to a Sebha-based smuggler.

Sebha-based smuggling organisation coordinated by a Libyan

A ten-year-old Sebha-based smuggling network provides work for over 30 people and generates LYD 400,000 – 600,000 (USD 66,667 – 100,000) yearly. It provides transportation, accommodation, food, water, bedding and other items to meet the basic needs of refugees and migrants.

The network is also involved in “wholesaling” clients to transporters. Its manager stated that “When I need to sell migrants, I calculate the fee and the buyer pays the right price.” He has three shelters (or *hadhana*, “incubators”) inside Sebha, in the Hejara and Mahdia neighbourhoods. The people that run the shelters are mainly from the communities of people that are being transported/smuggled and therefore better able to communicate with them and reach out to them in the first place. They are in charge of overseeing refugees and migrants and providing food and water.

Intermediaries

Intermediaries, also sometimes called “*wasit*”, “*komisangi*”, “*mandoub*”, “*dalala*” or “*samsara*”, are often refugees or migrants from one of the main countries of origin for the CMR. They are present in the main smuggling hubs of the countries on the way to Libya as well as in Libya itself, and work along ethnic and linguistic lines. They organise journeys and link refugees and migrants with transporters. In Libya, they have been local residents for many years, speak fluent Arabic and have developed useful local

¹³⁷ In Niger, coordinators overseeing the operation of large organisations are sometimes called “in tchaga”, whereas in Nigeria they would be “burgers”.

contacts. Intermediaries from countries of origin always work in partnership with Libyan smugglers (who either offer them with protection or own the whole smuggling network).

The most common type of intermediary is the **recruiter**. Recruiters advertise the services of transporters, establish contacts with potential clients, and put together groups of refugees and migrants that they sell to transporters once they reach the required number. They either take a commission from the price the traveller pays for their trip, or are paid a commission by the smuggler/transporter. An intermediary recruiting refugees and migrants from Eritrea, Ethiopia or Sudan might get up to USD 50 per person for instance. An intermediary recruiting for the journey between Sebha and Tripoli might make up to LYD 2,000 – 3,000 (USD 333 – 500) for one trip (for a group fitting in one vehicle). Intermediaries/recruiters contact transporters themselves when they have groups ready to leave. Some refugees and migrants work temporarily as intermediaries in order to pay for their own journey to Europe: organising just one journey for 30 people at US 50 per person could be sufficient.

Intermediaries can also take on other roles such as collecting the money from refugees and migrants, bribing local authorities, connecting with specific local facilitators, organising other logistical aspects, providing instruction to clients on how to behave in the country or, in cases of kidnapping and detention, acting as a go-between for victims, kidnappers and other smugglers.¹³⁸ All smugglers interviewed in Libya agreed that it was necessary to have a strong network of intermediaries to deal with refugees and migrants.

“A “Komisangi” who spoke Hausa dealt with the smuggler on our behalf”

Male, 34 years old, from Nigeria, interviewed in Gatrún, Libya

The independent research team interviewed an Eritrean intermediary currently imprisoned in the detention centre of Tariq Al Seka, Libya, who was previously one of the main focal points between smugglers on the Eastern routes through Libya and those operating boats to Italy. He said: *“I was in contact with more than 30 smugglers. I am well-known amongst Sudanese smugglers and in my village in Eritrea.”* He primarily organised departures for Europe by phone, earning LYD 50 (USD 8) by person on each trip. When a group of refugees and migrants arrived in Tripoli, the head of the group would call him to let him know they had arrived and he would then start organising the crossing to Europe. *“During the three summer months, we were able to organise departures for 50 small boats carrying 90-100 persons each and about 10 boats carrying 500 persons, which left from Garabuli and Sabratha”* he said. He was also instrumental in coordinating some journeys from Eritrea to Tripoli over the phone.

Other Facilitators and Specialist Service Providers

Many types of facilitators can be involved in smuggling, each providing unique services such as accommodation and food, vehicles, security, forged or falsified documents.

Shelter providers, also called “ghetto owners” or “*chefs de foyers*”, provide accommodation for those waiting to continue on to the next leg of the journey or to be transferred to the embarkation points. The transit houses (sometimes called “connection houses” or “foyers”) can be private houses, farms or abandoned factories and warehouses, which smugglers or shelter providers own or rent. The locations are usually tightly-controlled and those staying there have varying degrees of freedom of movement. They might be waiting for more people or waiting for optimal sea conditions. Some might also stay in properties owned by smugglers while gathering enough money to pay for the next leg of the journey (by working or asking relatives for support). In some cases, accommodation is included in the bulk price of the journey, while in others clients must pay per day or per week.

Spotters and security providers direct transporters to the best routes, inform them of possible border patrol checks, escort vehicles, and secure transit houses or detention centres managed by smugglers.

¹³⁸ See section 4.2.1 Risks and Vulnerabilities Associated with the Journey.

Between Niger and Libya for instance, some transporters send motorcycle spotters equipped with satellite phones ahead of them on the road or make sure that it is clear of checkpoints and patrols.

Cashiers and third-party insurers have reportedly developed to act as guarantors and hand over smuggling fees once refugees and migrants arrive safely at their destination. **Financiers** might deal with the money paid by the migrant and handle transactions between the informal and formal economy.

Anatomy of a smuggling network from West Africa to Libya through Niger

Roles are often very segmented along the route from West Africa to Libya, with each person involved in smuggling responsible for a specific area. There is rarely any overall coordinator overseeing operations but instead a loose network of individuals who carry out a particular role.

Refugees and migrants planning a trip often buy the phone numbers of smugglers or intermediaries who speak their home language and can arrange the first leg of the journey. Friends or relatives may give numbers out of solidarity, but respondents say that numbers are more often sold. Small offices and websites advise refugees and migrants on routes, travel hubs and what to expect on the way such as where bribes might be needed.

In some cases, a “*représentant*” helps refugees and migrants in Niamey, Niger, by providing accommodation for instance. At bus stations, travellers may encounter “*coxeurs*”, smugglers who book bus tickets for them as they run the risk of being overcharged or deliberately given tickets to the wrong destination if they do it themselves.

Once the bus arrives in Agadez, the last major city in Niger before the desert and Libya, “*chasse-migrants*” also sometimes called “*coxeurs*” advertise smugglers’ services at the bus station. “*Responsables des ghettos et foyers*” offer accommodation prior leaving for Libya with the “*transporteurs*”.¹³⁹

Smugglers for Sea Crossing

Smugglers who organise boat trips to Italy operate slightly differently than those who organise overland trips. A noticeable difference is the higher capital costs of operation. These smugglers must arrange accommodation at the coast and purchase supplies and equipment for the boat trip.

Sea-smuggling networks are contacted by smugglers or intermediaries that have a group interested in departing for Italy. Intermediaries take a commission for each traveller which can represent up to a quarter of the final price (up to LYD 200 – 300 [USD 33 – 50] per person). They organise transportation from nearby cities, such as Tripoli or Sorman, to a hidden location not far from the coast, charging about LYD 250 [USD 42] per passenger for transportation services.

According to smugglers interviewed, refugees and migrants are normally accommodated for between four and seven days at a coastal “transit house”, often a farm or a warehouse rented for the week.¹⁴⁰ Transportation is usually handled by the smugglers’ employees, who will avoid driving past the main

¹³⁹ This was under the “traditional” well-established smuggling system in the country; see section 3.6.2 for more details on the recent evolutions of smuggling routes through Niger.

¹⁴⁰ One of the smugglers interviewed mentioned paying LYD 15,000 [USD 2,500] to rent a farm for the week, which is a very high price for Libya, suggesting that the landlord is probably aware of the activities conducted by this temporary tenant.

coastal road. They also organise accommodation and basic meals at a reported price of around LYD 15,000 [USD 2,500] per one hundred people per week. These smugglers' employees can in some cases be refugees and migrants who exchange their work for discounted or free transportation to Europe.

A sea trip will begin when a group of 80 to 100 people is assembled. They are charged approximately LYD 1,200 – 1,500 (USD 200 – 250) each for both accommodation and the sea crossing itself. Rubber dinghies bought at the local market are the standard form of transportation but if these are not available or have become more expensive then smugglers might increase ticket prices. Smugglers buy new rubber boats for each departure, and report paying between LYD 26,000 – 28,000 (USD 4,333 – 4,666) for one. As an ISS study pointed out:¹⁴¹ *“For smugglers, both the migrants and the rubber boats they are loaded onto are disposable and their fate inconsequential.”*

Before departure, the smugglers usually show one of the intended passengers how to drive the boat and hand over basic equipment: a phone and a small compass for the designated “captain.” At sea, passengers then attempt to alert rescue ships or helicopters to their presence as soon as possible, using their phones or torches to attract attention.¹⁴²

Evolution in Smuggling by Sea over the Years

The nature of smuggling by sea has changed dramatically with the emergence of large rescue naval operations in the Mediterranean Sea, starting with Mare Nostrum and other independent initiatives in 2013. Key informants interviewed in Libya and Italy said smugglers had stopped arranging for refugees and migrants to cross long distances to Italy (over 160 nautical miles away, approximately 300km on land) and now only plan for shorter journeys that take refugees and migrants into international waters, assuming that they will then be rescued and taken onto larger ships that will take them directly to Italy. In essence, they point their charges in the right direction but in most cases no longer oversee their journey up until they reach Italian shores.

This shift has a direct effect on the costs borne by smugglers, who now buy less fuel, use cheaper, less seaworthy boats and no longer have to pay for a crew to be on board. The significant reduction of upfront costs has made the smuggling business more accessible to many young Libyans.

Means of Transportation Used

A wide array of vehicles is used on smuggling routes, including:

- Pick-up trucks (Toyotas, Fords, and others) are largely used by smugglers to cross the desert at the Sudanese-Libyan, Nigerien-Libyan and Algerian-Libya borders. The most common models now used are the Toyota Hilux and Toyota Tundra. Smugglers operating between Niger and Libya are turning to more modern and powerful models to be able to use less established tracks across the desert, sometimes buying one vehicle in common to be able to afford it¹⁴³. In

¹⁴¹ *Survive and Advance: the economics of smuggling refugees and migrants into Europe*, Institute for Security Studies, 2015.

¹⁴² See section 3.7.2 Departures from the Coast to Europe for more details.

¹⁴³ See section 3.6.2 Western routes through Niger.

Niger for instance, one such powerful model would cost around CFA 45-50 million (USD 74,192 – 82,436) according to interviews conducted.

- 4x4 trucks are used mainly around the Nigerien-Libyan border to carry goods or act as “buses” to transport larger groups of people. In theory only regular travellers and people from the region but also sometimes refugees and migrants from further afield.
- Trucks with plastic covers are used within Libya to transport passengers clandestinely. More elaborate schemes have also been observed, such as carving out space under cargo for refugees and migrants to crawl underneath. This is designed so as not to attract attention on the main roads, between Sebha and Shweref or Tripoli for instance.
- Taxis and private cars are an alternative for small groups of four to five people to move from one town to another, for example from Bani Walid to Tripoli.
- Rubber dinghies are equipped with a small engine that one passenger is in charge of operating after receiving cursory instructions from smugglers. These are unstable and highly unsafe but often loaded with as many as 100 people.
- Wooden boats are larger than rubber dinghies, taking up to 600 people on board. They are more stable but slower and easier to spot. Smugglers use these boats for Syrians, Palestinians or Eritreans, although other nationalities are sometimes offered discounted tickets to go in the hold of the boat, a position that brings a higher risk of death at sea.

Influential Tribes and Communities on Libyan Smuggling Routes

In Libya, armed groups dominate the smuggling and trafficking businesses. Profiles and tribal backgrounds of smugglers vary according to the area.

In the South, given the current tribal and ethnic divisions and ongoing conflict, the territory is divided and the movement of smugglers is restricted. Those engaged in smuggling mostly restrict their operations to the area of influence of the groups they belong to or cooperate with, with the outbreak of conflicts prompting some groups to avoid particular routes or areas entirely. For instance, due to tensions between Tebu and Zwey, who currently control central Kufra town, smugglers of Tebu origin interviewed diverted their routes away from the town. However, smugglers of different tribal or ethnic backgrounds might also communicate and coordinate with each other at hubs where people are handed over for the next leg of the journey, around Sebha or Bani Walid for instance.

In southwestern Libya, members of the Tebu community are particularly influential along the routes from the Nigerien border to Sebha, while Tuareg, and to a much lesser extent Magarha, predominate along the routes coming from Algeria, such as the Ghat to Brak/Adiri track, or tracks through the great Sahara leaving from Niger and passing by the Algerian territory to arrive in Ubari. According to respondents, the routes between Sebha and the coast usually fall within areas inhabited by Magarha and Awlad Suleyman.

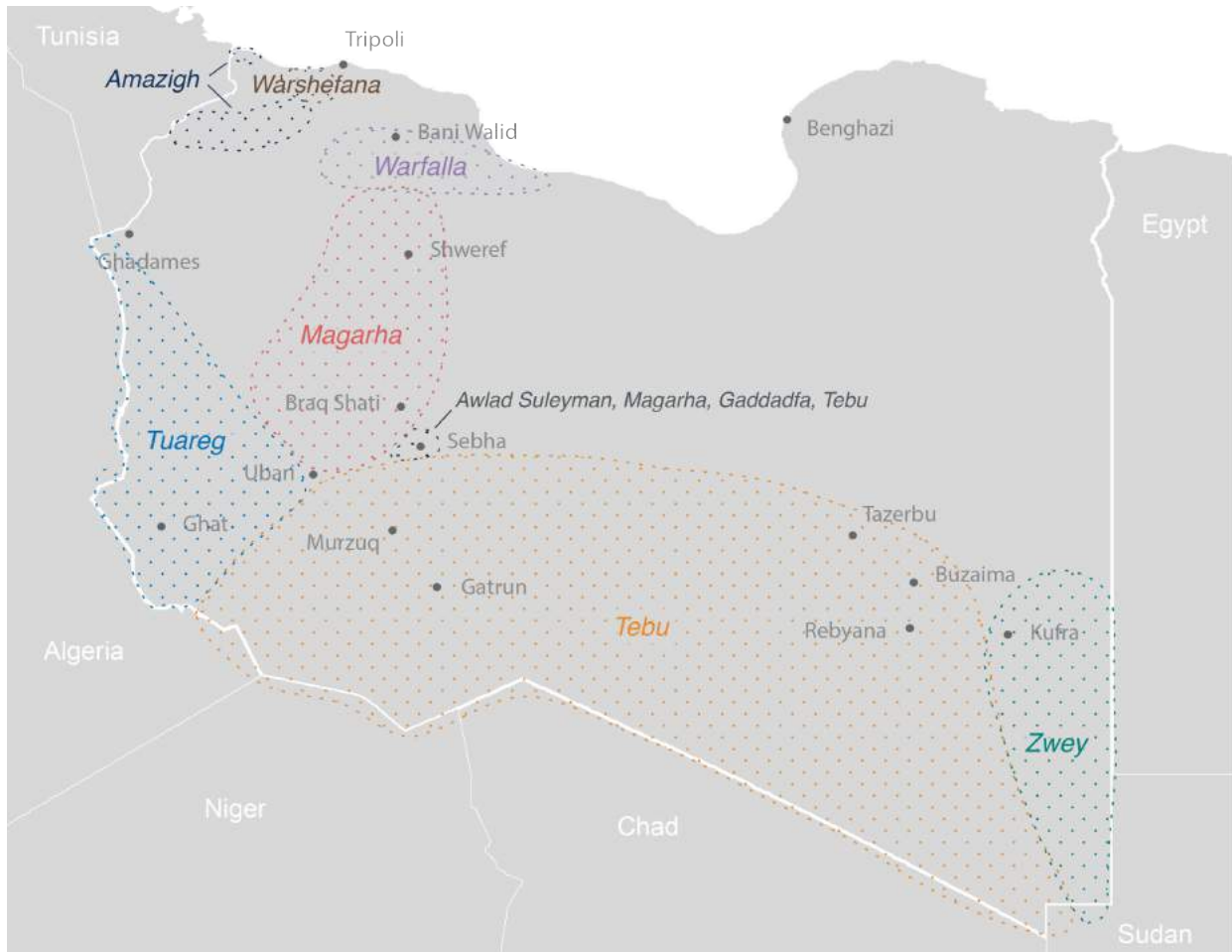
In Sebha, where several groups control different areas of the city, people being smuggled might be handed to other smugglers depending on the relationship between the different communities. Interviews indicated that smugglers originating from the Tebu and Magarha communities, for instance, tended to connect and work hand-in-hand for mutual profitability. Smugglers of Awlad Suleyman descent were marginally less involved, as the area where their tribe is influential is surrounded by Tebu and Magarha-dominated neighbourhoods. Smugglers of Tuareg origin interviewed reported rarely having access to the south of Sebha, where Tebu are powerful, saying they preferred to avoid the area.

In the south east, respondents indicated that members of Zwey and Tebu communities were equally involved in the smuggling industry, albeit using different routes. In the district of Kufra, smugglers with Tebu backgrounds tended to stop in the area of Rebyana, which is under Tebu control, whereas Zwey

go via Jufra (Kufra city). Smugglers from both Zwey and Tebu communities operated along the routes from the district of Kufra to Waddan, according to interviews.

In the north, zones of control are more difficult to determine as they tend to be along political as well as tribal lines and therefore can change quickly depending on conflicts between the different militias and armed groups.

Figure 29: Influential tribes and ethnic groups populating regions rife with smuggling routes in Libya



3.3.2. COSTS AND FINANCES

Payment logistics

Several payment mechanisms and types of financial transaction are used by smuggling networks and largely depend on the type of journey undertaken and nationality of those transported.

Those undertaking step-by-step journeys tend to make up-front cash payments either to intermediaries or directly to smugglers before starting out on a particular leg of their trip. It is however not uncommon for that a refugee or migrant would not have enough cash to pay for the smuggler's services. In such cases, he or she might work for a few days, weeks or months to save up funds. In some cases, he or she might be offered other, often exploitative, payment options by smugglers. Fearing robbery, respondents said they usually only carried what they needed for the next leg of their journey and used international money transfer operators to access their savings.

For organised journeys taken care of by more structured transnational smuggling networks, the financial transaction might take place through international bank transfers either before departure or after arrival, directly to a smuggler or through third-party insurance. Due to the nature of this type of journey, the amount paid is much larger and is often transferred by family or relatives in USD or EUR. It was reported to the research team that the money can be transferred in Europe, the US, Cairo or Dubai. The payment is usually received by a particular smuggler or intermediary who is the responsible for paying the different smuggling networks involved along the route. The sea crossing fee seems to be paid separately most of the time.

The large majority of people interviewed in Libya for this study claimed to have made their first payment in their home country and later payments in a transit country. Out of our sample of 140 people, 110 said they had collected all the necessary funds before embarking on their journey.¹⁴⁴ A majority of respondents said they had made the payment transactions themselves. However, it is common for people fleeing conflict or political persecution to report that relatives funded their trip and organized the financial transaction for them.

Even if sufficient funds had been collected before leaving their country of origin, many refugees and migrants are kidnapped or detained along the way and asked for additional money.¹⁴⁵ Therefore they often have to call on relatives at home (or members of their community in transit countries or diaspora members in countries of destination) for assistance to make up the shortfall.

Money Transfers in Niger

In Niger, refugees and migrants planning their trips mostly use Ecobank's rapid transfer system or Western Union to receive money from relatives in Europe or West Africa. There is no *hawala* system in Agadez. Ecobank is preferred because it is less expensive than Western Union and because the bank has a high number of branches in West Africa. The money sent can be withdrawn instantaneously by the recipient at the local branch provided they have the password and their ID (usually an ID card, rarely a passport). According to our interview with the head of Ecobank's Agadez branch: *"In most cases, people receive around CFA 10,000-15,000 per transfer (USD 16-25).¹⁴⁶ They usually come back several times to receive more transfers. It is very rare that sums such as CFA 100,000 (USD 163) are received."* Those transiting through Niger can only receive CFAs and no other currency through services such as Western Union or banks' rapid transfers, so all smugglers are paid in CFAs.

Money transfers are processed through both formal, rapid bank transfer operators such as MoneyGram or Western Union¹⁴⁷ and informal yet sophisticated channels such as *hawala* systems or mobile money. Mobile money was reported to be common for refugees and migrants who ran out of money or needed to pay ransom for release in cases of detention and kidnappings. The *hawala* system, meaning

¹⁴⁴ It is worth noting that for the purpose of this study we focus on seven communities of specific interest to UNHCR and therefore largely oversampled migrants from refugee-producing countries.

¹⁴⁵ In Niger for instance, smugglers keep refugees and migrants in houses until they call their relatives and receive additional money. These houses are called "*Guidam Bacha*" or "*maisons à crédit*" in French.

¹⁴⁶ Note that we used official rate of 31 January 2017 to convert local currencies (to the exception of LYD) into USD through this report.

¹⁴⁷ Note that Western Union services are not currently available in Tripoli.

“transfer” in Arabic, functions on a network of money brokers called *hawaldars* or *hawala* dealers across the globe that process the transfer between them without actually physically moving the money. It is based on the trust placed in tribal, ethnic or family networks and has historically been present in many Islamic countries. Cash is given to a *hawala* dealer in one location, who then calls another *hawala* dealer in the destination location, often in another country. The *hawala* dealer in the destination location then hands over the cash – the sum collected in the source country minus a commission – to the intended recipient, who was given a password to use. The *hawala* operators keep a tally of the money that they owe to each other and periodically settle their accounts. Money transfers completed via a *hawala* system can be very quick, often taking just minutes to process, and leave no trace. In Libya, for example in Tripoli’s old town, many intermediaries from Chad, Sudan and Niger have *hawala* businesses as a side activity for other small trades. Some of them can be easily found in the old town of Tripoli for instance.

How much is charged?

Smugglers operating along the route to, and inside, Libya reported that prices have increased by at least 30% in the past couple of years – due in part to the evolution of the Libyan context.¹⁴⁸ This has meant that:

- Journeys are more dangerous because of the deteriorated security situation and the number of checkpoints where armed forces need to be bribed has reportedly increased;
- The number of intermediaries along the route has increased;
- The prices of commodities such as food and fuel have increased because of high inflation, and liquidity and foreign currency crises. The Libyan dinar has also collapsed in black market exchange rates;
- Frequent petrol shortages mean smugglers have to buy petrol on the black market, sometimes at up to ten times the usual petrol station price.

Respondents reported relatively similar prices. However, it is worth noting that although smugglers tended to refer to fixed prices for their services, other sources said that prices fluctuate based on a variety of factors, including nationalities and perceived economic backgrounds. Ethiopians and Eritreans, for instance, are considered richer than Western Africans (as Syrians and Palestinians were in 2013), and are therefore charged higher prices. Out of 57 respondents that arrived in Libya between 2014 and 2016, the average total cost paid from their country of origin to Libya was USD 1,000. Significant discrepancies were found based however on the respondents’ country of origin.

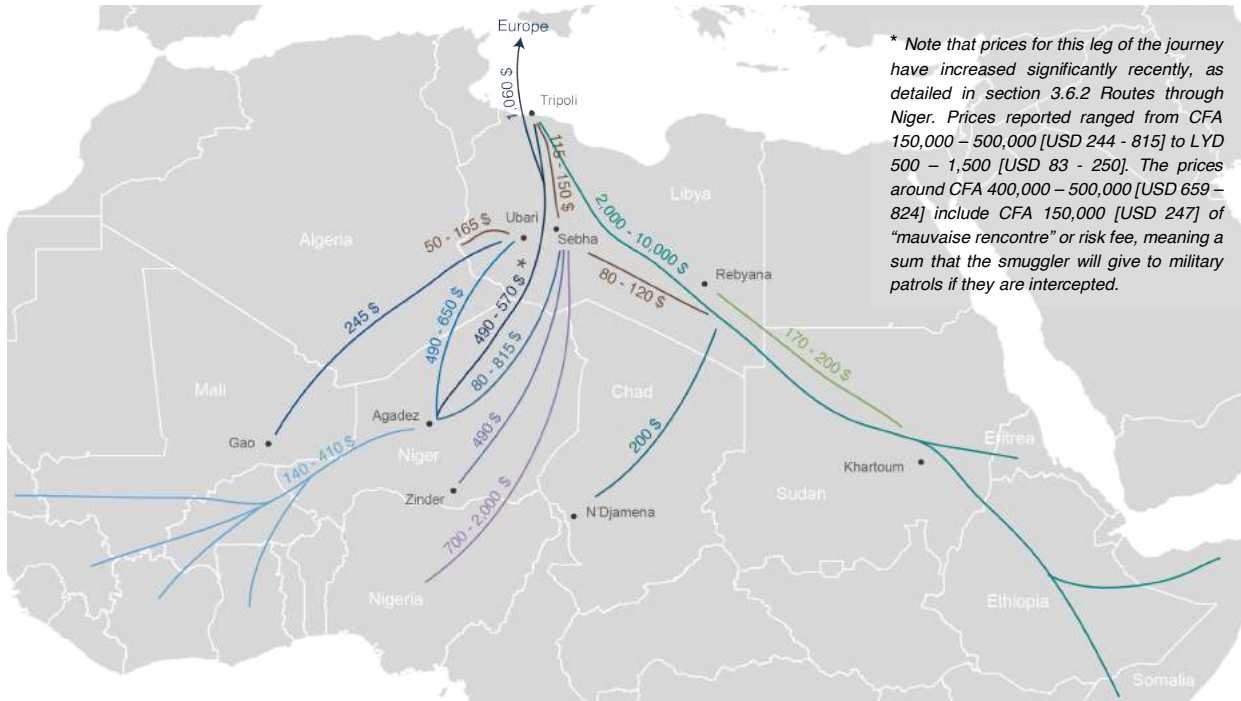
Refugees and migrants who worked for smugglers are often offered for free the relevant section of the journey (Eritrean boys for instance have been reported to work as servants for smugglers for a few months to a year before being given a spot within a group transiting through Libya).

Prices vary particularly for sea trips, based on the smugglers’ need to fill up their boats. Discount prices are often offered for the last few spots. Refugees and migrants can also travel for free if they help the smuggler with odd jobs or agree to be in charge of driving the boat.

Figure 30 outlines prices reported by several smugglers and/or other respondents in the currency of transaction. These prices are indicative only, to give an idea of the existing range of prices and illustrate the significant discrepancies that exist.

¹⁴⁸ The price of journey between Agadez and Sebha, for instance, tripled between 2013 and the end of 2016, from approximately LYD 400 – 500 [USD 67 – 83] to LYD 1200 – 1500 [USD 200 – 250].

Figure 30: Prices paid by refugees and migrants along the routes to and through Libya¹⁴⁹



Potential Earnings for a Smuggler

Quick and significant profits can be made from smuggling, but some operators generate higher returns than others. While interviews revealed that some smugglers opt to work on their own, keeping a low profile and stable level of activity, the general trend in the past few years has been to scale up and professionalise smuggling networks so they can generate more revenue.

For example:

- A large smuggling organisation in Kufra claimed its yearly revenues were about LYD 1 million a year (USD 166,667);
- A wholesaler providing three shelters in the city of Sebha reported generating between LYD 400,000 and LYD 600,000 yearly (USD 66,667 – 100,000);
- A smuggler interviewed in Kufra town who was working alone with one vehicle reported making about LYD 7,500 (USD 1,250) per trip with 25-30 migrants and close to LYD 60,000 (USD 10,000) a year;
- A smuggler in the region of Rebyana reported charging LYD 7,000 (USD 1,166) per trip and making about LYD 90,000 (USD 15,000) a year;
- A smuggler transporting refugees and migrants between Niger and Gatrún said he could earn between LYD 7,600 and 8,500 (USD 1,266 – 1,417) per journey and organise approximately two journeys per month, yielding at a minimum of LYD 150,000 (USD 25,000) per year;

¹⁴⁹ This figure presents smuggling prices reported by refugees and migrants interviewed who travelled in the past two years. Note that in almost all cases, prices were expressed in local currencies and not US dollars. Prices given in Libyan dinars were converted into US dollars according to the estimate black-market rate on 31 January 2017 in Tripoli. Prices in other local currencies were converted using the official rate stated on 31 January 2017. See section 2.6.1 Challenges for details.

- On the Sebha to Shweref, another smuggler claimed his annual revenues to be LYD 100,000 (USD 16,667);
- A smuggler in Um al Aranib reported that he earned “LYD 3,000 (USD 500) per trip and I can organise 20-24 trips a year, depending on the security situation, and gangsters on the road. The route has been increasingly risky lately.”
- Transporters operating between Sebha and the coast said they made up to LYD 18,000 – 20,000 (USD 3,000 – 3,333) per trip;
- A smuggler in Agadez said that for the main route from Niger to the South of Libya¹⁵⁰ the driver was paid CFA 150,000 (USD 244) and the intermediary, “*démarcheur*” recruiting migrants was paid CFA 50,000 (USD 81), whereas a year ago the driver would have been paid CFA 70,000 (USD 114). Drivers on the route between Agadez and Ubari, which passes through the Sahara desert and the Algerian border area which is the most dangerous for the smuggler and his car, are usually paid CFA 350,000 – 400,000 (USD 570 – 652).

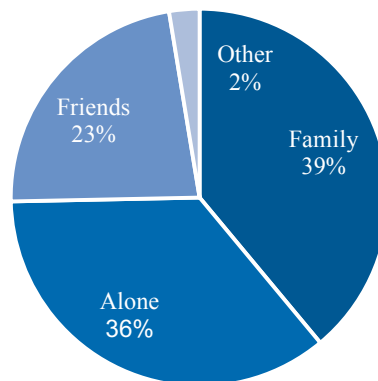
Smugglers can make considerably more than the average salary in Libya. In the South in particular, job opportunities are scarce and smuggling represents an Eldorado for unemployed young people. As a result, few of the smugglers interviewed expressed any interest in finding a different job since none could match their current income.

3.4. JOURNEY CONDITIONS

3.4.1. PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

Most respondents organised their journey with family (38%) or friends (24%), while the rest organised their journey alone, without anyone’s help. Organising the journey consists primarily of gathering information, finding transportation, contacting intermediaries, and getting in touch with relatives, friends or community members in destination countries who can facilitate access to basic services, accommodation and food.

Figure 31: Who helped you organise your journey?¹⁵¹

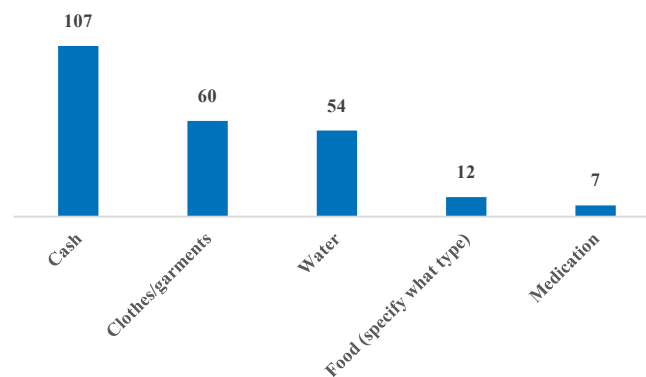


¹⁵⁰ Through Tomu, see section 3.6.2 on routes through Niger.

¹⁵¹ Note that this graph includes answers from refugees and migrants interviewed in Italy.

Those interviewed reported travelling with a very limited number of personal belongings. All respondents carried some cash to provide for their basic needs, and for those on step-by-step journeys to pay each smuggler individually. Almost all of them also carried some clothes and water to cope with the desert crossing, particularly those travelling on step-by-step journeys for whom the smugglers do not provide sustenance. Only a few respondents reported bringing food but when they did, they carried basic staples such as biscuits, dates or other dried fruits, flour or dried milk such as Nido. Very few respondents said they took medicine with them for the journey.

Figure 32: Items brought along during journey



3.4.2. LOGISTICS

Travel documents

The vast majority of respondents reported that they did not carry a passport, with the exception of Syrians, Iraqis and Palestinians. Those coming from rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa often do not have any travel documents as they would need to travel to their closest large urban centre – often many hours away – to obtain them in what can be a lengthy process. In addition, some might not be aware of the need for official travel documents to cross neighbouring countries' borders in areas where trade and transportation routes have been open for centuries without control, and where borders are largely porous or unmarked. This ignorance around travel documents is sometimes exploited by smugglers and security officials who use it to abuse and blackmail those travelling without the right documentation. In the ECOWAS region, this misunderstanding is understandable since people in the region can travel freely without visas. As a result, many assume that movements are not controlled, according to a Nigerian Immigration Officer.¹⁵² The same officer said that ECOWAS citizens are however required to carry proper travel documents and get them stamped at entry points, something stipulated in the ECOWAS Protocol related to free movement.¹⁵³ Yet most West Africans cross into neighbouring countries without going through border posts, and this internal circulation outside of regular entry channels within the zone seems to be largely tolerated. This acceptance contributes to the confusion around travel documents.

Businesses offering forged documents have emerged in many transit hubs as police sweeps for lack of papers are frequent in countries like Sudan and Algeria. In Sudan, fake refugee cards are sold to

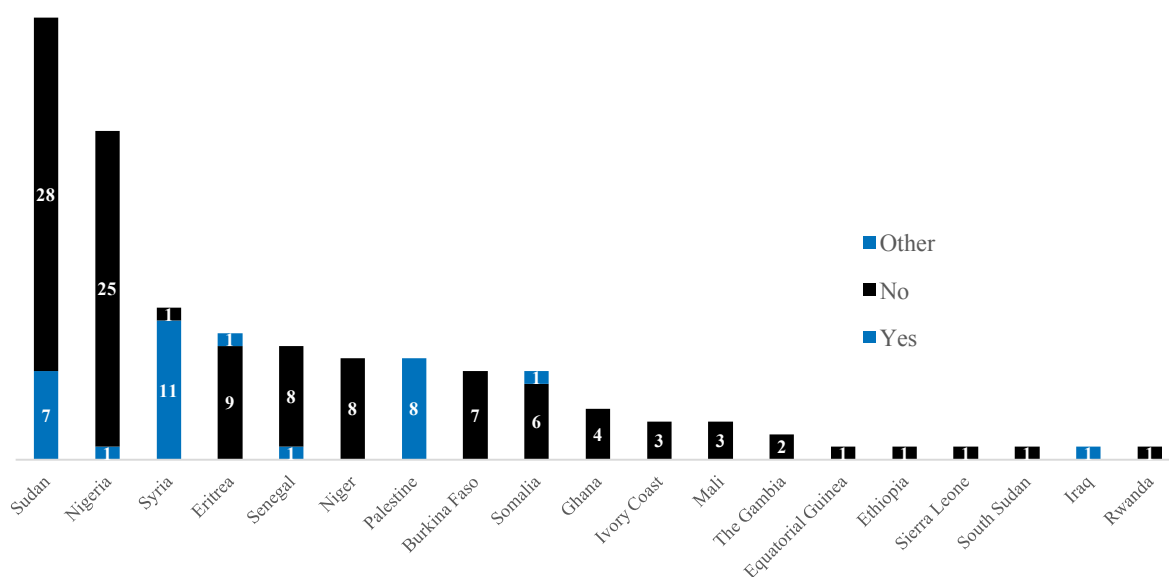
¹⁵² Interview conducted by Altai Consulting in Nigeria in 2015.

¹⁵³ See ECOWAS Protocol A/P.A/5/79 Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, Articles 3 and 4.

Eritreans and Sudanese while in Mali, fake Malian passports are forged for West Africans to enter Algeria without a visa. However, the aid of these counterfeit documents in preventing police sweeps and securing regular entry into countries seems relatively limited.

Most smugglers interviewed reported that they faced no issues at the border when interacting with officials. One, who has been working in the industry since 2008, said: *“Before 2011, I used to face problems from time to time, but not at all since.”* Another, who has been working in Sebha for the past 10 years, declared: *“I was detained before 2011 for one month, but since then nothing; I haven’t had problems recently.”* Others said that there were “no problems with authorities at all”, and that if an issue arose, it could be solved in “a cordial manner”, referring to bribes. One smuggler in Rebyana reported: *“They (the local authorities) stop me sometimes and confiscate my group from me. I have to pay a certain amount for our release and then they let us go.”*

Figure 33: Did you enter Libya with your travel documents?



Accommodation

Accommodation for refugees and migrants to rest until the next leg of their journey en route to and inside Libya is usually provided in farms or warehouses.¹⁵⁴ The conditions in these “transit houses” are extremely basic, with people sleeping on the floor most of the time or in some instances, on carpets. These “transit houses” are often a place for smugglers to buy and sell people or to hand over groups to the smuggler responsible for the next leg if they are on an organised journey. They are also sometimes used as detention facilities to demand a ransom or more money.

Those undertaking step-by-step journeys have to find their own accommodation in each city they stop in. They either follow the recommendations of smugglers or get in contact with intermediaries or other people in a similar situation (from their country of origin, neighbouring countries or communities that speak the same language). These places may or may not be owned by smugglers. They are often communal. Respondents reported usually living there in group of five to 50, paying rent and sharing

¹⁵⁴ See section 3.3.1 Smugglers and Their Roles.

food and tasks. They often refer to such places as “ghettos” and many can be found in Libyan transit hubs such as Tripoli, Sebha and Bani Walid, (and to a lesser extent Ghadames, Ghat, etc.).

Duration of the Journey

Figure 34 details the duration of the different legs of the journey to and through Libya based on interviews conducted with refugees and migrants, and other key informants.

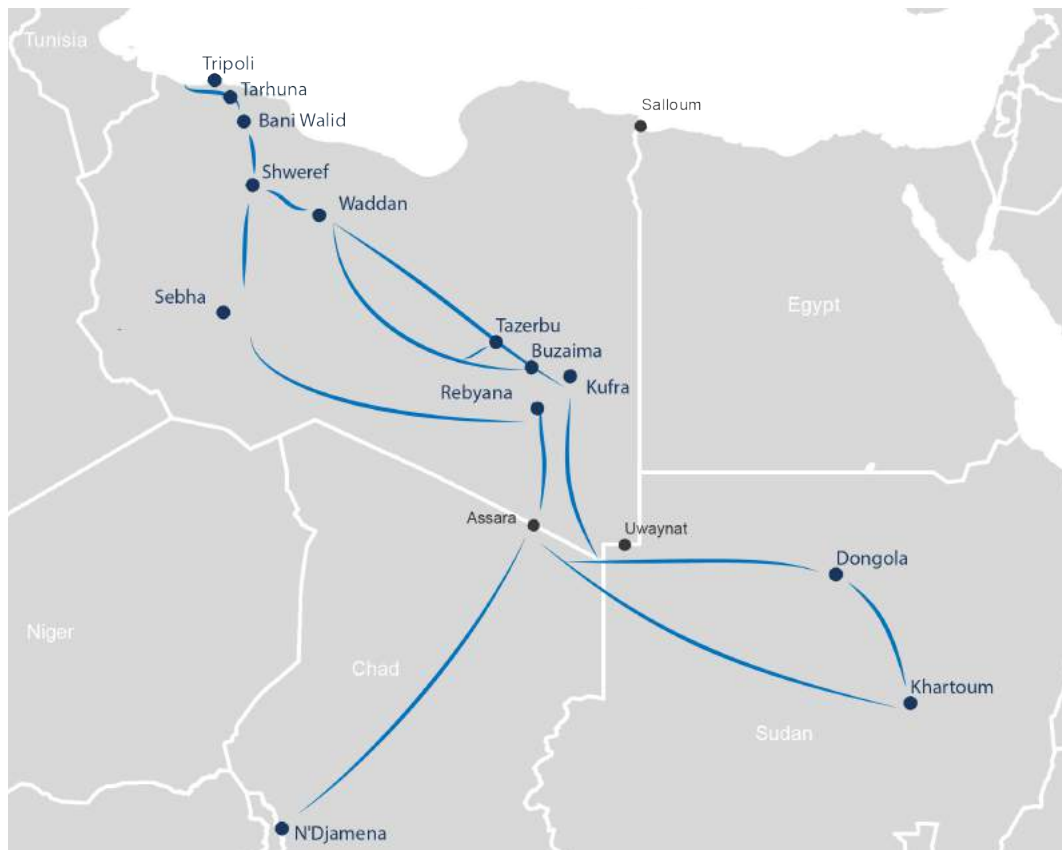
Figure 34: Duration of the journey by segment

Leg of the Journey	Duration of Travel (average)
North Niger to Gatrún/Murzuq/Sebha area	3 to 7 days
North Sudan to Rebyana area	3 to 6 days
Sebha to Shweref	3 to 4 hours
Sebha to Tripoli	8 to 9 hours
Tin Alkom (border with Ghat) to Ubari	4 to 5 hours

3.5. EASTERN ROUTES THROUGH LIBYA

This section provides an overview of the main routes from Sudan, Chad and Egypt to Libya.

Figure 35: Eastern routes to and through Libya



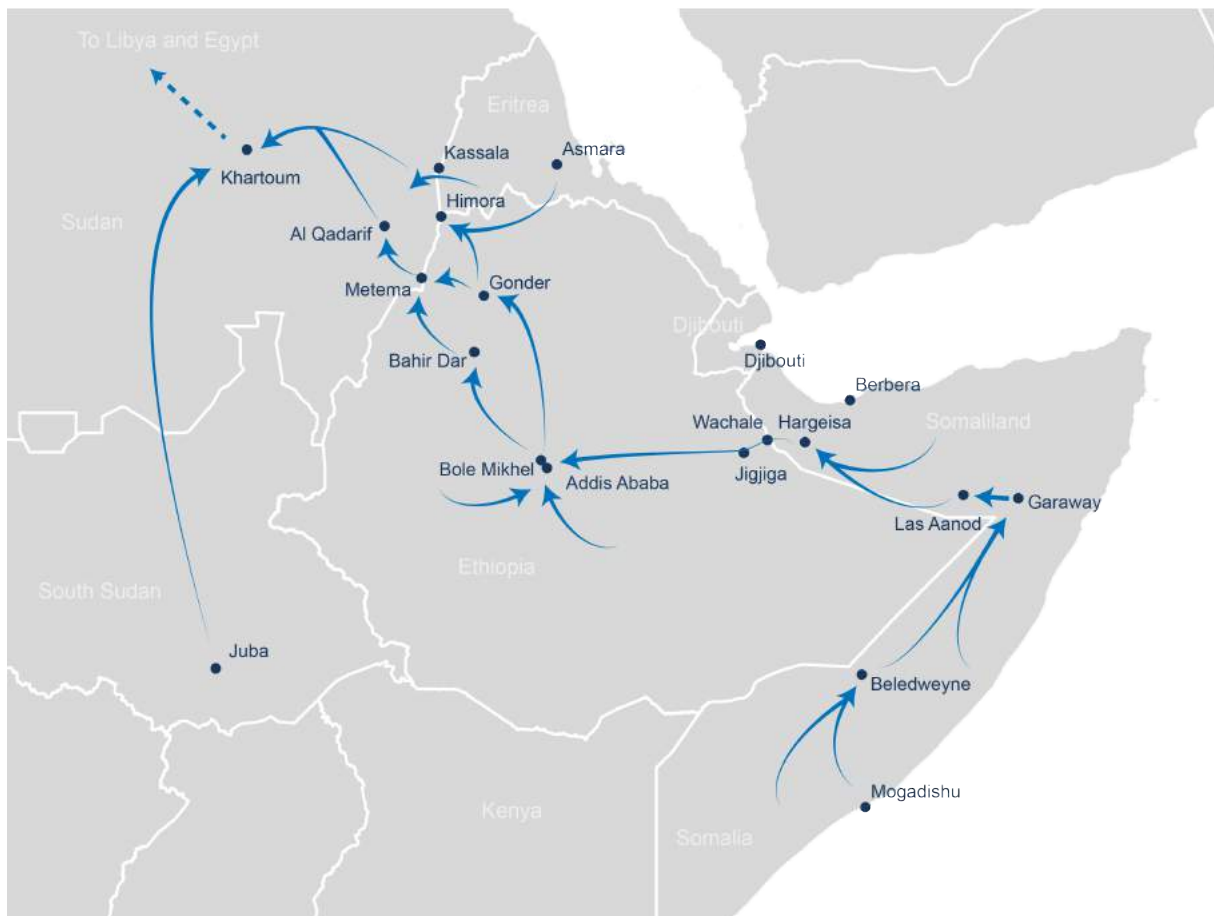
3.5.1. HORN OF AFRICA TO SUDAN

Most Eritreans, Ethiopians and Somalians use minibuses or cars to reach their countries' borders.

Ethiopian authorities have told previous interviewers that both Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees and migrants tend to cross their borders the same way, by paying smugglers to lead them “through the bush” at night.¹⁵⁵ Small groups or individuals prefer the Eritrean-Ethiopian border at Metema as the police rarely arrest small groups. Travelling from Metema to the Sudanese border at Gallabat does not require any documentation since border controls are rare and there is little hassle from the authorities. Large groups crossing together are more likely to be stopped by the authorities and arrested, which is why smugglers prefer to take smaller groups across at night to avoid detection by the police. People coming from Ethiopia enter Sudan through Gedaref while Eritreans enter through Kassala, also by walking or being smuggled in.

Those seized by soldiers at the border are usually taken to the nearest transit camps before being sent to refugee camps in Gedaref or Kassala states in eastern Sudan. Sudan currently has an encampment policy in place. However, increasing numbers of Eritreans and Ethiopians detained in camps manage to find a way out or to obtain work permits and head to larger urban centres. Some are helped to leave the camps by smugglers based locally. Most people head to Khartoum where they try to find jobs, meet smugglers/intermediaries and organise their journey to Libya.

Figure 36: Routes within East Africa



¹⁵⁵ Interviews with Ethiopian Federal Police staff and the mayor of Metema. See *Addressing Mixed Migration Flows in Eastern Africa*, Altai Consulting for Expertise France, 2017.

3.5.2. TRAVELLING THROUGH SUDAN

Once in Khartoum, those seeking to move to Europe make their way through Libya or, to a lesser extent, through Egypt.¹⁵⁶ Flows fluctuate based on the military presence in certain areas, the weather, conflicts and the structure of and connections between the smuggling networks involved. In 2013, northbound flows from Khartoum were estimated to be between 2,500 and 5,000 people a month.¹⁵⁷ However, Sudan passed an anti-trafficking law in January 2014 and has set up a “Rapid Support Force” (RSF) to carry out anti-trafficking operations at the Libyan, Chad and Egyptian borders, by arresting smugglers and combatting rebel armed groups at the same time.¹⁵⁸ The RSF has also reportedly seized and deported Ethiopians and Eritreans on their way to Egypt.¹⁵⁹ These operations make it more difficult and expensive for refugees and migrants to cross into Libya.

From Khartoum, respondents reported travelling in pick-up trucks or buses to the region of Dongola in the north-west, where they met new transporters or smugglers. Some stopped in Dongola before continuing to the Libyan or Sudanese borders, while others preferred to avoid larger cities and crossed the desert directly from Khartoum. Once in the north of the country, smugglers took people to the Sudanese-Libyan border where they were handed over to a Libyan smuggler who took them across the desert through the Libyan district of Kufra. Smugglers in southern Libya said that some of the routes from Sudan passed through Chadian territory and Tebu-controlled areas, before entering Libya

Most Eritreans, Ethiopians and Somalis pay USD 3,000 – 4,000 on average for an organised journey from their country of origin to Libya through Sudan, but prices can go up to USD 6,000 to 8,000 for some. The UNHCR 2013 report¹⁶⁰ found that for those who contacted smugglers directly in Sudan and stopped in Tripoli, prices ranged between USD 600 and USD 1,600, while 2016 interviews showed a slight decrease as prices were around USD 300 for the Khartoum-Kufra leg only. Libyan smugglers reported that they charged between LYD 300 and LYD 1,000 (USD 50 – 167) to take refugees and migrants from the Sudanese border to Tazerbu and Rebyana in Libya in pick-ups. Few Eritreans, Somalis or Ethiopians pay for their journeys leg by leg however; they usually pay a package price that will take them from their home country all the way to their destination.

3.5.3. ROUTE THROUGH CHAD

The route through Chad is less busy than the routes through Sudan, Niger or even Algeria, with less than one hundred people moving along it monthly, most of whom are Chadians engaging in circular migration. Sudanese from Darfur and other western regions neighbouring Chad might also cross Chad's eastern border before travelling north to Libya, along with some Cameroonians, Nigerians (including an increasing number of women), Nigeriens, Sierra Leoneans and Congolese from the Republic of the Congo.

This route is less popular because for most nationalities going through Chad entails adding an extra leg to their journey. Furthermore, due to the State of Emergency declared by Chad because of Boko Haram

¹⁵⁶ Recent studies indicate an increase of the flows through Egypt at the beginning of 2017. See for instance: *For Eritreans, Egypt is the new route to Europe*, Hazel Haddon for IRIN, 13 January 2017.

¹⁵⁷ *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroad*, Altai Consulting for UNHCR, 2013.

¹⁵⁸ *Lifting Sudan's sanctions is prerequisite to halt human trafficking-militia leader*, Sudan Tribune, 8 October 2016; available at this [link](#).

¹⁵⁹ *Sudanese Government sends the Janjaweed against Eritrean Refugees*, Africa Monitors, August 2016, available at this [link](#).

¹⁶⁰ *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroad*, Altai Consulting for UNHCR, 2013.

¹⁶⁰ *Addressing Mixed Migration Flows in East Africa*, Altai Consulting for Expertise France, 2016.

activities in the border area with Nigeria and Cameroon, there are restrictions on movement in particular for motorbikes or other vehicles at specific hours of the day. The Nigeria-Chadian border is closed and navigation on Lake Chad is forbidden.

The Chadian border with Libya is also difficult to cross because of the Tibesti Mountains and fields of landmines left over from the Libya-Chad war at the end of the 1980s.

Chadians who travel north follow the main route to Abeche, Biltine, Arada, Kalaide and then Faya or Amdjarass. They then either go east to enter Libya at Kufra, or west of the Tibesti Mountains to join the route to Gatrún and Sebha. Abeche in Chad appears to have become a transit hub where people gather and find smugglers to transport them north towards Faya and the Libya border. People also stop there to work before continuing their journey. The smuggling industry in northern Chad is reportedly dominated by the Tebu, who know the tracks and the roads to both Kufrah and Murzuq districts in Libya. From Faya, each smuggler chooses his own track, based on his knowledge of the desert and his contacts, with some going through Ouadidoum and Ounianga before entering Libya. Smaller groups of refugees and migrants are smuggled than in Agadez, Niger, with people mostly gathered in groups of 15 or 20.

Another route takes refugees and migrants from N'Djamena to Moussoro and on to Faya before travelling north across the desert west of the Tibesti Mountains. They then cross the border at Zouar or Bardai, where there are no official border posts, before eventually reaching southwestern Libya through Gatrún. Only 100 to 200 people use this route each month, according to organisations interviewed in Chad, a very small number compared to the route through north Niger. Prices are estimated at USD 200 to 800.

Different strategies are used to cross the Libyan border including walking along rough tracks, crossing by car and paying bribes to any police or security officers, and crossing by camel, on the pretence of being nomads.

Chadians can travel around their country using their birth certificates but foreigners need documents and therefore often use forgeries.

The price for smuggling Chadians is estimated to be CFA 150,000 (USD 202) from N'Djamena to the Libyan border near Kufra and about CFA 5,000-25,000 (USD 8 – 40) for the last leg from Faya to the Libyan border. For other nationalities in Chad, prices can be up to CFA 250,000 (USD 405) from N'Djamena to Libya, as outlined by several sources in Chad including a custom officer in Abeche. The leg from N'Djamena to Abeche costs around CFA 20,000 (USD 32) and from Abeche to Libya through Kufra about CFA 150,000 (USD 243).

Each leg of the journey through Chad can be paid for separately, and respondents were able to provide specific prices per segment. According to a local elder, the prices were: CFA 3,000 (USD 5) from Abeche to Biltine, CFA 5,000 (USD 8) from Biltine to Kalaide, CFA 15,000 (USD 24) from Kalaide to Faya, CFA 5,000 (USD 8) from Faya to Ounianga and CFA 75,000 (USD 121) from Ounianga to Kufra. Smugglers ask for additional money to pay bribes or avoid border controls.

Some people on the move through Chad go north to the country's newly-discovered gold mines in search of work, but generally end up carrying on to Libya. In Chad, the peak departure season starts in March with the onset of dry weather and slows down in July with the start of the rainy season.

On January 5th 2017, Chad closed its border with Libya because of the risk of terrorists meeting with other militants from IS-related and Boko Haram groups in West Africa. It remains to be seen what effect this will have on the routes through Chad in the months to come.

3.5.4. ENTERING LIBYA THROUGH THE SOUTH-EASTERN BORDER

The journey from Khartoum to Kufra can take up to ten days, with the desert crossing alone taking four to five days. Smugglers in southwestern Libya reported that desert crossings were more frequent during the winter when the weather conditions are better: the desert is cooler and the risk of dehydration lower. One key informant said however that such crossings are increasingly happening all year round, particularly in the south east of Libya, where the flow of Eritreans and Somalis is continuous. Most people who use the southeast Libya route intend to transit quickly to the north and get on a boat as soon as possible. As a result, they tend to cross during the summer when crossings by sea are easier due to calmer seas and warmer temperatures.

The passage along the south east makes use of geographical features including:

- Dry river beds that carry away limited rainfall and are commonly used to conceal the movements of smuggling convoys;
- The Trans-Saharan road connecting Darfur to Kufra, which was constructed in the 1980s and is still used by smugglers, human traffickers and bandits;
- The Al-Uwaynat mountain range of 1,200 square kilometres, which is situated at the nexus of Libya, Egypt and Sudan and is known to have several small springs in the midst of an otherwise waterless desert. Today, the route is being used again by a combination of commercial traffic, smugglers, traffickers, adventure tourists and armed groups.

The number of refugees and migrants entering Libya via the southeast is difficult to estimate, including for Sudanese and Libyan authorities. For example, the Tummo border post chief reported: *“Since 2013, the flow on the Niger/Gatroun route has increased, and stayed the same for the Sudan/Kufra and the Algeria/Ghat route,”* while a Rebyana border control representative explained that the *“route of Kufra Tazerbo is more active than in 2013.”*

In Kufra, no one seemed to know the exact size of the flows but some key informants suggested 10 to 15 vehicles a day with approximately 25-30 people on board, which equates to an average of 13,500 crossings per month during the high season. Meanwhile, the Red Crescent in Rebyana estimated arrivals in their town to 2,000 people per month. In 2013, the Governor of Kufra announced that between 10,000 and 12,000 refugees and migrants crossed the border per month,¹⁶¹ and smugglers interviewed in both Kufra and Rebyana confirmed that the flows increased since 2013.

Kufra (sometimes referred to as “Al-Jawf”) is the largest town in the southeast of Libya but since February 2012 many smugglers have been avoiding it because of regular clashes between the Zwey and Tebu tribes in and around the town. Although members of both these communities are involved in the smuggling industry, Kufra does not have much to offer in terms of livelihoods to refugees and migrants. Zwey smugglers reportedly take people from the areas directly surrounding Kufra to Jufra district, using a multitude of tracks and avoiding the Tebu-controlled areas and authorities. By contrast, Tebu smugglers avoid Kufra town and its surroundings and lead their groups closer to Tazerbu, Buzaymah and Rebyana, about 200km northwest of Kufra town, in areas dominated by their own.

Refugees and migrants intend only to travel through these small towns. In Rebyana for instance, the Red Crescent reported that no more than 200 refugees and migrants were currently staying in the city, and in general only a few tended to settle and look for work. *“Most of them rely on their smugglers who provide them with food, water and a place to stay, but we do not really know what is happening in places where they are accommodated”*, a member of the Red Crescent told interviewers.

¹⁶¹ *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroad*, Altai Consulting for UNHCR, 2013, page 33.

Whereas in 2013, flows coming from southeast Libya were going through Ajdabiyah and then Benghazi (or Tripoli by travelling the coastal road), the last few years have seen a change in direction. Since the east of Libya is no longer attractive for refugees and migrants due to protracted conflicts in Benghazi and Derna, and because Sirte was also the theatre of multiple conflicts, smugglers now avoid the Gulf of Sirte and go through the Jufra region and eventually Bani Walid. In the past two years, Bani Walid has become a large hub for refugees and migrants before reaching Tripoli and the north-west in general.¹⁶²

In parallel, the route crossing the Libyan Sahara horizontally from the Kufra area to the Fezzan, in particular Ghatrun or Sebha, is still active though the northern route is still preferred. Some smugglers, in particular those of Tebu origin (as the entire central south region is Tebu-controlled), transport groups to Sebha where they either settle or join flows to the coast.

3.5.5. ROUTE THROUGH EGYPT

Relatively few refugees and migrants travel through Egypt at present and those who were doing so up until 2016 would attempt to head to Europe directly from there rather than embarking on the sea trip from Libya.

In the past, Egypt was a transit point for Syrians, Palestinians and Sudanese who would take boats from El Hamam, Damietta or around Alexandria to reach Malta and Sicily. This journey was however longer and more hazardous than the route leaving from the Libyan coast. As a result, many people would also try to cross the Libyan-Egyptian border around Sallum or further south. Boats leaving from Egypt would take a week to get to Italy, much longer than those leaving from Libya. The distance made the trip more uncertain and less attractive, hindering the development of the smuggling industry in Egypt involving those hoping to reach Europe.

Between 2014 and 2016, the numbers of refugees and migrants using Egypt as a transit country declined steadily. The conflict in eastern Libya made it more difficult to cross from Egypt, with the border closing multiple times. The conflict in Sirte also made it difficult to travel from northeast to northwest Libya. At the same time, Egypt imposed a visa requirement for Syrians, forcing them to transit through Sudan instead¹⁶³ and tightened its southern and western borders, prompting people generally to enter Libya through its southern border with Sudan instead.

By the end of 2016 however, flows had shifted again with the Egyptian route apparently becoming popular with Eritreans, Ethiopians, Somalis and Sudanese seeking to avoid the chaos in Libya.¹⁶⁴ Those travelling to Egypt at present say they intend to leave for Europe from there, instead of crossing through Libya. Those using the route travel from Khartoum to Aswan or Cairo in Egypt before heading to Alexandria and its surrounds on the coast. There were 1,900 arrivals in Italy from Egypt between January and April 2016, compared to only 655 from the same period the previous year, according to IOM. In 2016, 5.9% of individuals arriving in Italy by sea had departed from Egypt instead of Libya.¹⁶⁵ There are other signs of the Egyptian route to Europe being revived in 2016, including boats which likely departed from Egypt capsizing off the Greek coast in January 2017.

¹⁶² See section 1.4 Northern Leg of the Journey and Departure to Europe.

¹⁶³ See section 3.2.2 Profiles of Refugees and Migrants and focus box Syrians in Sudan.

¹⁶⁴ *For Eritreans, Egypt is the new route to Europe*, IRIN News, 13 January 2017.

¹⁶⁵ *Italy Update #10*, UNHCR, December 2016, available at this [link](#).

Egypt might continue to see an increase in traffic from those in transit to Europe in the coming years, as recent developments in Libya have made it the safer option. Egyptians themselves are also taking boats to Europe, thereby fuelling the local smuggling industry. More Eritreans who had settled in Sudan also reportedly elect to depart for Europe from Egypt, as they feel increasingly unsafe where they are due to the recent multiplication of police round-ups.

However, the Egyptian police are proceeding to regular arrests of people illegally leaving the country.¹⁶⁶ Large numbers of refugees and migrants are currently detained on charges of unauthorized exit from Egypt (not unauthorized entry), as Egypt's criminal code bans leaving the country without official documents and authorization.¹⁶⁷ At the time of finalizing the report departures by boat seemed to be on hold as a result of a crackdown by the authorities.

3.6. WESTERN ROUTES THROUGH LIBYA

This section outlines the main migration routes from Niger, Algeria and Tunisia to Libya.

3.6.1. OVERVIEW

The main routes into western Libya are presented by Figure 37. They include:

- The route through Niger that heads towards Ghatrun, Murzuq or Ubari, sometimes passing through Algerian territory along the southern border with Niger. It is the most common route for West Africans going to Libya;
- The route through Algeria, which takes refugees and migrants from Tamanrasset to Ghat or Ghadames;
- The route through Tunisia, which sees a marginal flow.

Population flows from West Africa are generally less structured than flows from East Africa¹⁶⁸. Movements from East Africa to Europe started several decades ago and diaspora networks are well developed,¹⁶⁹ making the trip better organised and quicker. People smuggling from West Africa to Europe through Libya, on the other hand, emerged with the fall of Gaddafi in 2011 and usually involves a much longer and more improvised journey, including several extended stopovers in transit along the way.

The western routes through Libya were still evolving while research for this report was ongoing, as local authorities and the EU had recently stepped up controls to curb irregular migration, something that was

¹⁶⁶ "Since 2014, there has been a steady increase in the number of interceptions of refugees and migrants trying to leave Egypt in an irregular manner. For 2016 to date, over 4,600 foreign nationals, predominantly Sudanese, Somalis, Eritreans and Ethiopians, have been arrested for attempting irregular departure from the Northern Coast, which is 28 per cent more than the whole of 2015. The numbers in 2015 were also higher than 2014." Source: *Migrant and Refugee Boat Tragedy and Irregular Departures from Egypt*, UNHCR, 23 September 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2016/9/57e4ee964/migrant-refugee-boat-tragedy-irregular-departures-egypt.html>

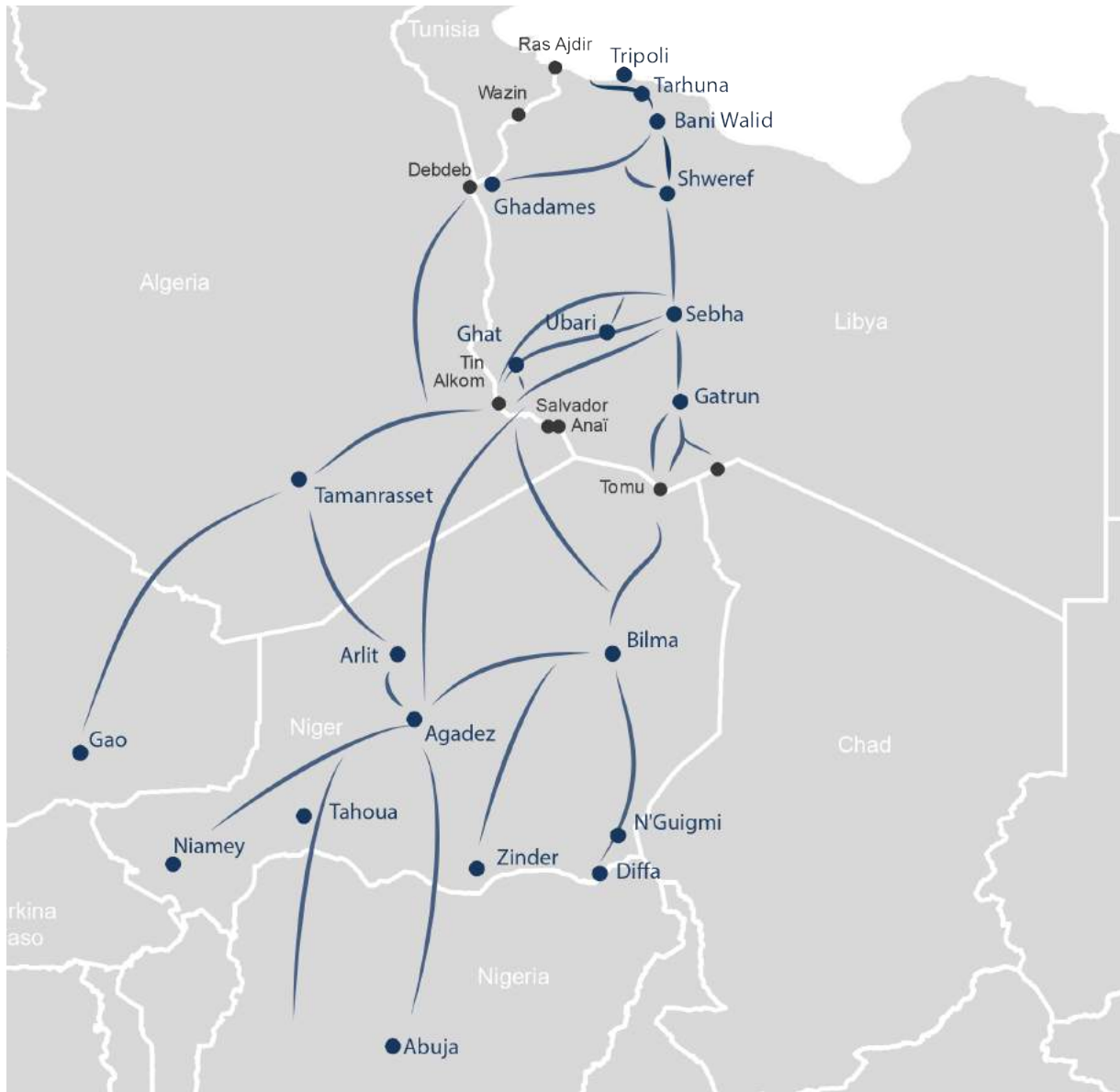
¹⁶⁷ *Migration Through Egypt: The Safe Alternative to Libya*, RMMS, 9 August 2016, <http://regionalmms.org/index.php/component/spsimpleportfolio/item/51-migration-through-egypt-the-safe-alternative-to-libya>. According to this RMMS report, Egypt arrested 5,076 people for illegally leaving the country between March and June 2016 only.

¹⁶⁸ See Section 3.1.2 Main types of Journeys on the CMR.

¹⁶⁹ According to one of the KILs conducted in Italy for this research, "flows from the Horn of Africa to Europe started during the 1970s and accelerated with the 1983-1986 Ethiopian famine and the Eritrean–Ethiopian War at the end of the 1990s. They have grown to be well structured and much more organised than flows from West Africa".

particularly noticeable in north-eastern Niger and southern Algeria. It remains unclear however what the long-term impact of these actions will be on the flow of refugees and migrants to Libya

Figure 37: Western routes to and through Libya



3.6.2. ROUTES THROUGH NIGER

Since 2012, and the outbreak of conflict in northern Mali, Niger has been the main gateway into Libya from West and Central Africa.¹⁷⁰ At present, the overwhelming majority of refugees and migrants from

¹⁷⁰ The Tuareg rebellion began driving government forces out of northern Mali in January 2012, before President Amadou Toumani Touré was ousted in a coup d'état in March of the same year.

West and Central Africa pass through Niger to reach Libya. In 2016, Nigerians, Guineans, Ivoirians, Gambians, Senegalese and Malians were particularly numerous along this route.¹⁷¹

The routes through Niger either lead directly into Ghatrun and Murzuq in Libya through the northern Niger/Libya border, or through Algerian territory in the extreme southeast of the country to reach Ubari in Libya.

The “traditional” Route to Libya through Niger

Over the past few years, Agadez, a city in central Niger on the edge of the Sahara desert, saw its smuggling industry soar and it established itself as the main hub on the road to Libya through Niger. Agadez was a tourist location before instability hit the area, with functioning roads and drivers able to navigate through the desert for leisure trips. After tourist numbers dropped off, the same drivers used their skills and knowledge to begin transporting migrants as the smuggling industry grew in size and profitability. Smuggling people became the most lucrative trade in the region, more so even than other types of smuggling.

The route from Agadez to Ghatrun via the Nigerien-Libyan border post of Tomu was the cheapest and busiest according to our research in 2013 and remained so until recently. According to the IOM, 310,000 people, mostly from West Africa, travelled from Agadez to Libya in 2016, with an additional 30,000 travelling from Agadez to Algeria.¹⁷² Traffic along this route was extremely organised and free-flowing.

However, recent anti-smuggling laws and their enforcement (detailed in the next section) have now changed the situation. This section explains the journey as it was a few months ago and how it has changed.

Getting to Agadez

Getting to Agadez is relatively simple for Western Africans since ECOWAS citizens can travel without restriction across the region.¹⁷³ In most cases, refugees and migrants take normal buses but those with greater means also use minibus taxis or smugglers’ cars. Most arrive from Niamey but the Dosso region east of Niamey is also well-used by those coming from countries such as The Gambia or Senegal.

In Agadez

According to interviews conducted in Niger, most people arriving in Agadez already have the contact details of a smuggler they plan to use. Those without connections can find smugglers at the main bus stations across the city where they advertise their services. Refugees and migrants who cannot afford to pay for smuggler-owned accommodation often sleep at the bus stations in Agadez as they have shelter space and toilets. Often they wait there until they receive additional money from family or friends to pay for the next leg of the journey.

According to the official syndicate for goods or people carriers (“*Syndicat des transporteurs*”), any foreigner entering the city of Agadez is required to pay a “*taxe de voirie*” of CFA 1,100 (USD 1.8) per person, and any vehicle leaving pays CFA 5,000 CFA (USD 8.2) (per vehicle).

¹⁷¹ This is reflected in the number of arrivals by sea in Italy. Nigeria, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Senegal and Mali were among the top ten countries of origin for refugees and migrants arriving in Italy by sea (almost all of them departing from Libya’s shores) in 2016. Source: UNHCR data, available online [here](#).

¹⁷² *Statistical Report Niger Flow Monitoring Points (FMP)*, IOM, November 2016

¹⁷³ The ECOWAS member countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo.

Once in Agadez, those who have paid for the next leg of their journeys are accommodated in “ghettos” or “foyers”: houses or compounds belonging to smugglers, where 30 to 100 people are crowded into small rooms with basic amenities and often unsanitary conditions.

Harassment along the Western routes

Refugees and migrants travelling to Agadez face a great deal of harassment at checkpoints along the way. While West Africans from ECOWAS countries should have freedom of movement within the region, the overwhelming majority interviewed reported having to bribe police officers at border posts regardless of their documentation.

Often the excessive paying of bribes dramatically reduces refugees’ and migrants’ ability to fund the entire journey to Libya without stopping to work or receiving remittances. The total amount spent on bribes by the time people reach Agadez can be upwards of USD 100, with payments at each checkpoint.

In Mali, the going rate for a bribe is CFA 1,000 or 2,000 (USD 1.7 to 3.5) but in Burkina Faso and Niger it shoots up to CFA 20,000 (USD 35). Interviewees who were not able to pay reported not being allowed to pass. As a result, some opt to pay smugglers instead to avoid the official border crossing, especially when they have been refused passage on many occasions. Smugglers then take them by motorbike across the border at an unmanned location for prices in the region of CFA 21,000 (USD 35).

The types of harassment vary. Some report that when the bus arrives at the checkpoint everyone is asked to disembark and is then held in rooms until they pay, while others say they were directly sent back the way they came. Other extortion methods consist of confiscating ID cards and only returning them once a payment has been made. Bus station staff interviewed in Agadez reported that given the time spent at checkpoints, separate buses are used for refugees and migrants so as not to delay other passengers.

From Agadez to Libya’s South West

The main track to Libya’s southwest, used for smuggling and regular transport alike, passes through Dirkou, Seguidine, Madama, Dao and Tomu. Until recently, refugees and migrants were packed onto the back of pick-up trucks, with 25 to 30 migrants per vehicle, and driven either to the border post of Tomu, where they were picked up by Libyan smugglers, or directly to the region of Sebha in Libya. The vehicles often left on Monday night, following official convoys including transport trucks carrying goods and regular passengers that are given a military escort to protect them from attacks along the way.

Routes Changes

Evolution of the Context

In May 2015, Niger passed an anti-smuggling law transposing the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air and providing for judges and police to take action against smugglers.¹⁷⁴ In an effort to prevent refugees and migrants without documentation from being brutalised, the law

¹⁷⁴ Loi n°2015-36 du 26 mai 2015 relative au trafic illicite de migrants, available at this [link](#). The new Law complements existing legislation, including Ordonnance n°2010-86 du 16 décembre 2010 relative à la lutte contre la traite des personnes.

emphasised that smuggled persons were victims of human rights abuses. The authorities started enforcing the law at the end of summer 2016.

By December 2016, over 40 smugglers had been arrested in the Agadez area, 76 vehicles had been seized and numerous “ghettos” closed. According to key informants interviewed in Niger, the large number of arrests was mostly due to the operation’s element of surprise rather than a reflection on the improved capacity of Nigerien forces.

Multiplication of Possible Routes

It was difficult to evaluate the impact of the new law’s enforcement on the number of refugees and migrants transiting through Agadez at the time of the research. For instance, in December 2016, the mayor of Agadez said during an interview: *“There is no significant decrease at the moment in the number of arrivals in the city and no major changes in the communities represented.”* Other local activists and journalists interviewed shared his opinion, reporting that although arrivals might be less visible the phenomenon was still ongoing. However, bus station managers in Agadez said that far fewer people were arriving. *“There are almost no more arrivals by bus, their number has decreased by 75%, those who arrive now are people from villages, who are not well informed,”* one said. Another added: *“There are only one or two migrants per bus these days, when before there were entire buses full of migrants.”*¹⁷⁵ One local journalist interviewed claimed that he and his team calculated over a week at the end of September 2016 that on average 150 refugees and migrants arrived each night.¹⁷⁶

Field research conducted in Agadez in December 2016 suggests that people smuggling is still happening, but is now more clandestine. Agadez was still at the time of writing one of the easiest cities in the region refugees and migrants to find smugglers.

However, smugglers do seem to be switching to less obvious routes to avoid transiting through Agadez. The multitude of routes reportedly used at the time of the assessment, and still very much evolving, include:

- The Great Sahara route between Agadez and Ubari;
- The route from Zinder to Libya, avoiding Agadez;
- The route from Diffa to Libya avoiding Agadez;
- The route from Tahoua to Tchín Tabaraden.

3.6.3. ROUTES THROUGH ALGERIA

Algeria is a less popular transit country for refugees and migrants travelling to Libya but does nonetheless serve as one for some. According to respondents, transiting through Algeria (from Arlit in Niger for instance) is more dangerous than going directly from Niger to Libya. Military patrols are more frequent and better-trained, and attacks by bandits are more prevalent.

Tamanrasset, in the south of Algeria, remains the main hub for those travelling in this region.

From Niger, smugglers usually bring their groups from Agadez or Arlit to Tamanrasset. Those arriving from Niamey or Tahoua pass through Tchín Tabaradene in Niger before crossing the border with Algeria near Guezzam, then heading to Tamanrasset. As mentioned in section 3.6.2 Routes through Niger, some smugglers going directly from Agadez to Ubari in south-west Libya opt to pass through Algerian

¹⁷⁵ To be noted however that some other key informants interviewed were of the opinion that the bus station “Chefs d’escale” did not want to say that refugees and migrants were continuing to arrive by bus for fear of attracting police attention.

¹⁷⁶ Six researchers stood all night at each of Agadez’s six main bus stations during a week at the end of September 2016. They counted a total of 150 people from West and Central Africa arriving each night on average.

territory, driving a few kilometres north of the border with Niger until they reach the Salvador corridor at the border with Libya in order to avoid crossing the Djado mountains in Niger.

From Gao in Mali, people cross into Algeria at the Borj Mokhtar border crossing and move on to Tamanrasset by crossing the desert, which takes a few days. Southern Algeria and northern Mali are Tuareg territories, and almost all cargo both people and goods passing through the region are under their control. Due to the vastness of this desert region, it is easy to bypass border posts and cross into Algeria clandestinely from Mali. However, most smugglers go through the Borj Mokhtar border crossing, paying bribes to security forces there. Fake Malian passports are also used to enter Algeria as Malians do not need a visa.

3.7. NORTHERN LEG OF THE JOURNEY AND DEPARTURE TO EUROPE

This section details the last leg of the journey of refugees and migrants in Libya, through the country's north-western region to travel to, in most cases, Italy.

3.7.1. NORTHERN LEG OF THE JOURNEY

In north-western Libya, refugees and migrants generally travel on normal paved roads as opposed to smuggling tracks. However, this does not mean that the northern routes are any less dangerous. There are many checkpoints and a myriad of armed groups operating in the region, controlling certain sections of road. Most people held captive in detention centres were abducted or arrested at checkpoints on this leg of the journey, or in the major cities of the north (see section 4.2.3 on Detention centres).¹⁷⁷ For these reasons and others, the majority of those transiting through north-western Libya resort to smugglers instead of travelling independently.¹⁷⁸

A New Hub: Bani Walid

The main eastern and western smuggling routes through Libya identified in previous sections currently converge in the area of Bani Walid. When coming from Sebha or its surroundings, smugglers prefer to pass through Bani Walid instead of taking the more direct route through Gharyan, to avoid the area controlled by Zintan militias who operate between Mizdah, Zintan and Gharyan.¹⁷⁹ For those coming from eastern or south-eastern Libya, passing through Bani Walid means avoiding the conflict-ridden coastal route between Benghazi and Misrata, and Sirte in particular.

Smuggling is thriving in Bani Walid, which does not fall under the control of one armed group in particular but is divided amongst many. This means that smugglers are able to operate as long as they maintain cordial relations with, or belong to, one of the controlling groups. The city is also well-connected to the main departure points along the coast, making it geographically strategic.¹⁸⁰ It is relatively close to Garabuli beach, to the east of Tripoli, and a strong smuggling network connects it to

¹⁷⁷ Excluding migrants who were detained upon entry to Libya (for instance when they arrived at the airport).

¹⁷⁸ It is possible to travel to Tripoli by bus or taxi, but refugees and migrants are generally either a) afraid of being apprehended by authorities or militia so prefer to travel with a smuggler or b) they paid for an "organised" journey that already included this part of the journey.

¹⁷⁹ Between Shweref and departure points on the coast to the west of Tripoli, the most direct road passes through Mizdah and Gharyan.

¹⁸⁰ See Section 3.7.2 for more details on departure points.

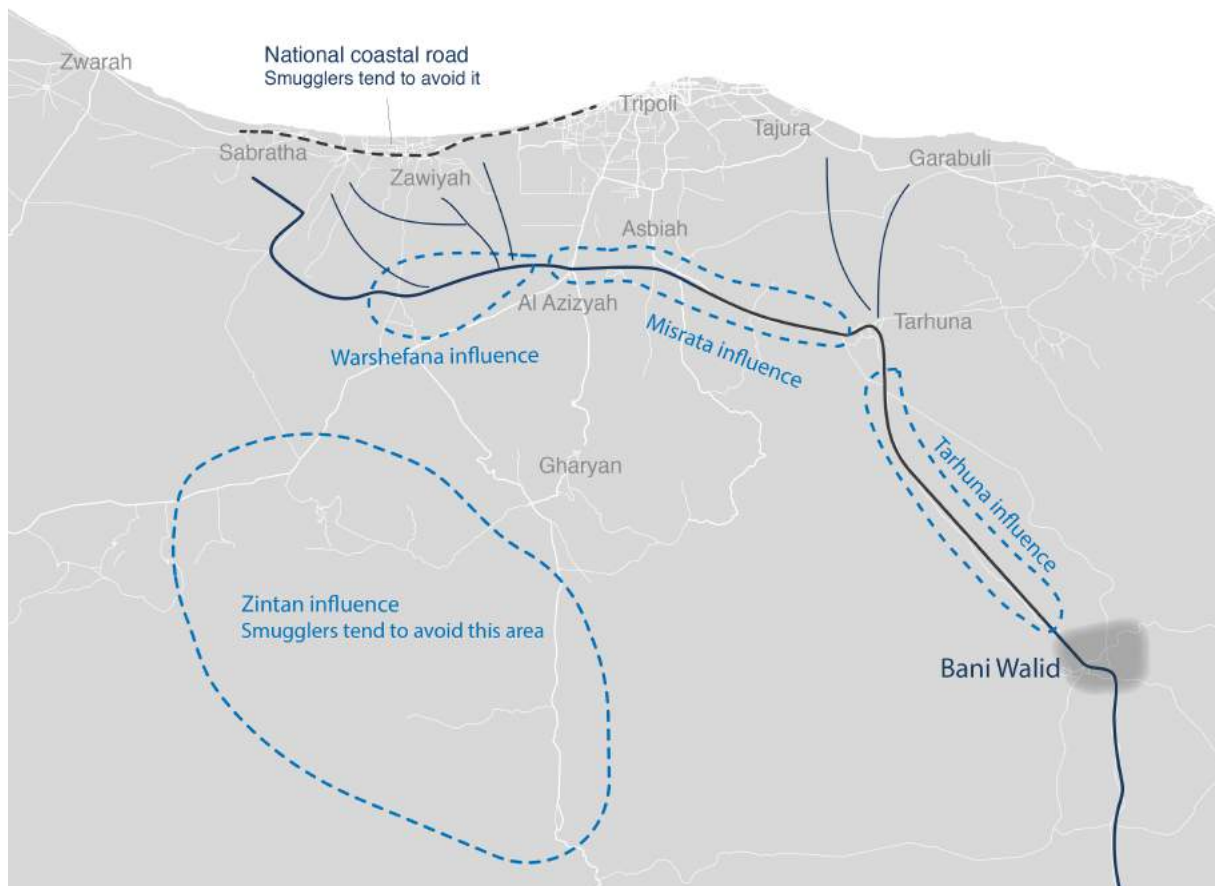
Sabratha to the west of Tripoli through Warshefana territory. This means that smugglers can take people directly from Bani Walid to departure points along the coast, avoiding Tripoli altogether.

While the area of Bani Walid now seems to be a transit hub through Libya, this was not the case a few years ago. In 2013, refugees and migrants coming from Sebha used to drive through Gharyan or Tarhuna, while those coming from Kufra district would stop in Ajdabiya before heading to Tripoli or Benghazi via coastal roads.¹⁸¹

There have also been recent reports that smuggling might be resuming through Zintan.

Routes from Bani Walid to the Coast

Figure 38: Routes from Bani Walid to the Coast



From Bani Walid to the coast, smugglers usually drive on paved roads and hide their charges in trucks or empty containers. Somalis and Eritreans also sometimes use taxis carrying two to three individuals, which are faster but considerably more expensive.

Different armed groups control the new route to the coast through Bani Walid. Some portions of the route are under the control of Warshefana militias, others by groups from Tarhuna, and others (around Asbiah) by Misrata armed groups. This requires smugglers to plan their trips carefully and be on good terms with different stakeholders.

¹⁸¹ See *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroad*, Altai Consulting for UNHCR, 2013. Between Sebha and Tripoli, those transiting used to take pick-ups or smaller cars travelling by night through Gharyan or Tarhuna (1-2 days total). Between Kufra (Jawf, Rebyana, or Tazerbu) and Tripoli, they would take smuggler pick-ups to Ajdabiya before taking a bus to Tripoli. Now however the coastal road between Ajdabiya and Tripoli that passes through Sirte and Misrata is no longer safe.

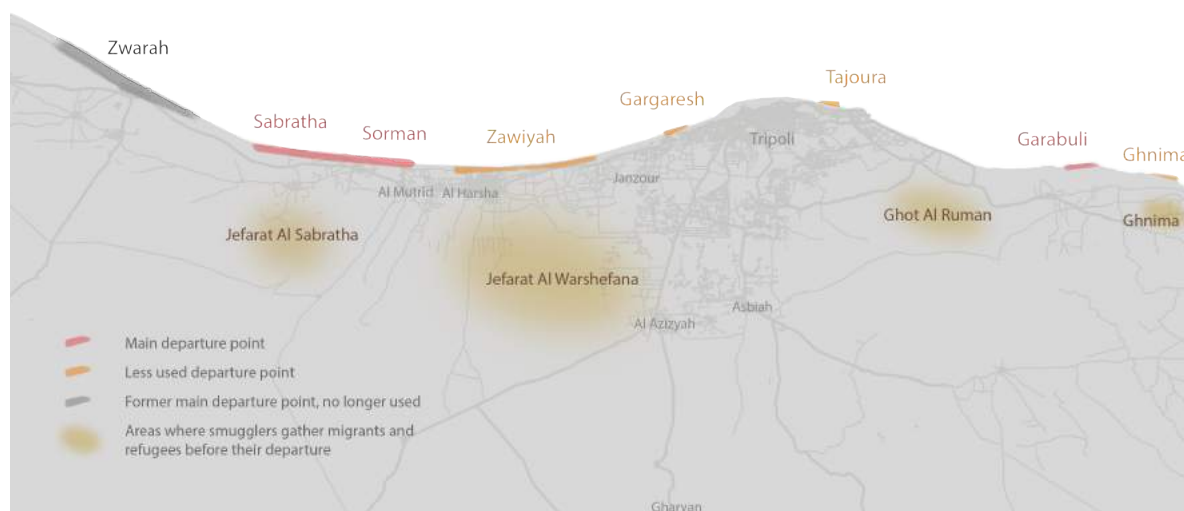
This segment of the journey is mostly taken care of by smugglers from Tarhuna or Bani Walid: being the most neutral actors in the area, they are in the best position to get along with all groups controlling the route.

3.7.2. DEPARTURES FROM THE COAST TO EUROPE

Departure Points

The city of Sabratha / Sorman, some 65km west of Tripoli, has emerged as the main departure point for boats leaving for Italy in the last few years.¹⁸² Garabuli beach, about 75km east of Tripoli, is the second. The smuggling activity in Garabuli stopped between 2014 and 2015 when the Misrata militias were in control of the city. However, Misratan brigades were chased out in April 2016 and smuggling is reported to have resumed. The coastal area surrounding Zawiyah between Tripoli and Sabratha and the beaches of Gargaresh and Tajoura, close to Tripoli, are other less popular launching points.

Figure 39: Departure points on the Tripolitania coast



Departure points from Libya to Europe shift according to levels of control, availability of isolated sandy beaches and outbreaks of conflict along the coastline.

Zwarah for example – half way between Sabratha and the Tunisian border – used to be a major departure point with an active smuggling industry, but the municipal council, local militias and inhabitants of the city have joined forces to chase smugglers out on moral grounds. As a result, smugglers have switched their activities to neighbouring towns, picking Sabratha as their first choice due to the availability of isolated beaches. Similarly, no boats have been leaving from Libya’s eastern coast in the past two years as conflict and military control disrupted smuggling in the area.

Refugees and migrants are usually taken or directed to gathering locations close to the coast, usually within a 100km radius of Tripoli, before their departure. These locations can be farms, warehouses or abandoned buildings. At the time of research, they were often located in the area of south of Sabratha (see Figure 39). A number of houses and condos surrounded by high fences can also be observed

¹⁸² Sabratha was not used much as a port of departure in 2013 when Altai conducted research for its previous UNHCR report for instance.

along the shoreline which are typically used by smugglers, in particular in the area of Tallil (Sabratha) and Al Mutrid.

There are no smuggler-controlled pre-departure gathering locations in the city of Tripoli itself, although some people stay in common houses or “foyers” there before attempting a sea crossing, as detailed in section 4.1.5 Refugees and Migrants in the Region of Tripoli.

Those waiting for a boat wait for between a few days to a few weeks until the smuggler decides that the conditions are right for travel, which means that several boats sometimes leave at the same time. Summer is the most popular time to attempt crossings, which is often reflected in an arrivals’ peak in Italy and deaths at sea during this time.

Some people wait longer than others before being allowed to board a boat. Those who paid the most and for “package” journeys often leave first. Others stay longer because they have to pay off debts to smugglers before they are allowed to leave.

The Sea Voyage

The journey to Italy is hazardous as boats are inadequate, overcrowded and under-supplied. Smugglers use wooden or rubber inflatable dinghies, which can be packed with up to 100 people while wooden boats take 350 to 700 people on board.¹⁸³ Smugglers usually provide some food and water, which is often insufficient.¹⁸⁴

On board, safer and riskier spots are distributed according to the price paid and the smugglers’ personal preferences with regard to ethnicities. Arab and Muslim passengers such as Syrians and Palestinians are said to be routinely treated better. On a wooden boat for example, a place on the upper deck and a life jacket means a much safer journey than a place in the cabin below deck, where cases of asphyxiation are common and where passengers are the first to drown if the boat begins to sink.

A member of the Prosecutor’s Office in Italy interviewed during the research explained: “*There is a high discrepancy among sea crossing fees paid.*” Prices may range between USD 500 and 2,000,¹⁸⁵ depending on a variety of factors including:

- Nationality: on average, people from East Africa and the Middle East tend to pay more than those from West Africa, as they are considered richer. Syrians for instance are usually sold “safer” journeys for an increased price (upper deck of a wooden boat, with life jackets), while Sub-Saharan refugees and migrants are routinely accommodated in the lower decks if travelling on wooden boats, or given rubber boats;
- Ability to drive a boat: a discount is granted to people able and willing to navigate the boat to international waters;
- Previous support to the smuggler: people who have served as intermediaries, recruiting and gathering other passengers for sea crossings for instance, are usually offered a discount on their own trip.
- Need to fill up the boats: those who arrive last might be given discounts as smugglers aim to fill up the boats as much as possible and as fast as possible when the weather and logistics conditions are favourable;

¹⁸³ Regularly including pregnant women, babies and small children.

¹⁸⁴ It is very common for migrants to run out of food and water within a few hours, and resort to drinking sea water which makes them ill.

¹⁸⁵ Based on interviews for this study, the median cost of the journey to Europe was of USD 1,500. Eritreans tended to pay USD 2,000.

- Weather conditions: cheaper during the winter months, mainly because the sea is rougher and the trip is, thus, more dangerous.

Boats usually depart at dusk or during the night to avoid being spotted by the Libyan authorities or coast guards. They move very slowly as the motors are unfit and usually become lost at sea because they lack the appropriate navigational equipment. Passengers are told they will reach Italy in six to eight hours but often they drift for several days. The lucky ones are identified and rescued after a few hours of drifting off the Libyan coast, often close to the border between Libyan territorial and international waters, much closer to Libya than Sicily. The journey from Libya to Sicily in itself would take about two days in the type of boats used with proper navigation equipment.

Since the launch of search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, smugglers have reportedly begun to use boats that are not seaworthy in the expectation that they will be picked up shortly after departure by European Navy forces or NGOs. Boats barely carry enough fuel to reach international waters. According to a prosecutor working on the issue interviewed in Italy: “*International rescue operations have led smugglers to abandon the migrants on the high seas. They have also had an effect on the quality of the rafts and vessels used which are, in general, in a dreadful state.*” Policy changes have also prompted smugglers to adapt their tactics: as the authorities have started destroying wooden boats, they have increasingly been replacing them with flimsy rubber dinghies. A key informant who was on an MSF boat told us: “*MSF left the smugglers’ boats behind after rescue, the military would come and tag them (for destruction).*”

Smugglers usually load passengers onto the boats, start the engines and accompany them as they set out to sea. They then abandon the boat and return to shore. In the case of rubber boats, one (or several) of the passengers would be handed control of the boat and pointed in the direction of navigation.¹⁸⁶ In the case of larger wooden boats, there have been reports of smugglers remaining on the boats until they reached international waters then disembarking once another vessel was in sight, by way of a small dinghy.¹⁸⁷ Until the authorities started destroying the boats after rescue, the smugglers would wait nearby until all the passengers had been transferred onto the rescue ship, and then return to collect their boat so it could be reused. There are also reports of smugglers switching passengers to smaller boats the further they go out to sea for the same reason.

In Italy

Most boats from Libya aim to reach Sicily. If they make it there, passengers are transferred to the Italian mainland for processing. In most cases however, refugees and migrants are rescued at sea, and taken to one of the main ports of Sicily, Calabria, Apulia or Sardinia.¹⁸⁸ There, the Italian authorities conduct an identification interview then transfer them to “hotspots” (in Sicily for instance, these are located in Trapani, Catania or Toronto). A very small number of people also make landfall in Malta,¹⁸⁹ mostly by

¹⁸⁶ Some refugees and migrants said they had been forced to take the helm at gunpoint by Libyan smugglers. “*Smugglers would tell the drivers they would be shot if they returned to Libya,*” members of the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Palermo investigating smuggling networks told the researchers.

¹⁸⁷ Sometimes smugglers even call search and rescue operators.

¹⁸⁸ According to the UNHCR, most refugees and migrants arrive in Sicily (123,706 in 2016) and Calabria (31,450 in 2016), with some also arriving in Apulia (12,331 in 2016) Sardinia (9,078 in 2016), and Campania (4,871 in 2016). Source: UNHCR data on arrivals, an excel sheet can be downloaded through this [link](#).

¹⁸⁹ While there were 2,008 arrivals in Malta in 2013, this number dropped significantly to 29 in 2016 according to UNHCR Malta. Source: UNHCR data, available online [here](#). One of the factors explaining this could be that refugees and migrants intercepted or rescued by the Triton Joint Operation are disembarked in Italy, and the operational area for Triton covers a large part of the Maltese Search and Rescue area). Source: European Commission, see [here](#) and [here](#).

accident after being shipwrecked or because Maltese coastguards rescued them. In Malta, sea arrivals are detained for identification and medical screenings, after which they are released.

UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificates are not considered by the Italian authorities. According to a researcher and volunteer at a Palermo reception centre “When I was on a MOAS boat (Migrant Offshore Aid Station, rescue mission in the Mediterranean Sea), I saw asylum seekers taking great care of this document. However, it was not recognised nor considered by the NGO workers or police.” Other key informants interviewed in Italy agreed that refugees might be labouring under the misapprehension that Asylum Seeker Certificates distributed in transit countries might have some value in Europe while this is not the case.

Italy is often considered to be a transit country by refugees and migrants hoping to settle in other European countries as soon as possible, in part due to the lack of livelihood opportunities there. Those who arrive with plans to move onto another country usually intend to only stay in Italy for a few days. The exact length of their stay depends on their economic capacity and border management policy developments.

“Before the implementation of tight border controls two years ago it was quite easy to find informal ways to leave Italy. Now it takes much longer”

Key informant interviewed in Italy

Once in Italy, refugees and migrants often head to Rome and Milan to organise the final phase of their journey. They are often approached outside reception centres in Sicily by intermediaries from their countries of origin who offer support to travel north. According to a key informant interviewed in Italy: “Catania is increasingly gaining ground as a gathering place for departures to the north of Italy, a place where ‘new’ smugglers look for lucrative opportunities to organise the train or bus journey to the rest of the country.” Smuggling networks organising trips to northern Europe reportedly charge around USD 200-400, depending on destination country.

Most refugees and migrants intend to reach final destinations where they have relatives, connections, or where there is a strong network of people from their country of origin. The exact countries vary among the different nationalities. Refugees and migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia for instance usually hope to settle in the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden or the Netherlands. Syrians on the other hand often opt for Germany, the United Kingdom or Sweden. Nigerians and Gambians often stay in Italy. IOM’s DTM Flow Monitoring Survey of September 2016 concurs with this finding, reporting that Italy is the preferred destination country for the majority of Nigerian (71%) and Gambian (72%) respondents interviewed along the CMR.¹⁹⁰

Those seeking international protection on arrival in Italy can be relocated across Europe if they are in clear need and belong to nationalities whose recognition of international protection in Europe is equal to or greater than 75% (such as Syria and Eritrea).¹⁹¹ However in practice the system is very slow. Nationals from Syria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia tend to spend little time in Sicily as they are either transferred to northern Italy while waiting for relocation or drop out of the reception system and try to cross the border irregularly. In the past, Eritreans have refused fingerprinting, as they know that they have high chances of acceptance in northern European countries.

¹⁹⁰ *Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean and Beyond*, IOM, June –September 2016, page 10, available at this [link](#).

¹⁹¹ As per the European Agenda on Migration. Nationalities whose recognition of international protection in Europe is equal to or greater than 75% are identified based on Eurostat data. See *what is Relocation*, European Asylum Support Office, September 2016, available at this [link](#).



MIXED MIGRATION IN THE SOUTH OF LIBYA

Mr.
apple

4. MIXED MIGRATION IN THE SOUTH OF LIBYA

4.1. MAPPING REFUGEE AND MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

This section maps refugee and migrant communities in southern Libya, looking into their size, location and profiles.

4.1.1. OVERVIEW

The majority of refugees and migrants transiting through Libya plan to go to the north: Tripoli, the largest urban centre, offers the most economic opportunities and the coastal line of Tripolitania is where boat departures to Italy are organised from. Those found in the South usually intend to move north as soon as possible and only stay a few days to two months in southern cities, according to a border guard on the Libyan-Sudanese border. Despite the South attracting fewer people than in the past, some still decide to settle there and establish small communities, with Sebha being the preferred option.

The three main groups who tend to settle in the South are:

- Syrians, Palestinians and Iraqis who integrate easily and are less vulnerable than Sub-Saharan Africans, with the exception of the Sudanese;
- Nigeriens, Chadians, Malians and Sudanese, for whom setting up in the South, mainly in Sebha and Gatrun, is also a way to be closer to their country of origin so they can afford to go back and forth in circular migration patterns or settle for several years at a time.
- Nigerians and West Africans are most vulnerable and most likely to stay for the least time, to find short-term employment opportunities to pay for their journey further north. They join already existing communities of their countrymen and look for daily work.

A representative from the Census Committee of Workers and Migrants in Sebha, under the authority of Sebha Municipality responsible for mapping communities and supporting their return to their home countries said: *“90% of Nigeriens and Malians go back home after the work season is over; while those from other West African countries – Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire etcetera - only work here to be able to find money and pay for their journey. Only 30% of them actually stop in Libya.”*

Eritreans, Somalians and Ethiopians are the most vulnerable refugees and migrants in the South but they do not remain there, simply transiting through using “express” smuggling networks.

Refugees and migrants cited various reasons for choosing to stay in a city: the presence of peers or relatives, the access to labour and the short distance to the border which makes it more accessible for those from neighbouring countries to engage in circular migration. A local journalist interviewed in Ubari, Libya, said: *“95% or more consider the South to be an area to collect money on their way to Europe, their assumed heaven. Perhaps only the migrants from Niger do not consider going to Europe. They are only working in Libya to provide a decent life for themselves once they return to their country. It is possible that the presence of a large Nigerien community in Libya and the large acceptance shown by the people of the South is one of the encouraging factors for them to remain in Libya”.*

Estimated Size of the Refugee and Migrant Communities

As always when it comes to data on refugee and migrant communities, figures are difficult to obtain. The constant irregular movements of people and the lack of official and systematic documentation and census data makes exact numbers near impossible to track. A border guard in Tumo estimated the community in the South to be around 10,000 individuals while the mayor of Sebha reported *“Tens of*

thousands of all nationalities in the South". Local CSO Taher Ezzawi in Sebha shared a similar estimation, sizing the communities at around 7,000-10,000. Other sources, like the Committee for Census of Workers and Migrants in Sebha estimated the number of foreign workers staying for more than one year at only 3,000 individuals, seemingly representing just 10% of the total of refugees and migrants passing through the city. However, including those in transit, some estimate the total to be around 30,000-40,000 in Sebha. Local journalists believe that monthly arrivals offset monthly departures, meaning the turnover of people remains consistently high.

In Gatrún, a representative of the municipality estimated refugee and migrant communities to be between 1,000 and 2,000 individuals while a DCIM representative estimated between 3,000 and 4,000 people roughly, in line with the Red Crescent's estimate.

In the south east, a member of a local CSO called Hand in Hand estimated the number of established refugees and migrants in Kufra town at 2,500 individuals. Only few of them intend to settle in the south east of the country, where job opportunities are scarcer. According to the Red Crescent in Sebha, 70% of those travelling through Rebyana stay for a maximum of two months, the rest - mainly Chadians, Sudanese and Nigeriens - stay for a few years to save money before going back to their country of origin.

Refugees Communities

Looking at refugee and asylum seeker communities in particular, their size seems particularly small in the South. Most Palestinians and Iraqis in Libya arrived many years or decades ago and preferred to settle in northern urban centres like Tripoli and Benghazi.¹⁹² Those who arrived long ago are likely to be more integrated: they work as teachers or run small-scale businesses and restaurants, for instance.

Eritreans and Somalis do not settle in the South and no actual community exists there: many simply transit through Kufra district before heading further north and, in most cases, on to Europe. Small communities exist in Tripoli and its environs, but the number remains limited.

The Sudanese on the contrary have communities of several thousand-strong in Sebha, Gatrún and Kufra town. They come for economic opportunities, in the context of a circular migration. Those unable to return to Sudan because of risks of persecution or violence tend to then join the northern routes with a view to crossing to Europe.

4.1.2. REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN THE REGION OF SEBHA

Syrian, Palestinians and Iraqis

According to the mayor of Sebha, Syrians represent 15% of the entire foreign communities in the city, and Palestinians about 10%. Journalists and members of the local CSO Ena Muhajer, which supporting refugees and migrants in Sebha, put the number of Syrians and Palestinians at 300-400 individuals each, while Iraqis represent just a handful.

These nationalities are scattered across the city, have businesses and interact normally with the rest of the population, taking advantage of speaking the same language, having the same faith, and their long time presence in the community: Iraqis, for example, have lived in Sebha for 20-25 years. Unlike other foreign workers, Syrians and Palestinians do not work as daily labourers, but rather in small trade activities.

¹⁹² *Mapping Asylum Seekers in Three Cities*, Altai Consulting for UNHCR, 2013.

Other Nationalities

Nigeriens, Sudanese and Chadians represent the largest foreign communities in Sebha – Nigeriens and Chadians are thought by local municipal staff to number around 7,000 and 10,000 each. Most of them work as daily labourers, and can stay for a month or several years.

A Malian community representative estimated Malians to be no less than 4,000. A Malian community representative said: *“Many Malians go back and forth at least once a year. The South represents job opportunities for us. I have been here for 8 years myself.”* Malians work as mechanics, in small trade, in domestic construction and in other semi-skilled/unskilled jobs.

Other communities, such as West Africans, are not well-established in Sebha and tend only to stay for as long as it takes them to earn money to pay for their journey to Tripoli. Refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa rarely transit through the city, and when they do, they often remain in the hands of the smugglers, and stay in farms mainly in the North of the city, in the neighbourhoods of Al Waresh and Hay Abdelkefi.

Local Dynamics in the City

To find the most vulnerable communities of foreigners in Sebha, one has to look in neighbourhoods that are further away from the centre, and in the control of specific groups.

A majority of refugees and migrants in transit through the city can be found in the northern and the eastern suburbs, former construction sites or abandoned workshops and farms. Some are also found in the Hay Abdelkefi, Al Waresh neighbourhoods and Al Jadid farms, mainly under Magarha and Awlad Busaif control. Those planning to head north tend to stay there while waiting to be taken to Shweref and Bani Walid.

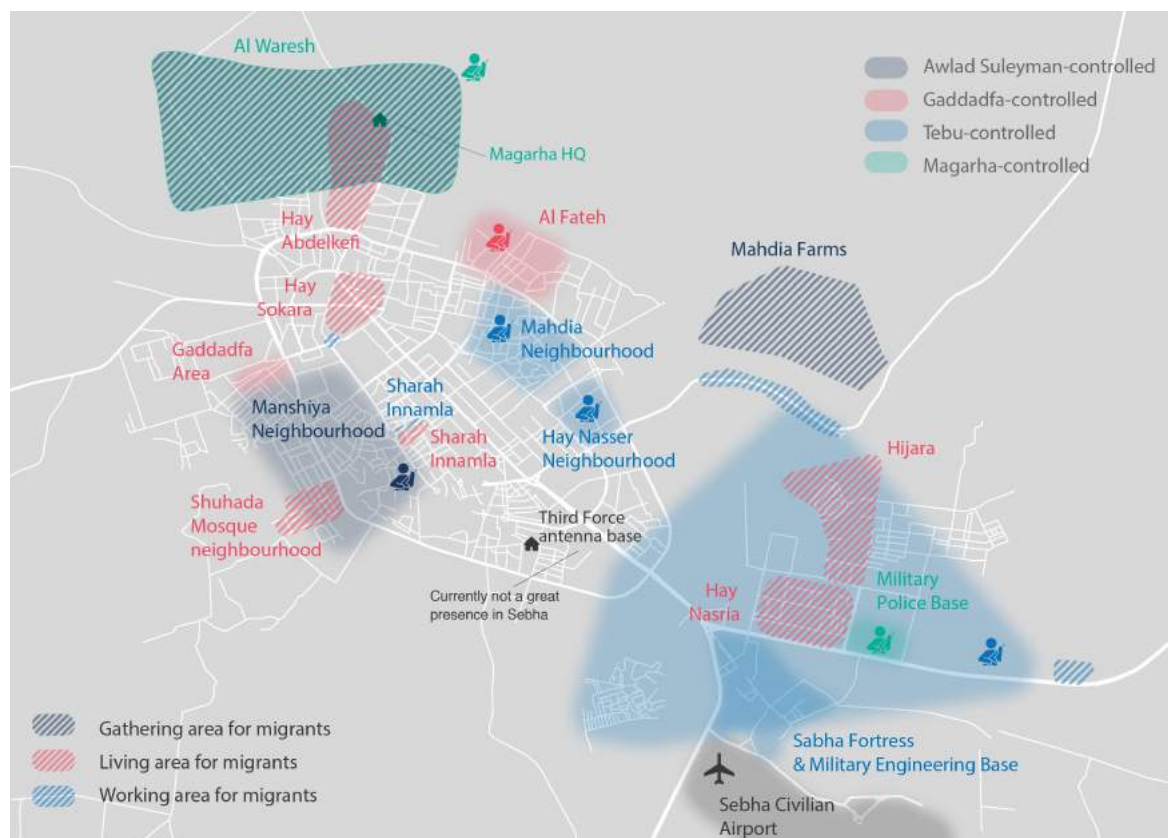
Similarly, the Tebu control some neighbourhoods of Sebha and are in direct contact with the Magarha, with whom they are said to maintain good relations. Tebu are particularly influential along the southern routes from the Nigerien and Chadian borders, and the southern areas of Sebha like Hijarah, between the military police base and the civilian airport. Numerous refugees and migrants are staying in these areas, and some work in the brick factories in Hijarah. Tebu are also key players in Mahdia, Hay Nasser and Tayouri, east of Sebha, in close coordination with Magarha and Gaddadfa tribes. In eastern Mahdia there are a number of farms that have been converted into accommodation for hundreds of people.

Areas with Awlad Suleyman presence are located west of Sebha and often under their total or partial control, with smugglers from this community operating in the neighbourhoods of Manshiya, Ghordha, Sharaa Arbeen, Gaayed and some farms around Hay Abdelkefi. Although Awlad Suleyman are reported to have a difficult relationship with both Tebu and Magarha in the city, it seems that arrangements between smugglers originating from different groups are professional when it comes to business, in particular the trade of refugees and migrants. According to respondents, smugglers of Awlad Suleyman origin are in contact with Tuareg smugglers that transport refugees and migrants from the Algerian border through Ubari or Sebha, and accommodate them in Manshiya and its surroundings. However, as Awlad Suleyman do not control the northern route through Braq Shati, smugglers belonging to this community deal directly with Magarha or Tebu to sell them groups of people that want to travel north.

Foreign nationals are visible everywhere in the city, but particularly high numbers can be found near Souq Al Nemla where they work in small trade and cafés, and Soukarah Avenue in Jamala, where they sell phones or look for semi-skilled work in plumbing, reparation, mechanics etcetera. Others work in garages in Mahdia. Females are seen selling herbs in small bundles along roads, while children can be seen begging everywhere in the city.

Even if they are not physically detained by smuggling groups, they often work under their control. This is reported to be a relatively recent evolution. In 2013 for instance, refugees and migrants would gather at roundabouts to seek casual labour and lived in collective houses, largely outside of smugglers' control. Three years later, the smuggling industry has scaled up, and so too has the control of their charges in Sebha.

Figure 40: Refugees and migrants in Sebha



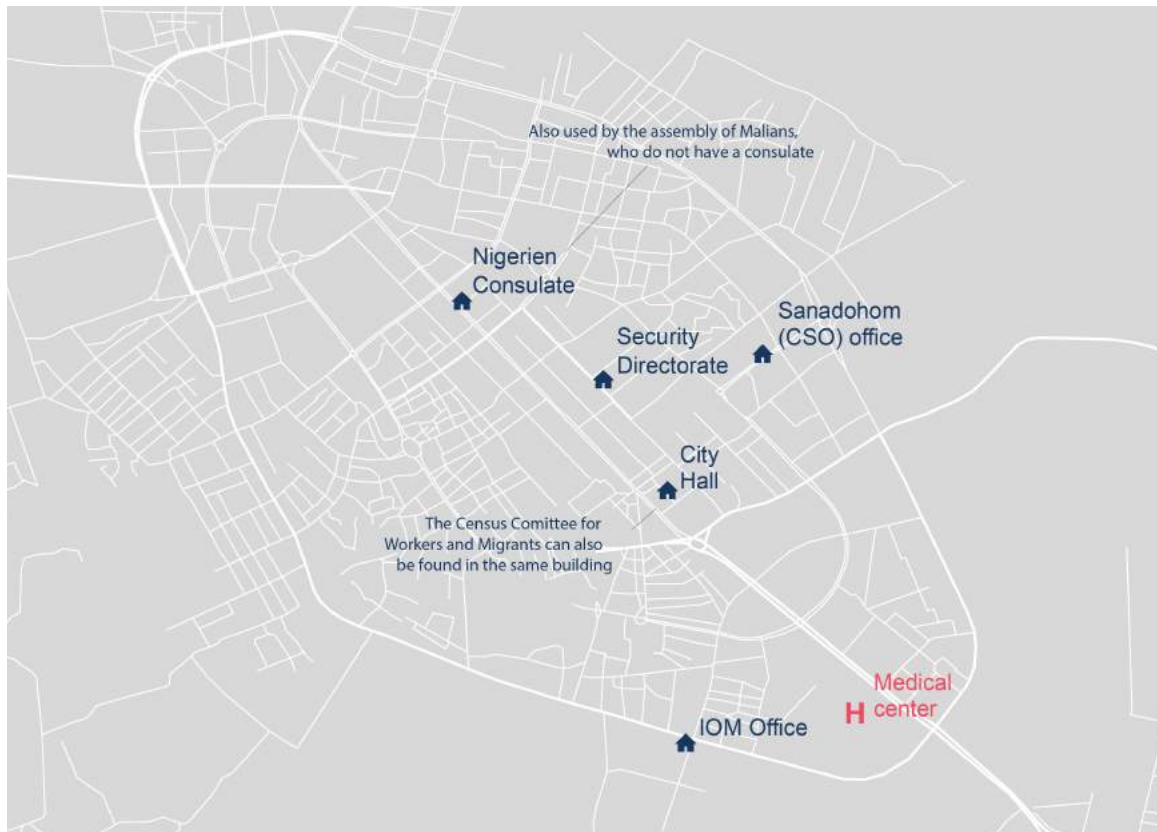
Institutions in Sebha

The local authorities and public institutions in Sebha are all either directly or indirectly impacted by people smuggling and they are very much aware of the scale of the phenomenon. However, they lack the resources or knowledge of how to respond.

The mayor of Sebha told researchers that institutions across the South were overwhelmed by the presence of smuggling networks and the transit of foreign nationals, with none being able to appropriately respond in the absence of formal national authorities and police forces. “*We do not know who arrives in the city,*” he said. Given the lack of security infrastructure and protection mechanisms, the municipality largely leaves the smuggling networks and armed groups to handle refugees and migrants. The municipality does coordinate with IOM and diplomatic missions however to arrange for their voluntary return home. It also at times provides support to local CSOs – for instance sending ambulances for medical emergencies.

The municipality has recently established a committee to conduct a census on migrants and workers in Sebha to have a better demographic understanding of the population, specifically to identify those who were working, those who wanted to return to their country of origin and those who were in transit. According to interviews, the committee is still to determine precise figures yet at this stage.

Figure 41: Relevant institutions and landmarks in Sebha



At one time, there was a detention centre in Sebha managed by DCIM in coordination with the municipality, but it was closed due to the conflict. With the closure of the centre, refugees and migrants have been less accessible to aid workers. There is currently nothing in its place and no location for local CSOs to serve this community, apart from consulates with limited outreach capacity.

Sebha Detention Centre

The Sebha Detention Centre, located in a conflict-ridden area of the city centre currently controlled by Tebu militias, closed in 2014 when clashes broke out with rival armed groups. Prior to this, the DCIM ran the centre by holding foreign nationals in an irregular situation before returning them to the border. Between 2012 and its closure in 2014 more than 40,000 refugees and migrants were returned. Most found at the detention centre were from West and Central Africa, with few Arabs apart from a handful of Egyptians who were occasionally deported.

The Sebha Medical Centre provides occasional medical assistance to refugees and migrants. A representative from this centre decried the closure of the detention centre, saying it was the most efficient way to provide medical services to these communities. The medical centre usually treats foreign nationals who have experienced violence and abuse at the hands of smugglers, armed groups, or local residents or those who have been in serious car accidents, often en route to the city. It also handles corpses found in the city and corpses left outside the hospital at night, allegedly transported by

people linked to the smuggling industry.¹⁹³ Refugees and migrants only come to the medical centre on their own if they have suffered serious injuries, or if someone pays the taxi for them. Generally, they avoid the hospital due to their irregular status and because they might be asked to pay to access medical services and lack the money to do so. That said, many key informants said that Syrians, Iraqis and Palestinians received the same level of treatment as Libyans. At the time of the researchers' visit, a number of refugees and migrants were being treated for gunshot wounds after they were fired on by their smugglers. According to medical centre staff, some smugglers will shoot their clients if they are unable to pay for transportation or for ransom in cases of kidnapping.

4.1.3. REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN THE REGION OF KUFRA

Overview

The geography of south-eastern Libya and the border areas with Sudan, Egypt and Chad is largely desert and sparsely populated. Kufra town is the only significant urban centre in the region and developed as a result of its water source. For centuries Kufra served as a stopping-off point for merchants and traders traversing the Sahara. It now provides the same service to smugglers and traffickers.

Unlike in Sebha, refugees and migrants do not stay in Kufra, neither permanently nor to seek temporary work. With the exception of a few Sudanese and Chadians who are circular migrants and stay for a few months to a few years, most people are only transiting through the city. For these people, in particular refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa (Eritreans, Somalis and Ethiopians), the length of stay is short.

Sudanese and Chadians work for traders and farmers or as construction workers in Kufra town, or nearby Rebyana or Tazerbu. Collectively, there are about 2,000-3,000 in the region. However, these urban centres are small and do not have much to offer in terms of economic opportunities.

Local Dynamics

Two main communities dominate the Kufra area: the Zwey and the Tebu. As reported by USIP, members of the Zwey and Tebu communities have “*an integral role to play in all of the four major illicit markets in the region: drugs, people, arms and commodities,*” as they are able to capitalise on their local knowledge of the desert terrain and its routes.¹⁹⁴

The Tebu and Zwey have been in conflict over land and water resources in the South for years, with violence erupting sporadically. Allegedly, the Zwey were backed by the Gaddafi regime during its Arabisation policy in the South, and under government patronage individuals of Zwey origin took control of the smuggling economy in the region.¹⁹⁵ During the anti-Gaddafi uprising in 2011, Tebu militias took control of the regime's weaponry and expanded their influence both west and east to control the Sudan and Chadian border, ultimately gaining control over most of the south east. The Zwey were hemmed in to the town of Kufra, where clashes were inevitable between the two communities, resulting in a long period of instability that remains today. The Zwey currently control most of the centre of Kufra town,

¹⁹³ Medical Centre staff mentioned receiving an average of four corpses per week, which increases to 10-15 per week when there are car accidents along transit routes. Some patients at the centre had survived a car accident between two smugglers trucks in which 24 people died and whose bodies remained unclaimed in the hospital morgue.

¹⁹⁴ *Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition*, USIP, 2014, page 30.

¹⁹⁵ *Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition*, USIP, 2014, page 30.”

with the exception of the suburbs of Hay Gudrafi, Hay Shura and Hay Swedia, which is a mix of Tebu and Zwey.

The Zwey group use similar smuggling routes from the Sudanese border as the Tebu, and use Kufra town and its direct surroundings as a hub. The Tebu on the other hand, bypass Kufra town preferring to use Rebyana, Tazerbu and their surroundings as their stopping points, as both cities are completely under their control. According to one border control officer in Rebyana, local authorities have been unable to ascertain the locations of the accommodation smugglers use for refugees and migrants.

The instability triggered by local clashes has seen smuggling levels drop within the main towns themselves. They tend instead to use empty warehouses and farms outside the city centres to gather groups together before moving quickly on to the next destination. The few foreign nationals that look for work opportunities in these centres come from neighbouring countries, in particular Sudan, Chad and Niger. Some stay up to six months before they move to another region in Libya, according to a local journalist interviewed in Kufra. A CSO representative estimated that many only stay a few days.

Hodan – Somali in Rebyana

Hodan is a 33-year-old man from Somalia who arrived in Libya two weeks prior to being interviewed. He is currently staying in Rebyana at a farm with 60 other refugees and migrants. Hodan used to be a fisherman in Somalia but decided to move with the support of his mother and brother, who hoped to benefit from him settling abroad.

Hodan travelled through Somalia to Djibouti and then on to Ethiopia. From Ethiopia, he continued to Sudan where he spent two months before travelling with a smuggler by car to Rebyana. He was detained for five days upon arriving in Libya by an unknown authority. He was not given a reason for his detention nor for his release. He has not been working since arriving in Libya and his most urgent need is to find decent accommodation and get food.

Hodan's main objective is to go to Europe as soon as possible. He declared he could not go back to war-torn Somalia. He says: *"I cannot go back home because of the war in Somalia and the absence of the government for over two decades."*



The detention centre in Kufra town has only been operational intermittently since the beginning of 2016. It was closed when researchers visited it for this study, although it has been visited by UNHCR staff since then. Without funding from the government, the DCIM has been unable to keep its doors open continuously. Key informants said that all detainees were transferred “elsewhere” but were unable to provide more details. In early 2016, there were up to 700 refugees and migrants detained in one main room. The director of the DCIM in Kufra said: *“As we did not have money to take care of the centre, we just stopped dealing with migrants. Anyway, we did not have much food to give them.”*¹⁹⁶ DCIM staff in Kufra reported preferring to manage migration locally based on the interest of the people of the region

¹⁹⁶ “Daech, réfugiés, gouvernement d'union nationale : où en est la Libye ?”, Arte, 8 September 2016, available online at this [link](#).

and therefore little communication exists between the Kufra-based DCIM and the central level. They pointed out that Kufra district residents have no interest in detaining the refugees and migrants at a cost.

4.1.4. REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN THE SOUTH WEST (GATRUN, MURZUQ, UBARI, GHAT)

Context

The region of Murzuq is a desert area located in southwest of Libya at the nexus of Algeria, Niger and Chad. The city of Murzuq has 20,000 inhabitants, lies 150 kilometres south of Sebha and is populated by a mix of Tuareg, Tebu, smaller Arab local tribes and *Ahali*, which is Arabic for “natives” and used across southwest Libya to describe local Arab communities of mixed Arab and sub-Saharan African descent without tribal affiliation. Located on the main smuggling routes from Niger and Chad, several of this region’s small towns are important transit hubs for those en route to Tripoli.

The Gatrun area – also known as Wadi Al Hikma and the municipality of Gatrun – includes Gatrun town, Tajarhi, Bakhi, Gasr Masud, Madrusa and Nagar Kanma. This area is the convergence point for illicit activities across the three neighbouring countries of Algeria, Niger and Libya, with people smuggling being the most prevalent. The Tebu are the principal inhabitants of the region with the much less numerous *Ahali* living amongst them. The road south from Murzuq runs through the town of Gatrun, after which it splits to lead either to the Tumo border post with Niger,¹⁹⁷ or southeast towards Chad. Many respondents reported passing through Gatrun and Murzuq before arriving in Sebha.

Ubari is a town of approximately 40,000 people in the Targa valley, 200 kilometres west of Sebha. Its population is a mixture of tribes and ethnicities, Tuareg and *Ahali* being the largest groups, with a Tebu minority. Ubari is a major hub along the routes from Algeria to Libya.

According to respondents, the Tebu currently control the Salvador¹⁹⁸ corridor at the Algerian and Nigerien borders, which is one of the key entry points into Libya. In recent years, smugglers of Tebu origin have increased their hold on southwestern routes from Niger, aided by their knowledge of the desert and their connections in neighbouring countries. The shift of smuggling and trafficking routes into the sphere of influence of the Tebu after the 2011 revolution is said to have tipped the balance of power in their favour over the Tuareg, who now only control the far west border with Algeria.¹⁹⁹ The Tuareg have also been chased by the Zintani from the city of Ghadames at the Algerian and Tunisian borders, another entry point into Libya for refugees and migrants. As a result, the position of smugglers of Tuareg origin within the smuggling industry has weakened and their oversight is currently limited to smuggling routes from Algeria through Ghat and Ubari.²⁰⁰

With the recent crackdown on smuggling in Niger however, and the closure of the main Nigerien route through Tebu territory, the fortunes of the Tuareg may still turn. Routes through Algeria might pick up in the future, which would largely benefit Tuareg smugglers, although this change had yet to be

¹⁹⁷ When the border post at Tumo is closed, travellers from Niger must report to Libyan authorities in Gatrun, the closest city.

¹⁹⁸ The Salvador corridor is a narrow mountain pass which lies at the north end of the Mangueni Plateau near the nexus of Algeria, Niger, and Libya. It is used by smugglers, traffickers and armed groups to avoid the official crossing at Tumo. See section 3.6 Western Routes through Libya.

¹⁹⁹ *Illicit Trafficking and Libya’s Transition*, USIP, 2014, page 29.

²⁰⁰ Note that this does not mean that smugglers of Tuareg origin do not operate on other routes.

confirmed in the early months of 2017. The Tuareg have an unparalleled knowledge of the desert and as a result “*Their overall position in the smuggling economy will remain,*” according to USIP.²⁰¹

Southwestern Libya is economically poor, and subsists of local and cross-border trade. Interviews conducted in Gatrun, Tajerhi and Ubari showed that many young men in the region had links to the smuggling industry, whether it be goods or humans.²⁰² In a region that is economically marginalised and without real economic prospects for young people, smuggling is often the easiest way to make a decent living.

Although smuggling occurred during the Gaddafi regime, it increased dramatically in volume and lucrativeness with his fall. The widespread legal and institutional breakdown in Libya ensued that there is no government-controlled security force able to tackle or mitigate flows in the South, allowing smugglers to operate largely unchecked. Smugglers interviewed in the South confirmed that if they experienced trouble with the authorities before 2011, including being arrested and charged and even imprisoned, now life is far easier. The only obstacles to their business now, according to them, is the internal competition between smugglers and banditry in the desert. A border control official in Ghat claimed that the security forces lacked the equipment and resources needed to enforce the law at the border: “*When we catch migrants, we often end up releasing them because there is no detention centre here and no resources to return them.*” He also complained that they have sometimes called for support from the central authorities but received no response.

There were no DCIM or official detention centres in the south west at the time of research. There was once a DCIM-run detention centre in Ghat but due to a lack of resources it had closed down, according to border control officers. Gatrun had the only functioning DCIM detention centre in the region until its recent closure. The DCIM representative interviewed in Gatrun stressed the lack of resources in the centre and his “*hope to receive vehicles that are better adapted to the desert*” to be able to carry out intercept on missions as their vehicles are inferior to the smugglers’.

Refugee and Migrant Communities

In Gatrun, minor tensions were reported between the Tebu and the Ahali over land expropriation and concerns about the growing influence of the Tebu in the city and region. Overall though, most inhabitants depicted the town as peaceful and went as far to say that refugees and migrants passing through could stay and find a job, despite most only staying for a few nights before carrying on to Sebha. As a result, there is only a small community of foreign nationals, mainly from neighbouring countries like Niger, Chad, Sudan or Nigeria. They work on farms or do other forms of casual labour, staying for a few months before returning to their country of origin. A border control official at the Tomu border post close to the city said: “*There are approximately 4,000 migrants in the region of Gatrun and Tajerhi, mainly established migrants that do not want to move.*”

Overall the majority of refugees and migrants travelling through south-west Libya stop in Sebha and opt to simply pass through Murzuq town, Ghat or Ubari given the lack of employment opportunities. The few who do stay in these cities are those who have managed to find temporary work. The mayor of the city of Ghat confirmed that saying “*All migrants coming through Ghat are only transiting or they seek work.*”

Very few East Africans, Syrians, Palestinians or Iraqis were reported to have settled in the south west. A member of the local authority in Ghat reported: “*Nigeriens work in small shops and farms here and they are respected by the local community. There is only one Syrian and no Palestinians.*”

²⁰¹ *Illicit Trafficking and Libya’s Transition*, USIP, 2014, page 30.

²⁰² The route through Gatrun for instance is also used for smuggling goods such as alcohol, hashish and pharmaceutical products.

Figure 42: Refugees and migrants in Gatrun

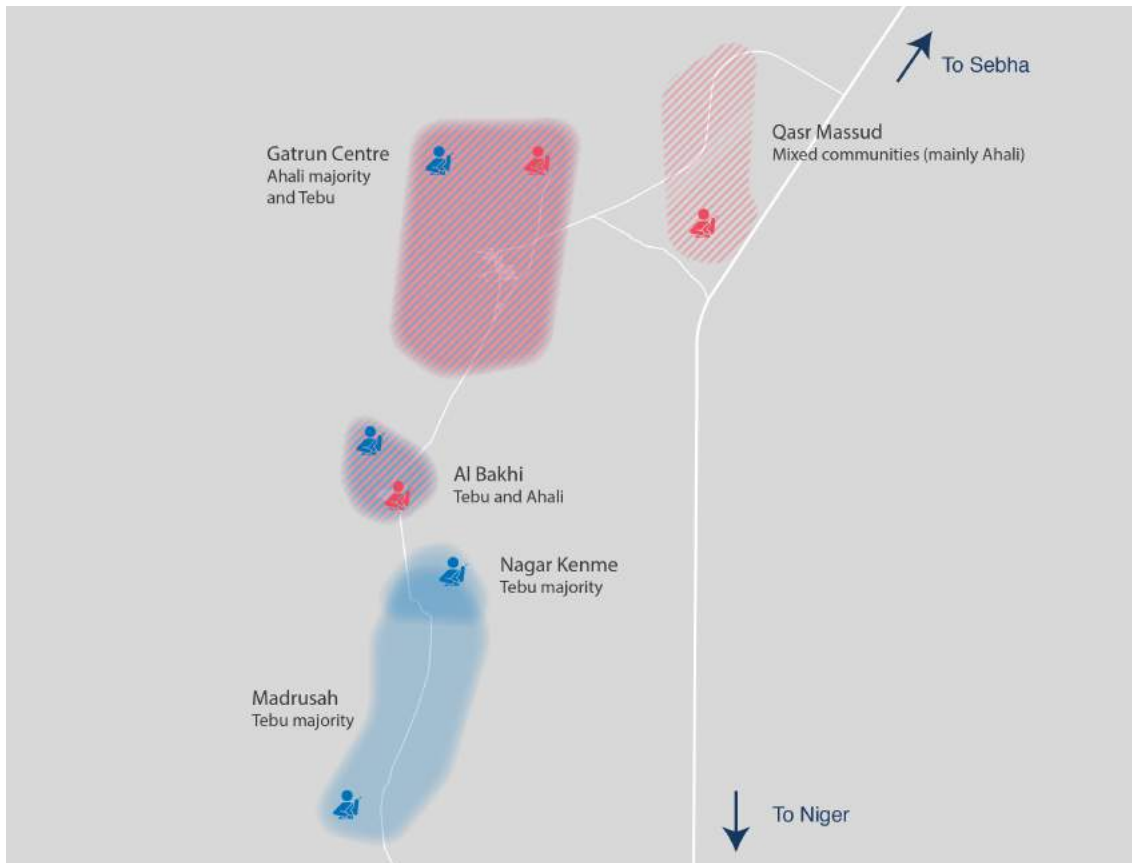
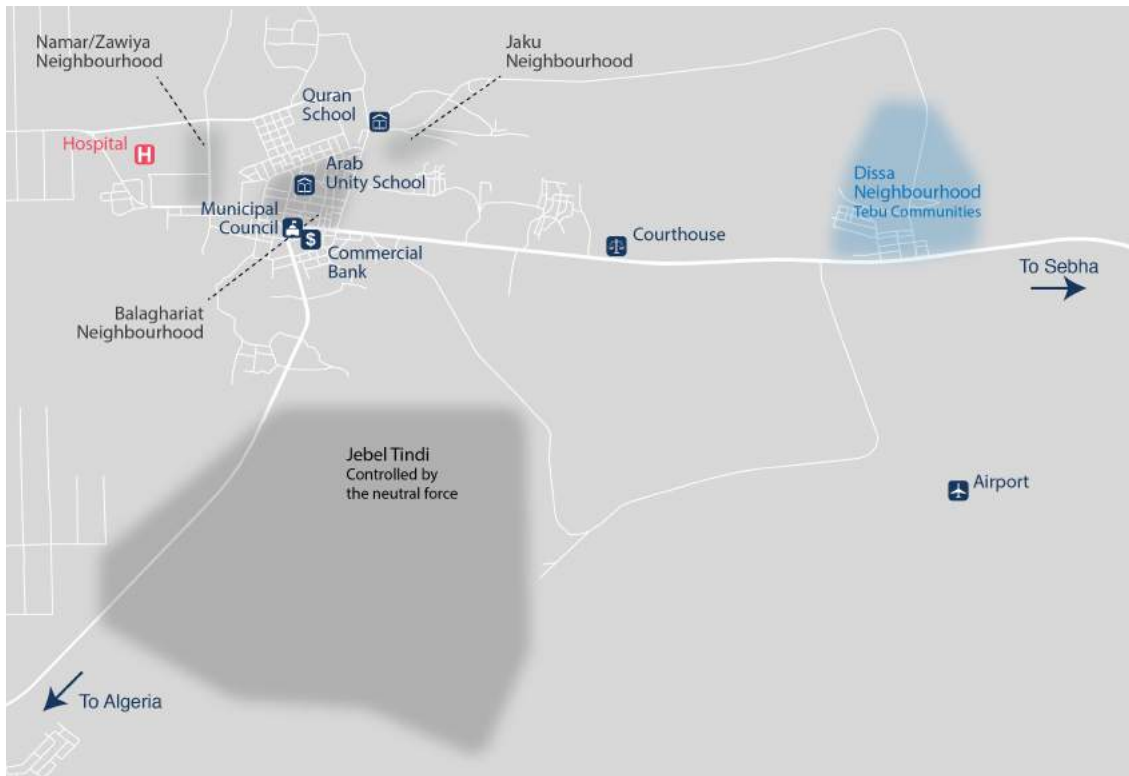


Figure 43: Refugees and migrants in Ubari



4.1.5. REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN THE REGION OF TRIPOLI

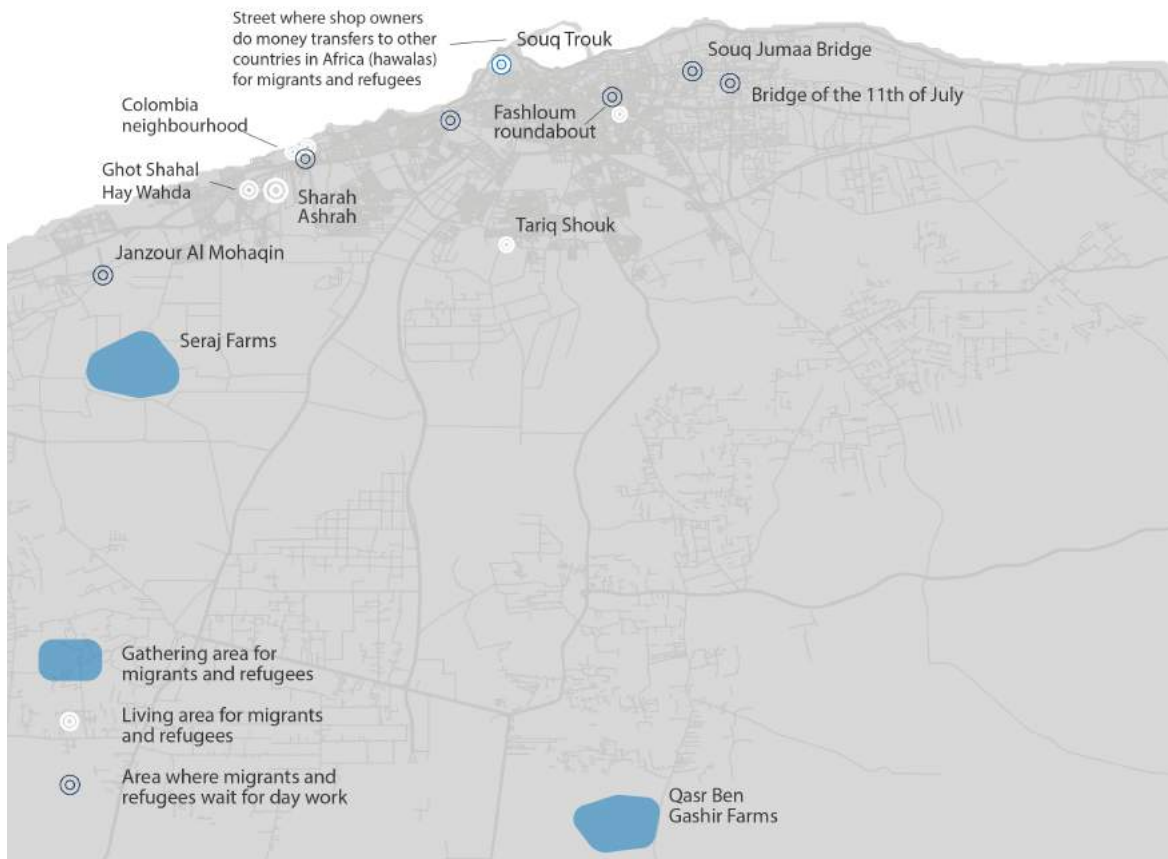
Tripoli is the capital and economic driver of Libya and as such attracts large numbers of foreign nationals who enter the country. The city is on the coast and only a few kilometres from the main jumping-off points for boats crossing the Mediterranean. As the largest city, it offers employment opportunities in the construction, trade and agricultural sectors where refugees and migrants work in large numbers. African workers can be seen throughout the city, often working in shops, car garages or in the old town collecting garbage for instance.

The area west of Tripoli, beyond Janzour, is a main launch pad for boats. The Warshefana tribe is particularly influential in this area. It is close to the government based in the east and as a result regularly clashes with the neighbouring Zawiyah and Janzour communities whom are close to the Tripoli based-government. Long-standing tribal rivalries also play a part. Due to the instability of the area, it is at times difficult to move between Tripoli and the beaches of Sabratha, Surman and Zawiyah, from which most boats depart. Whereas Tripoli used to be a “logical” hub for refugees and migrants who gathered in farms and warehouses near the beaches, smugglers now tend to avoid bringing passengers to the city centre, instead heading directly to accommodation closer to departure points such as Seraj. This is particularly true for refugees and migrants on “organised” journeys that intend to pass through Libya as quickly as possible.

Some of the locations within Tripoli known to have larger refugee and migrant communities include:

- The old city and around Martyr’s Square. Those staying there are usually well-established foreign nationals, often Sudanese, Moroccans, Tunisians, Chadians and Nigeriens, who arrived long ago and run small businesses including shops that sell goods and also offer services such as haircuts;
- Ain Zara farms where they work in the fields;
- Ghot Shaal and Hay Wahda, suburbs where refugees and migrants rent houses that are either owned by Libyan families or are unfinished construction sites;
- Sharaa Ashra;
- Gergaresh road and Hay Colombia;
- Tariq Shouq where there are many collective houses occupied by refugees and migrants of all nationalities, including from the Horn of Africa;
- Fashloun where there are three or four collective houses with 30-40 people in each, from a large array of countries but mainly West Africa;
- Around Gorji roundabout, where refugees and migrants gather to wait for daily work - this was less active in 2016 however;
- Abu Slim neighbourhood where there are many collective houses rented to all nationalities. Some people from the Horn of Africa are held there by smugglers before being transferred to the coast and the boat launch points;
- Souq al Jumma and 11th July bridge, where individuals gather to seek daily work and offer their services to passers-by;
- Qasr Ben Ghashir where refugees and migrants gather at farms ready for transfer to the west for a boat departure.

Figure 44: Refugees and migrants in Tripoli

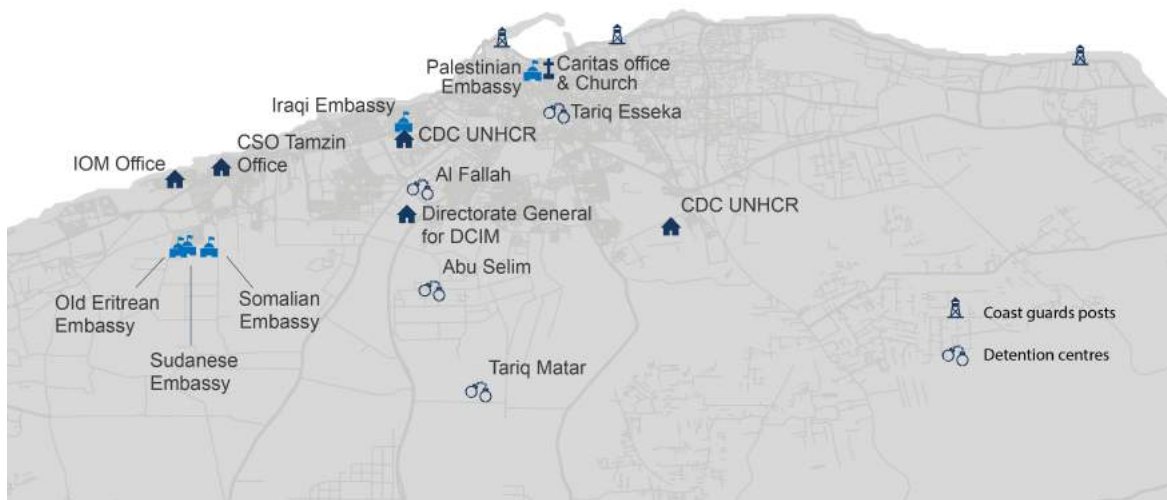


West and Central Africans on “step-by-step” journeys still see Tripoli as the best place to stay while they work to save money and plan their trip to Europe. They often stay in collective houses in the capital where they each contribute to paying rent. They may also have accommodation provided for them if they work as domestic staff such as cleaners or guards.

Refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa are usually gathered in large collective houses under the supervision of their intermediaries – often of the same origin as them – or smugglers that organise their stay in the city. Unlike people from West and Central Africa, they rarely seek jobs in the capital city, only waiting for the next departure to Europe. A few Ethiopians and Eritreans were reported as working in houses as cleaners to generate money, but the majority were not working.

Tripoli is also home to a few nationals from Arab countries escaping violence and insecurity in their country of origin. Perhaps, the largest Arab community in Tripoli is that of Syrian refugees who arrived between 2012 and 2014. They are scattered around the city, rent their own homes and work in restaurants or offices. According to respondents, they are better integrated in the local community and better regarded by Libyans than other communities. In addition to Syrians, there are longstanding communities from Iraq and Palestine. They are also well integrated as they share the same language, religion and many customs. They work as teachers in schools or universities or run shops. Most of them report having arrived in Libya over five years ago, usually in the 80s. Although scattered around the city, most Arab refugees and migrants are more likely than Sub-Saharan Africans to settle in locations where there is a strong network of other people from their own country. Most of them were found to be living in rented houses with access to water and electricity.

Figure 45: Relevant institutions and landmarks in Tripoli

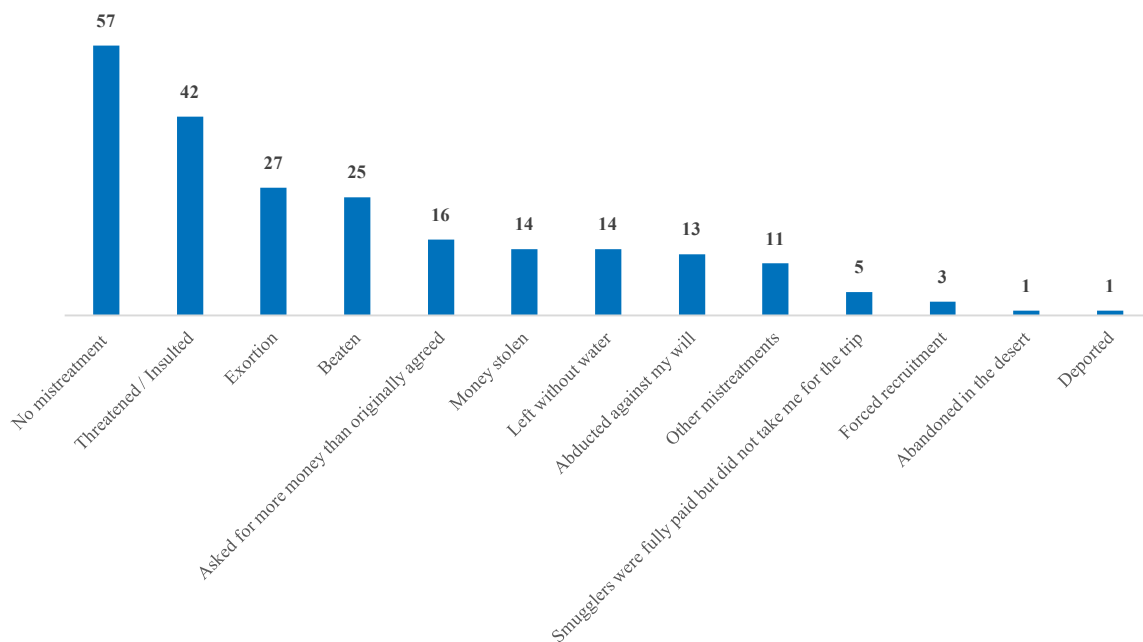


4.2. PROTECTION ISSUES AND VULNERABILITIES

4.2.1. RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE JOURNEY

Whether travelling along the western or eastern routes through Libya, refugees and migrants encounter many challenges. First, there are the geographic obstacles of crossing the desert and the sea, often using precarious means of transportation and in conditions that lead to dehydration, exhaustion, injury or worse. Second, they face extortion and mistreatment by the smugglers, drivers and authorities they meet on their way. There have been many accounts by refugees and migrants interviewed of being kidnapped for ransom, robbed, beaten and insulted along their journey.

Figure 46: Mistreatment faced along the route



Basic Needs

The journey to Libya involves travelling long distances through the Sahel and Sahara deserts. This can be very challenging for vulnerable individuals such as pregnant women or children. In addition to the nature of the environment, people are sometimes abandoned by smugglers and forced to walk long distances without guidance. Getting food and clean water is an additional challenge and many sleep under the open sky for much of their journey. A 22-year-old man from Senegal said: “[The driver] prevented us from drinking water for a long period of time.”

Issues Related to Health

Refugees and migrants face the same type of health complications that arise from prolonged exposure to the heat and sun, including dehydration, sunburns, sunstroke and fatigue. They also experience malnutrition and can incur injuries from beatings. Most cannot access health services in transit countries.

The most frequently reported health issues include:²⁰³

- Dehydration;
- Urinary infections due to dehydration;
- Diarrhoea, sometimes caused by parasites in contaminated water or food;
- Car accidents;
- Malaria;
- Respiratory infections;
- Access to antenatal, delivery and post-natal care;
- Child malnutrition.

Exploitation, Abuse and Ill-treatments

During their journey, refugees and migrants are at the mercy of their smugglers and drivers. They are considered as a commodity that smugglers exchange, sell and buy. A 22-year-old man from Nigeria explained: “We were sold to a smuggler, had to pay additional money, then were forcefully transported to Bani Walid.”

Reports of racism, insults and threats are very common, with some people even reporting being beaten and physically attacked. According to a 22-year-old man from Senegal: “*During the route, I was threatened to be beaten and abandoned.*”

“Modern slavery has become very present, migrants are considered as a commodity that smugglers sell and buy”

Key informant at the Somali Embassy, Tripoli

Extortion is also commonly practiced with victims being robbed, asked for more money than originally agreed on, forced to work without pay, particularly on southwestern farms, or abducted for ransoms of several thousands of dollars. Traffickers reportedly hold them captive in isolated locations until they pay the requested sum. Refugees and migrants are told to call relatives to ask them to transfer the money through *hawala* or smuggling intermediaries and they are often mistreated while on the phone. Those who cannot pay may be shot, sold or enslaved.

Findings from an IOM 2016 flow monitoring survey show that 73% of respondents have experienced some form of exploitation, with respondents answering yes to at least one of the trafficking and other

²⁰³ *Addressing Mixed Migration Flows in East Africa*, Altai Consulting for Expertise France, 2016.

exploitative indicators.²⁰⁴ West Africans were found to have higher rates of positive responses than those from the Horn of Africa. A total of 53% of refugees and migrants interviewed claimed they had been held against their will, 46% had worked without receiving payment and 45% were forced to work against their will. In addition, 4.4% of all respondents also reported hearing of instances where people on the journey were approached by someone offering cash in exchange for giving blood, organs or body parts. These cases were mostly registered in Libya and Egypt.

Criminal Groups

With the deterioration of the security situation in Libya and the presence of trafficking networks along the routes used by the smugglers, refugees and migrants are vulnerable to attacks from different armed groups. Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees and migrants interviewed in Sudan reported attacks at the Eritrean border where they were robbed or beaten if they refused to give their belongings. Similar cases of robbery and violence were documented in Libya with people being abducted.

A 32-year-old Palestinian woman said: *“My husband was kidnapped in Sebha. We did not know where or by whom he was kidnapped. He was beaten and abused. After he was released we transferred him to the hospital for treatment.”*

Victims of Trafficking and Gender-Based Violence

Refugees and migrants along both the eastern and the western route, women in particular, are vulnerable to different forms of exploitation and trafficking including sexual assault and forced prostitution:

- Some women and girls are victims of domestic servitude or sex trafficking in Sudan and Ethiopia, or some are sold to Gulf countries from Sudan;
- Kidnapping and sexual exploitation was also reported – although to a lesser extent – in Sudan and on the way to Libya;
- Children are sometimes forced to beg on the street and coerced to commit petty crimes, such as theft, to provide incomes for traffickers.

4.2.2. KEY PROTECTION CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES UPON ARRIVAL IN SOUTHERN LIBYA

This section looks at the main issues faced by refugees and migrants in Libya and their key vulnerabilities. In February 2017, a joint UNHCR-IOM statement confirmed: *“Given the current context, it is not appropriate to consider Libya a safe third country.”*²⁰⁵ Interviews conducted in Libya pointed to a wide array of issues and urgent needs in the south of the country, presented in Figure 47 and Figure 48.

²⁰⁴ Aggregated results from Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) conducted from June to November 2016 in Sicily, Apulia and Calabria, with refugees and migrants who had arrived by the CMR. See *Flow Monitoring Survey Analysis – Italy*, IOM, November 2016, available at this [link](#).

²⁰⁵ Joint UNHCR and IOM statement on addressing migration and refugee movement along the Central Mediterranean Route, 2 February 2017, available online at this [link](#).

Figure 47: Problems faced by refugees and migrants in the south of Libya

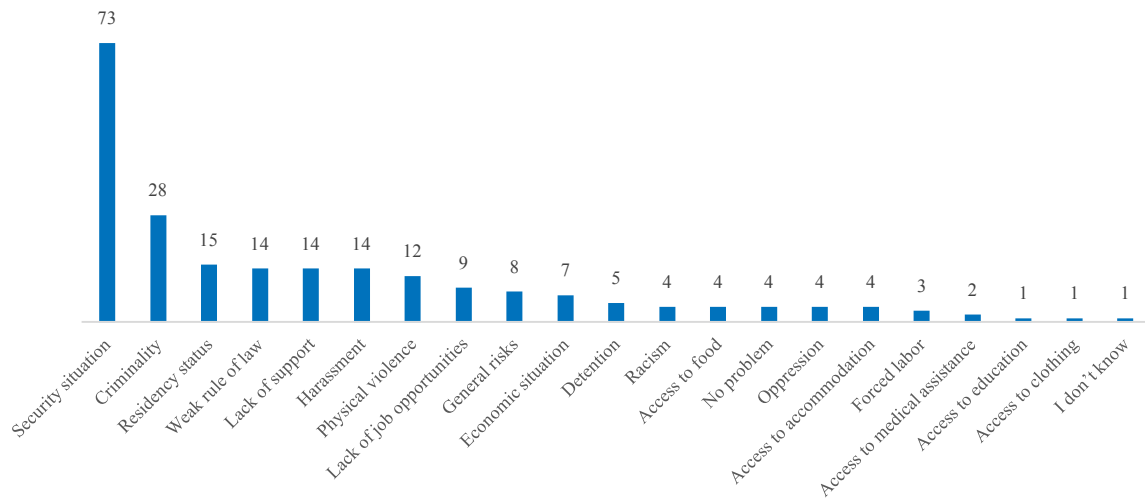
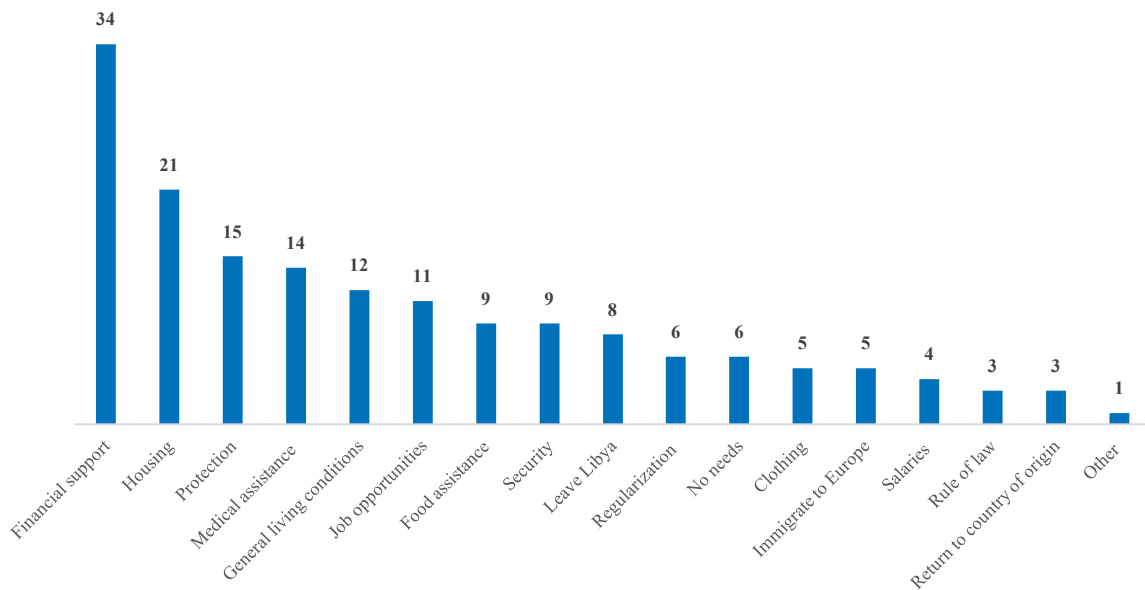


Figure 48: Most urgent needs of refugees and migrants in the south of Libya



Employment and Accommodation

Few of the refugees and migrants settled in Libya have a regular or skilled occupation, relying mainly on daily and occasional labour which sometimes exposes them to abuses. Except for some nationals from Arab countries, such as Palestine or Iraq, who are generally more qualified and work mostly in the education sector, most people are employed in construction, agriculture or in the service sector. A number of refugees and migrants have difficulties finding work, as illustrated by the need for urgent financial support reported by approximately 20% of respondents (34 out of 140). The lack of a livelihood source also impacts on the capacity of refugees and migrants to find decent accommodation. The few

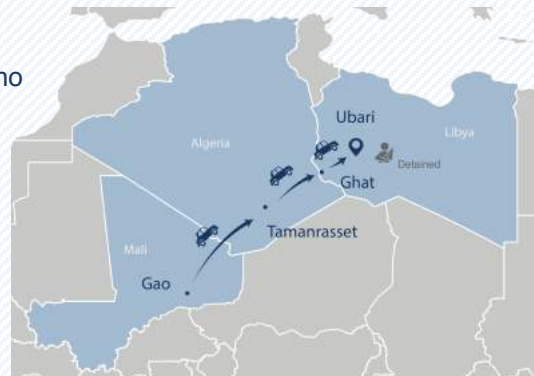
who have a stable job sleep where they work, for example on a farm, in a restaurant or a guard post for a watchman. Many rely on sharing overcrowded rooms with other members of their community. Some live in the places provided by their smuggler, while others in abandoned houses or in the streets.

Health and Education

With the breakdown in public services and the lack of funds, Libya's health care system has deteriorated to the point of collapse, with over 60% of hospitals inaccessible or closed in conflict areas.²⁰⁶ The World Health Organisation particularly deplores the neglect of healthcare provision in southern parts of Libya (Kufra, Sebha, Ghat and Ubari).²⁰⁷ While several refugees and migrants reported sustaining injuries while they were travelling, or contracted diseases while in detention, very few had access to medical services or could afford to pay for medicine. Similarly, very few could access Libyan schools, as the education system has also greatly suffered from the breakdown in public services.

Boubakar – Malian in Ubari

Boubakar is a 25-year-old man from Mali who arrived in Libya in 2014. He was kidnapped and detained by a Libyan armed group who forced him to work in a military base. His detention lasted for a week, during which time he was beaten and threatened, and endured extremely poor living conditions. He has not been able to receive treatment for the injuries sustained during his detention.



Boubakar explained that lack of access to health services is one of the many issues that refugees and migrants face in Libya. He himself suffers from asthma and cannot afford medication.

Boubakar says he has received help from community members in the form of money, food and psychological support. He works intermittently and lives on a farm in near Ubari with four other Malians. He plans to remain in Libya for a while before going back to his country, which he left because of conflict and poverty.

Lack of Protection

Refugees in a regular situation in Libya are in a very different situation to those intending to quickly transit through on their way to Europe. They face specific issues including: renewing official documents, for example for residency, getting recognition for their legal status, waiting for resettlement without knowing the exact length of the process, being paid for work they had conducted and other issues similar to those of Libyans, for example kidnapping for ransom and the deterioration of the health system.

However, some refugees said they were not treated the same as Libyans by the authorities. A 44-year-old Palestinian man said, *“The main problems we face in Libya is not being considered by the*

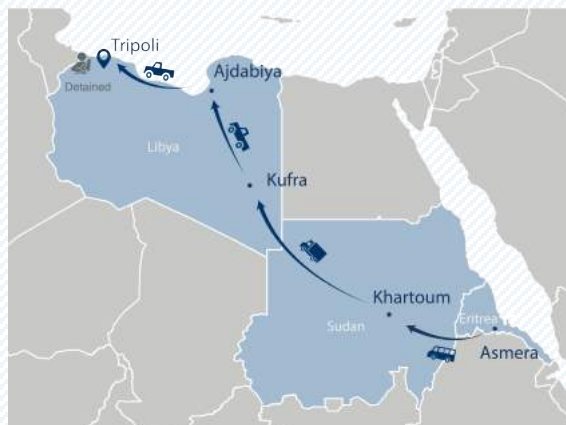
²⁰⁶ *Humanitarian Health Action, Libya Humanitarian Response Plan*, World Health Organisation, 2016. Available at this [link](#).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

government. There are rules issued by the previous government that remain unimplemented. Specifically, a law that indicates Palestinians and Libyans are equal in front of the law. The Transitional Council issued similar rules but they are still not implemented in Libya.”

Awet – Eritrean in Zawiyah

Awet arrived in Libya in 2009 and has seen first-hand the dramatic change in the situation for refugees and migrants since the 2011 revolution. He declares that they have become very vulnerable due to the deterioration of the security situation in the country. He says: *“Since 2011 the situation has become critical. We have been very affected by the security problems and we risk our lives in the streets we have a bad life here.”*



Awet had a residency card until 2011, but since then has not been able to renew it. He was arrested in Tajoura and detained for two weeks with 200 other refugees and migrants in an old military barracks. He said he was mistreated, beaten, threatened and poorly fed. He was also not told why he was being kept in detention. After such a traumatic experience, he says he locked himself in his house for months for fear of being arrested again.

Awet left Eritrea fearing for his life as he was not willing to enlist for the country’s mandatory military service. He used to sell fruit in the market and his four brothers and two sisters were also all working but it was still not enough for the family to sustain itself.

Awet’s brother, who went to Switzerland in 2013, covered the cost of his journey to Libya and encouraged him to go despite the risks. Awet took a bus from Asmara to Khartoum, then used a smuggler to reach Kufra town by truck before travelling on to Ajdabiya and Zawiyah using a pick-up truck.

Seven months before the interview, he found out about the existence of a UNHCR office in Libya. Although he was grateful for the support provided in the UNHCR’s Community Development Centres, he claims it is not sufficient. He has registered himself as an asylum seeker and is waiting to obtain his asylum card in the expectation that, he can be resettled in a European country.

Article 6 of Law No 19 of 2010 on Combating Irregular Migration, provides that illegal migrants will be put in jail and condemned to forced labour in jail or a fine of 1,000 Libyan dinars and expelled from the Libyan territory after serving their sentence.²⁰⁸ The regulatory framework on migration in Libya still does not clearly distinguish between irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. All foreigners who are arrested for lack of lawful immigration status are at risk of being detained.

As they are considered to be in an irregular situation, refugees cannot resort to the Libyan legal institutions to uphold their rights. Likewise, very few local and international organisations can offer them

²⁰⁸ *Secondary Data Review: Libya*, ACAPS, 2015, available at this [link](#).

support. Many foreign nationals deplored the absence of a diplomatic representative from their country of origin in Libya. A 32-year-old woman from Palestine told the research team: *“I need a law that assists people like me and protects their rights. I think such a law does exist, but it needs to be enforced in Libya.”*

Mihigo – Rwandan in Tripoli

Mihigo, from Rwanda, is 54 years-old. He arrived in Libya in 2013 after travelling from Rwanda to Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Morocco and Niger. Mihigo ran away from Rwanda because he received death threats and faced persecution. He and his family have been registered with the UNHCR since 2014 and are waiting to be resettled in another country, which they are hoping will be France.



He recounts very difficult living conditions in Libya. Although he works from time to time in construction, Mihigo is struggling to find regular employment. Furthermore, since moving to Libya he has been robbed, assaulted and experienced racism. *“I have faced all the problems: theft, bad treatment, discrimination, exploitation, rape attempt of my wife and my daughters.”*

Mihigo was also arrested by the coastguard with his wife and three children while attempting to cross to Europe via Sabratha a few years ago. He was then detained for two months until he was able to pay LYD 5,000 (USD 3,571) to be released. He describes terrible conditions in detention with not enough food or water, and beatings.

Security Situation

Since 2014, the lack of a rule of law and the proliferation of weapons has resulted in a spiralling of armed conflicts and violence in the country. This has disrupted both the lives of Libyan citizens as well as those of refugees and migrants. According to a 55-year-old Syrian man: *“Libya has drastically changed and security problems and kidnappings have increased.”*

Many respondents were kidnapped by armed groups in the south of Libya and forced to work or pay for their release.²⁰⁹ Out of 37 who were detained in Libya, 32 declared having been held by armed groups, smugglers or unknown individuals (as opposed to the DCIM). Grave abuses were also reported with refugees and migrants being held in overcrowded warehouses and subjected to beatings and insults. Female refugees and migrants are also often the victims of various types of sexual abuse. A number of women have told how they became pregnant through rape while in detention or forced prostitution.

²⁰⁹ Kidnappings were reportedly particularly frequent in the suburbs of Tripoli and the region directly south of the capital, in Sebha and in Bani Walid.

Economic Situation

The deterioration of the economic situation in Libya has negatively impacted the condition of refugees and migrants in the country. Many migrants came to Libya to search for job opportunities but only very few have been able to find a regular source of income. Furthermore, the lack of liquidity has restricted the capacity of many employers to pay the salaries of their workers. This is also the case for refugees and migrants who are employed by the state such as teachers, who have also not been receiving their salaries.

“I have not been paid for a year and a half and I find it difficult to cover basic needs”

Male, 40 years old, from Sudan

A 39-year-old Palestinian woman reported: *“We need salaries because they have been suspended since April 2016.”* Another woman, 20 years old from Nigeria, agreed: *“We are not receiving our money from some Libyans who we worked for.”* The depreciation of the Libyan dinar, whose value has decreased fivefold since 2013, is an additional difficulty.²¹⁰ Many foreign nationals have families that depend on the remittances they send back for their survival. A 28-year-old man from Senegal stated: *“We work but there is no use in working when we transfer our money to CFA.”*

Racism and Discrimination

Fuelled by widespread rumours of the use of foreign mercenaries from Africa in the Gaddafi era, racism and discrimination based on colour is very common and was frequently reported by respondents.²¹¹ In fact, many said they avoided disclosing their faith for fear of discrimination.

“My Christian colleagues are afraid of their religion being known”

Male, 25 years old, from Nigeria

4.2.3. DETENTION CENTRES

Detention Centres in Libya

Official detention centres in Libya are run by the Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM). At the time of the research however, the DCIM had less and less control over functioning detention centres. Most were funded by the DCIM but run by armed groups, with each belonging to a different group. According to the report, the DCIM maintains 17 centres in Libya, most of them around the capital, holding 7,000 detainees.²¹² However, the situation is constantly evolving, as new centres are being opened²¹³ and closed all the time.²¹⁴

At the time of the research there were no functioning detention centres in the south of Libya. All the DCIM-managed centres in the South, in Sebha, Ghatrun, Ubari, Ghat and Kufra, were closed. Armed groups in the South do not maintain detention centres for refugees and migrants either.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ In 2013, USD 1 was equivalent to LYD 1.25 while today USD 1 corresponds to LYD 6.3. See: <http://libyanbusiness.tv/table-currency/> and <http://www.xe.com/currencytables/?from=LYD&date=2013-01-10>

²¹¹ *Militias threaten hopes for new Libya*. Amnesty International, 2012. Available at this [link](#).

²¹² Point mentioned during a Key Informant Interview with IOM Operations Officer. According to UNSMIL, there are an estimated 3,000 to 6,000 migrants at detention centres in Libya.

²¹³ Al Hembra in the outskirts of Gharyan for instance.

²¹⁴ Gwaia detention centre, in Tripoli, for instance, was burnt down by a rival armed group a few months ago.

²¹⁵ However, there are gathering locations for migration managed by smugglers where migrants' freedom of movement is limited or inexistent.

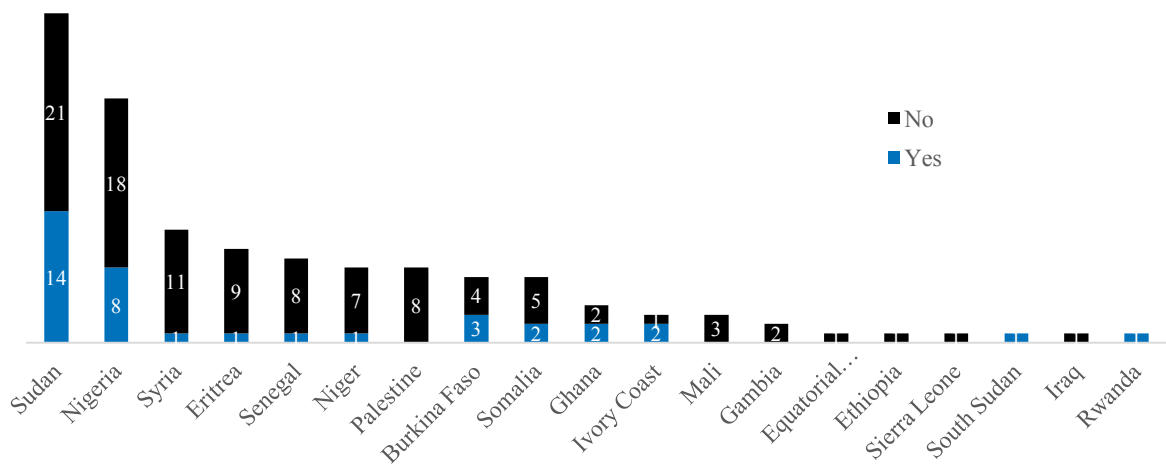
The capacity of DCIM has been heavily affected by the political turmoil and the instability in Libya and the department is facing both structural and budgetary issues. Various stakeholders are competing for control of existing detention centres. Interviewees reported that the DCIM has not received any Ministry of Interior funding since May 2015, meaning centres are often not in a position to meet even the most basic standard, such as food or acceptable sanitary conditions for detainees.

“We have great difficulty in continuing to manage this centre. We receive no support even from our central direction. Currently detainees suffer because there is a lack of food, they have only one meal per day”

Manager of the Al Fallah Detention Centre

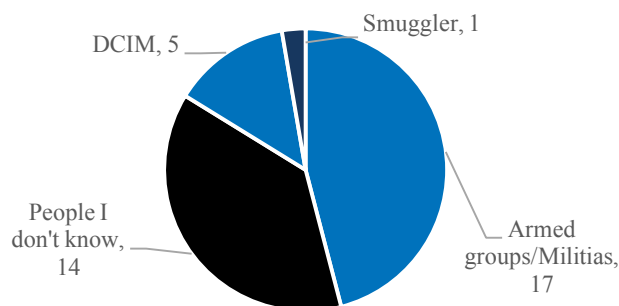
The large majority of refugees and migrants interviewed for this study were not detained (74%, representing 103 out of 140 respondents). However, the representativeness of our sample in this instance is limited, as most interviews were conducted in the South before refugees and migrants moved north where all the functioning detention centres are located. Among the 37 people who said they were detained, some were arrested upon their arrival in Libya either at the border, at the airport or at a roadside checkpoint. Others were detained in cities while going about their day-to-day activities either in their homes or on their way to work.

Figure 49: Refugees and migrants interviewed detained per nationality



Among the respondents who had been detained, the vast majority did not know exactly who was responsible. Seventeen respondents answered “armed groups” or “militias” but could not specify which, while another 14 answered “people I don’t know”.

Figure 50: Who detained you?

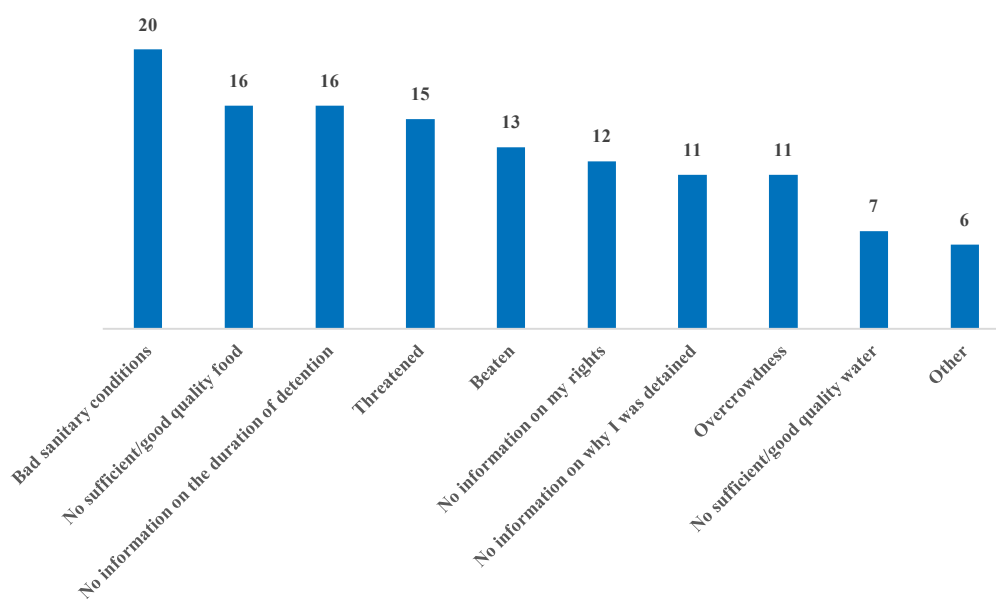


Conditions in the Detention Centres

Although their exact denomination in Arabic (مراكز إيواء الهجرة غير الشرعية) can be translated to “Hosting centres for illegal migrants”, the reality in the detention centres is different, with people held captive for a period of between one week to 12 months.²¹⁶ The UNSMIL reported that after visiting 11 detention centres for refugees and migrants, they found “*Conditions of grave concern, including chronic overcrowding, poor sanitation and health care, and insufficient food. There were also consistent reports of physical or verbal mistreatment, labour exploitation, sexual abuse.*”²¹⁷

Many respondents referred to overcrowding, with over 30% of those who had been detained reporting that they were held in the same room as between 20 to 200 other people. In addition, almost half of those detained (16 out of 37) said they did not receive regular meals and that the food they did receive was insufficient. Almost 20% (7 out of 37) said they were denied access to water for drinking or cleaning. Members of the team managing the detention centre in Abu Slim revealed that the contract of a company that provided food for the detainees had expired nine months prior to our visit and the centre has since relied on private donations as well as increasingly rare interventions by NGOs and IOs.

Figure 51: Main issues reportedly faced during detention



Detainees also shared experiences of violence, torture and sexual abuse. They reported cases of theft of their belonging by the guards, extortion and racketeering. Interviews also exposed hygiene conditions encouraging the spread of contagious diseases, especially skin, respiratory and vector-borne diseases. Detainees said the poor conditions added to their distress of not knowing why they were arrested and when they would be released.

²¹⁶ “UNHCR works to ease dire conditions in Libya’s immigration detention centres”, UNHCR Briefing Note, April 2015. Available at this [link](#).

²¹⁷ “Libya: UN condemns ‘horrific’ weeks of human rights violations amid county’s rising violence”, UN News Centre, 2015, available at this [link](#).

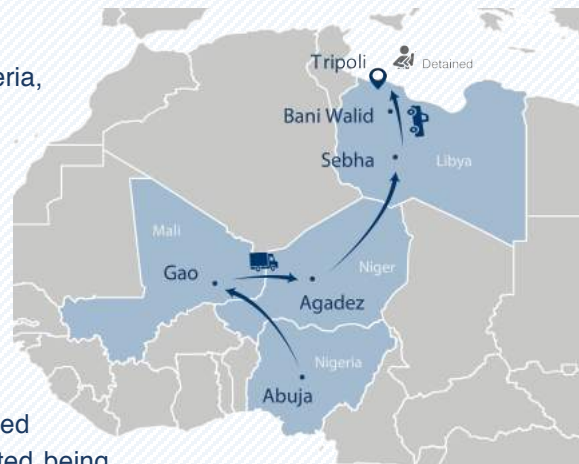
Jessica – Nigerian in Tripoli

Jessica, a 29-year-old woman from Nigeria, arrived in Libya in 2016. At the time of assessment, she was detained for three months with 54 other women in a centre in Ghot Al Shahal neighbourhood in Tripoli.

Jessica described the dire conditions in the centre including poor sanitation and a lack of sufficient food and water. She says she did not receive any information about her rights, the reason for her arrest, nor the expected duration of her detention. Jessica also reported being threatened, abused and sexually exploited at the centre, saying she was raped and asked to become a prostitute.

Jessica initially aimed to migrate to Europe to escape poverty but now, she is willing to go back home to live with her mother, five brothers and three sisters, despite their impoverished conditions. She has changed her mind following her experiences in Libya and is eager to return to Nigeria as soon as she is released from the detention centre. Being unable to cover the cost of the flight, she has already started looking to register for a return program to support her return.

She is aware of initiatives supporting the refugees and migrants but expresses her frustration and disenchantment with such organisations. *“I suffered a lot during this trip [...] despite the fact that my family's situation is very bad [...] I only want to go back to my country.”*



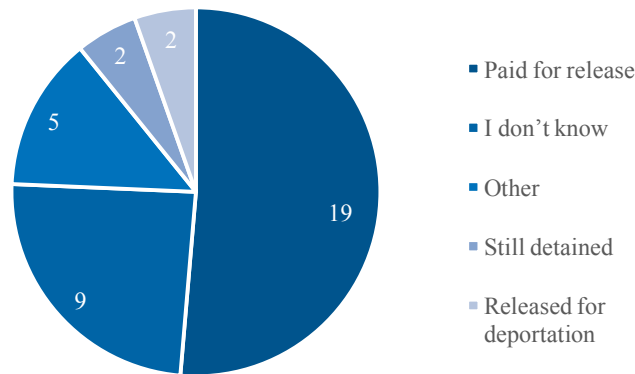
Release from Detention

Some half of respondents (19 out of 37) were released after paying the authority in charge of their detention. Some were released for deportation but ran away during the process, or returned to Libya later. Others (nine out of 37) were released without being given any reasons.

Interviews with detention centre employees reveal that there were sometimes agreements made between guards and smugglers to exchange detained refugees and migrants for money. A 54-year-old man from Rwanda reported that he was arrested by the coastguard and sold to smugglers. According to key informants, at some detention centers refugees and migrants could also be released if a Libyan national, generally an employer, would vouch for the individual.

According to the manager of a detention centre: *“Unfortunately, in some centres we know that guards are bribed by smugglers (LYD 1,000 per person) to release large numbers of people of specific nationalities (mainly Eritreans).”* Another manager of a DCIM detention centre reported: *“There are several detention centres managed by militias who make money by arresting people in the streets and demanding LYD 1,000 per person for their release. Unfortunately, these militias often pretend to depend on the DCIM.”*

Figure 52: Why were you released?

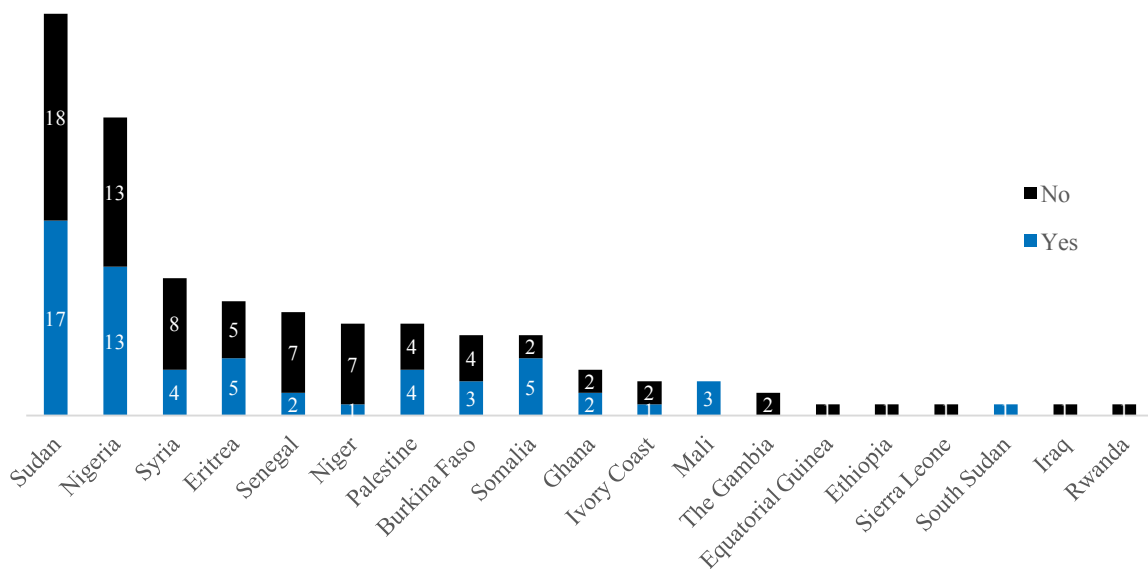


4.3. SUPPORTING REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

4.3.1. SUPPORT RECEIVED AND COPING MECHANISMS

Who Helped Refugees and Migrants?

Figure 53: Have you received support from other migrants?

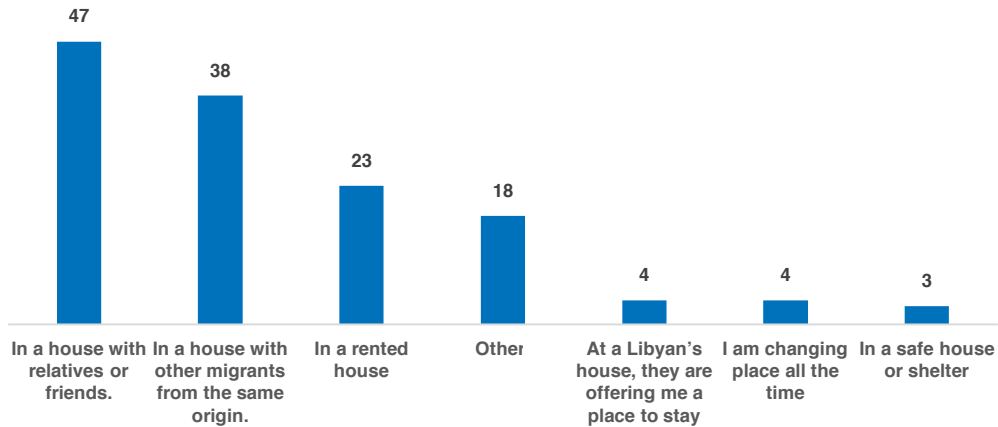


A majority of respondents interviewed for this research (84 of 140) travelled with others in a similar situation. Among them, 52% came to Libya with other community members, 35% with family members and 14% with friends. Unsurprisingly, nearly half of respondents (61 out of 140) declared having benefited from the support of others like them in Libya. Nationals from Somalia, Eritrea, Palestine, Nigeria, South Sudan and Ghana all appear to have well-organised solidarity networks in Libya. All or a significant majority of members of these communities received support from others in their position.

Community members and other refugees and migrants also play an important role in providing accommodation for those of their own nationality in Libya. The majority of the respondents live with

family members, friends or others from their home country. A small (6 out of 140) also manage their finances jointly with other community or family members.

Figure 54: How do you accommodate yourself?



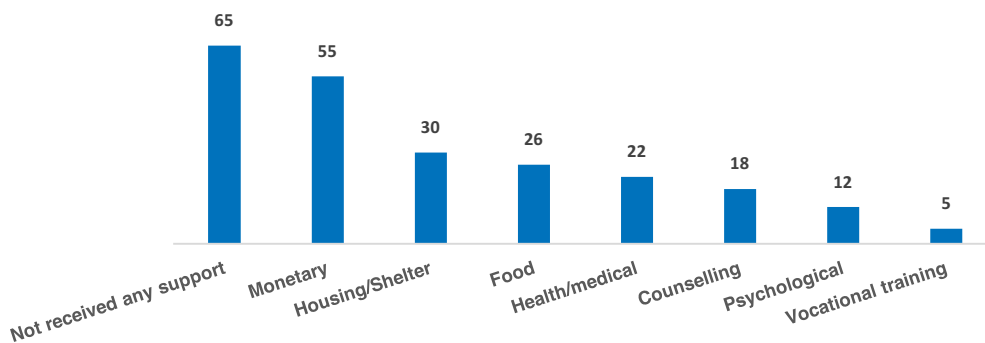
What Kind of Support Did Refugees and Migrants Receive?

Despite the hardship of the journey, approximately half of interviewees did not benefit from any state or international support since arriving to Libya. Indeed, 65 in 140 declared not having received any assistance from anyone since they had arrived.

A large majority of interviewees (87%, 122 out of 140) were not aware of any support mechanism available where they were. Only a few (18 out of 140) could name support initiatives either in the local community, from local and international organisations or the embassies of their home countries. Similarly, a large majority of refugees and migrants (115 out of 140 respondents) said they were unaware of the availability of support mechanisms elsewhere in Libya, with just a limited number able to identify organisations in the capital or in bigger cities.

Respondents also rarely relied on the municipal council or the local government for support, with only one reporting having received assistance from these actors. Likewise, Libyan and international organisations have provided limited support to refugees and migrants, with less than ten respondents out of 140 having benefited. In fact, local communities seem to be more active in providing assistance, with 20 out of 140 respondents saying they received help this way.

Figure 55: Type of support received



The most common type of support received was financial, something reported by 39% of interviewees. On several occasions, respondents said that other family members or friends sent them money to finance parts of their journey. Some also mentioned having received financial support for paying the ransom for their release.

Zahid – Sudanese in Tripoli

Zahid is a 44-year-old man from Sudan who arrived in Libya by plane in 2016. For more than a month, he has been detained in Abu Slim where he was interviewed. Despite not having a visa, Zahid had hoped to be granted permission to enter Libya, where his friends would welcome him and provide accommodation and work as promised. Instead, immigration officers sent Zahid directly to a detention centre managed by the DCIM.



Zahid is aware of organisations supporting refugees and migrants and has indeed benefitted from them. He is HIV positive and has received visits from IMC who have given him medical assistance and provided him with medication. However, he fears that he will be unable to get more medication in the future if he is released from the detention centre.

Zahid is also aware of IOM’s assistance to refugees and migrants who are willing to return to their home country. He plans to do this. “I am too old to be in prison [...] when they will let me go I will go back immediately to Sudan.”

Some interviewees (21%) received help finding housing or shelters. Indeed, as mentioned above, most refugees and migrants live with others in the same position. In some instances, Libyans also offered people refuge.

About 19% of respondents reported receiving food. One of them mentioned for example the initiatives organised by the local community during Ramadan to feed refugees and migrants. Sixteen percent of those interviewed reported receiving medical assistance. A respondent who tested positive for HIV received medical visits as well as medication while in detention in Libya. However, despite the high number of refugees and migrants who reported being insulted and having suffered from various types of physical violence, only a few (9%) said they received psychological support. Lastly, five respondents (4%) received vocational training in blacksmithing, painting and mechanics.

4.3.2. NETWORKS AND FOCAL POINTS

Networks and contacts are key elements in the migration/displacement process. Refugees and migrants are in frequent contact with relatives, friends, or other community members in the transit and destination countries in order to facilitate their journey and find support mechanisms in the different locations. Contacts are mainly established by phone and occasionally, social media or internet-based chat forums.

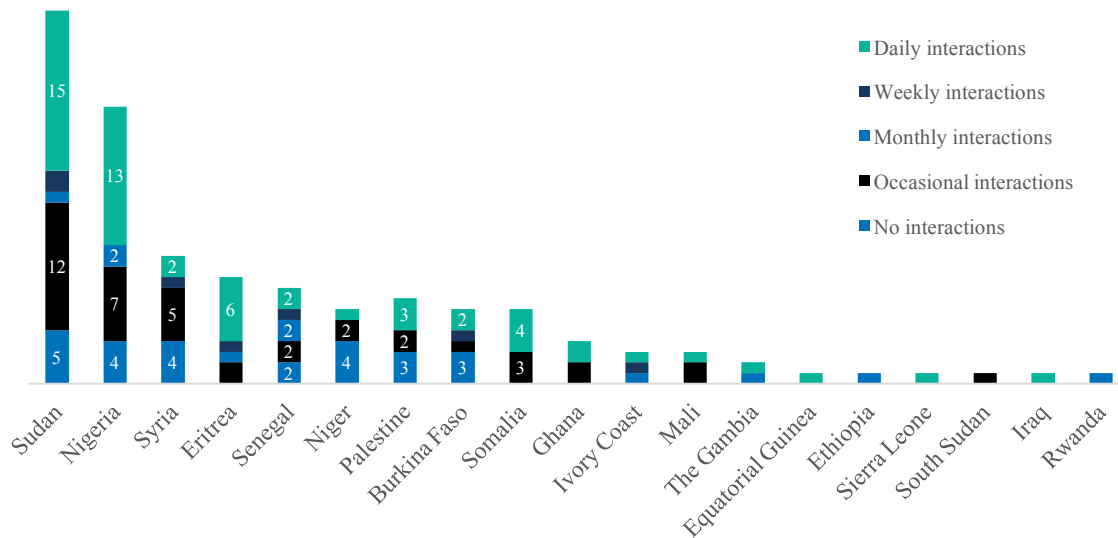
This communication is multifaceted and multipurpose. People communicate with relatives in their country of origin before departure, with co-travellers during their trip, with connections in their countries

of transit – including smugglers and intermediaries – and eventually with diaspora members including relatives, friends and contacts in their destination. Ties between members of the same community are very strong and the level of trust between them is high.

An Eritrean informant interviewed in Khartoum said diaspora members in Europe are the main catalyst for movement, encouraging others to follow their path and purposefully omitting to reveal the difficulties and risks faced on the journey²¹⁸ The Diasporas’ influence is also an important determinant of the routes refugees and migrants choose, the smuggling networks they use, the countries they aim for, the amount of money they pay and the way they find jobs at different stages along their journey.

Approximately half of respondents had daily interactions with other refugees and migrants. This was especially the case for Somalis (seven out of seven), Sudanese (20 out of 35), Nigerians (14 out of 26) and Eritreans (eight out of 10). One quarter of the sample (35 out of 140) said they had no interactions at all with other refugees and migrants in Libya, suggesting that they pursued their journey alone or in small groups depending on smugglers and/or members of their diaspora outside of Libya. This was particularly true for West Africans. More than a third of people (53 out of 140) reported having very few or no interactions at all with other refugees and migrants.

Figure 56: How often do you interact with other refugees and migrants?²¹⁹



Communication within diaspora communities is continuous and mostly oral.

Larger groups of refugees and migrants from a particular community tend to have access to more organised focal points and structures set up to help support their community. These networks are well-developed in East Africa around embassies and religious organisations. In Khartoum for instance, there is an Ethiopian Association linked to the Ethiopian embassy, and Ethiopian and Eritrean Churches which support their nationals, as well as an Eritrean safe house for women who are victims of trafficking. These organisations are critical in rendering support to those in need, providing accommodation, work, and even financial support where necessary.

²¹⁸ Interviewed by Altai Consulting in Sudan in April 2016.

²¹⁹ Note that this figure includes answers from migrants interviewed in Italy.

In Libya, such focal points and community hubs are less common and less structured. Nigeriens have access to consular services in the South but there is limited support when it comes to the priority needs: employment, accommodation or support service. The Nigerien consulate in Sebha limits its activity to providing travel documents to migrants who are engaged in regular migration and helping people in detention – when the detention centre was operational – or facilitating their return to Niger in coordination with IOM and the DCIM. Most Nigeriens do not connect with their consulate as most entered Libya without proper documentation and they have little need for such assistance. In reality, intermediaries and brokers inside collective houses or working with smugglers are deemed more useful: they are able to put them in touch with employers, find them accommodation and organise transportation to other locations.

Some migrants more settled in Libya attempt to provide an informal focal point for their communities, with varying levels of structure. One example in the South is the network “Maliens Gathering in the South”, which supports members of the community in and around Sebha. They link Malians willing to return home with the IOM and support vulnerable people in hospitals in coordination with the LRC. They are also in close contact with the Nigerien Consulate which coordinates returns of Malians through Niger. Generally, they act as an intermediary between the Malian community and different support organisations. *“We do our best to help the injured or sick people access to hospitals. We also support the medical cases if they want to return to their countries of origin,”* said a representative of the organisation.

The research team identified other similar organisations in Sebha, such as the “Union of the African Communities in the South” and the “Organisation of the Sudanese in the South.” The latter being linked to the Sudanese government, it does not directly support refugees from Darfur. Darfuris have an informal focal point representing them in Sebha.

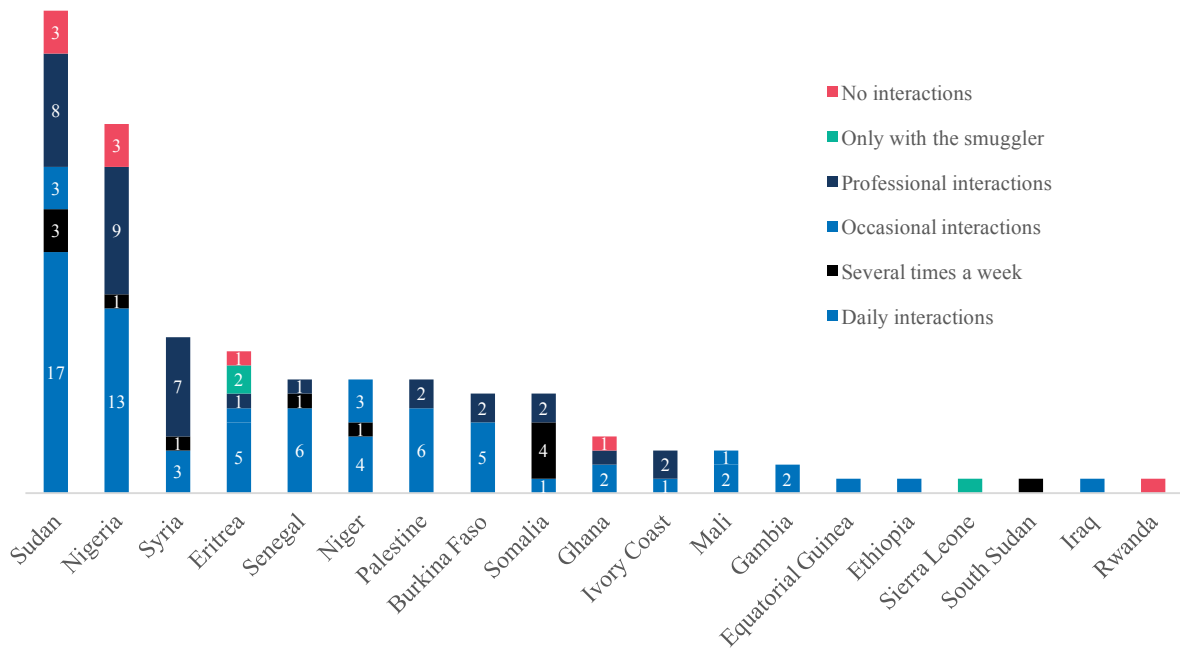
However, some communities have no community support systems. Field research in the South revealed that there are no representatives for Somalis, Ethiopians, Eritreans or Nigerians. Until recently, a Somali doctor established in Libya used to informally represent refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa in Sebha, but he has left and no one has replaced him to date.

Not all communities are organized. Syrians, Palestinians and Iraqis in particular are better integrated into the local community and have little need for more community support. That being said, there is a Facebook group named “Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Libya” with over 3,000 members, who regularly share information on boat departures for Europe and press articles on the situation in Libya. At the time of writing, its last post was about the Italian coastguard in the Mediterranean.

In Tripoli, Eritreans also have some focal points or community leaders that can speak for the community, but in a very informal way. The Eritrean community leader told our researchers that he had been in Libya for seven years and liaised with about 20 families to help them and the wider Eritrean community by linking them with support organisations. These types of focal points do not however have the capacity to provide direct assistance.

Other than the members of their community, refugees and migrants are also in contact with Libyans. Half of the respondents have daily contact with Libyan nationals; in addition, some 20% of respondents (35 out of 140) declared maintaining daily contact with Libyans for the purposes of their job. This was especially true for Sudanese (25 out of 35) Nigerians (22 out of 26) Syrians (10 out of 12) Eritreans (six out of 10) Senegalese (seven out of nine) Burkinabe (seven out of seven) and Ivoirians (all three respondents).

Figure 57: How often do you interact with Libyans?



Occasionally, some focal points reportedly make use of their position of influence in a city to take advantage of refugees and migrants, including from their own community. This is the case of many intermediaries and brokers that trade community members with smugglers. As an example, a so-called representative of the “African community” in Sebha was reported to be involved in the smuggling industry and acting as a facilitator for smugglers locally.

4.3.3. ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN THE SOUTH

Support available to refugees and migrants in the South is very limited. Local CSOs face difficulties such as funding cuts and insecurity to remain active, and most INGOs have left the region for the same reasons. As one respondent said: “International NGOs left the South two years ago, although they sometimes carry out sporadic assistance activities. Most local CSOs are disorganised and lack experience.”

Only three official diplomatic missions seemed to be open in the South at the time of research. As for Libyan authorities and public sector organisations, they offer very little in the way of direct support. “The situation of migrants in Libya clearly worsened over the past few years because of the absence of organisations and institutions helping them,” reported one public authority in Sebha.

Mapping of CSOs Currently Supporting Refugees and Migrants in the South

Only a small number of CSOs are currently active in supporting refugees and migrants in the South of Libya – approximately 30 across the region according to our estimates, of whom 20 were interviewed for this report.²²⁰ These organisations and their activities are detailed below.

While other organisations working in this area in the region were mentioned to the research team during interviews, a number of these CSOs were no longer actively supporting refugees and migrants at the time of writing due to the lack of funding or the challenging operational context. It also became clear that some CSOs who presented themselves as “working on migration” actually worked only with IDPs.

Civil society in Libya is particularly fragile and fluid: organisations often appear and disappear quite quickly and shift their thematic areas of focus to align with donor priorities and available external funding.²²¹ The lists of CSOs presented in this report are not exhaustive as there could be others beyond the researchers’ knowledge.²²² Similarly, these lists are only snapshots in time of the CSOs in Libya: they would need to be updated regularly to reflect the constant evolution of the sector.

CSOs supporting refugees and migrants in Sebha:

- Taher Elzawi (طاهر الزاوي) distribute NFIs and hygiene kits in collaboration with international organisations;
- Red Crescent (الهلال الاحمر) provide medical assistance to refugees and migrants including doctor visits in detention centres. It collaborates with the IOM for the distribution of hygiene kits, and identifies and manages dead bodies;
- Sanadohom (سندهم) provides medical assistance to refugees and migrants including doctor visits and medical testing and analysis, as well as distributing clothes;
- Libya Health – Al Ahrar Libya (ليبيا الاحرار للصحة) provides medical assistance to refugees and migrants including doctor visits and treatment of epidemics in smuggler-managed detention centres in Sebha, and collaborates with international organisations and diplomatic missions on humanitarian return and repatriation;
- Ana Muhajer (انا مهاجر) was not actively supporting refugees and migrants at the time of the research due to difficulties accessing those detained by smugglers in the South;
- Fezzan (فزان) used to provide first aid humanitarian assistance in detention centres but ceased operations in 2015 due to security issues and a lack of funding;
- Friends of Refugees (أصدقاء اللاجئين) conducts awareness-building workshops targeting representatives of the Libyan media about mixed migration and the difference between refugees, migrants and IDPs. It also distributes NFIs for both refugees and migrants and IDPs in collaboration with the Women Union (الاتحاد النسائي), and collaborates with IOM in Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR).

²²⁰ Some of these were local branches of the same organisation. For instance, local branches of the Red Crescent in Ghat, Sebha and Rebyana were interviewed.

²²¹ See *Libya Civil Society Mapping*, Altai Consulting, December 2015.

²²² Further research would be necessary to compile an exhaustive repertoire of local CSOs in the south and thoroughly verify their activities.

CSOs supporting refugees and migrants in Kufra:

- Decision makers and Development (صناع القرار) conducted relief distribution but no other activities at the time of research due to a lack of funds and difficulty accessing refugees and migrants detained by smugglers;
- Zaituna (زيتونة) provides support to refugees and migrants on a case-by-case basis;
- Hand in Hand (يد بيد) distributes food and NFIs and collects information on refugees and migrants in the South and the challenges they face but its activities are limited due to lack of funds and security issues;
- Youth and Donation (الشباب والتبرع) maintains an office where refugees and migrants can come but has not implemented activities supporting refugees and migrants in 2017 yet. They previously organised workshops for refugees and migrants to inform them about their rights, collaborated with IOM on humanitarian return and repatriation and distributed food and first aid;
- Irregular migration and refugee affairs (الهجرة الغير شرعية وشؤون اللاجئين) have not been active since the end of 2016. In the past, the organisation visited detention centres to distribute food and hygiene kits, collaborated with IOM on voluntary returns and organised surveys in detention centres to better understand the situations of refugees and migrants in the South.

CSOs supporting refugees and migrants in Gatrun:

- Al Janoub (الجنوب) conducts food distribution but its activities are limited at present due to lack of funds;
- Sada Al Hak (صدى الحق) maps migrant and refugee communities in Gatrun and collaborates with international organisations on relief distribution operations;
- Widad for Women and Children's rights (جمعية الوداد لحقوق المرأة والطفل) distributes food, hygiene kits and donations from IOM.

CSOs supporting refugees and migrants in Ubari:

- Tournass (توماس) provides psychological support and conducts awareness building activities;
- Enmedhal (النضال) was not active at the time of research due to lack of funds.

CSOs supporting refugees and migrants in Ghat:

- Taher Elzawi (طاهر الزاوي) distributes NFIs and hygiene kits in collaboration with international organisations and worked on a mapping of refugees and migrant communities with IOM Libya;
- Red Crescent (الهلال الاحمر) maps communities and arranges identification and management of dead bodies;
- Libya's Loyal Sons Organisation (أبناء منظمة ليبيا المخلصون) works in partnership with Save the Children to manage a community centre that provides basic health care services and conducts surveys on child protection, education and health situation of migrants, refugees and IDPs in Ghat.

CSOs supporting refugees and migrants in Rebyana:

- Red Crescent (الهلال الاحمر) conducts awareness building activities teaching young people about the dangers of trafficking, maps communities and arranges identification and management of dead bodies.

Interviews conducted in Rebyana indicate that there are no other active local organisations in the city. According to a key informant, “*There are no CSOs or NGOs supporting migrants here.*”

Other CSOs potentially supporting refugees and migrants in unconfirmed locations of the South:

Respondents mentioned the following local CSOs, however we could not conduct interviews with them to confirm their activities.

- Giving Without Borders (العطاء بلا حدود);
- Yad Bi Yad (أبناء الصحراء);
- Abnaa Al Sahara (أبناء الصحراء);
- LIBO (ليبو);

Existing CSOs face many program implementation challenges ranging from a lack of funds and expertise to the complex and insecure operational context. Local conflicts as well as the absence of rule of law hinder the activities of CSOs. They often find themselves forced to cooperate with tribal leaders, smugglers, armed groups and other stakeholders to be able to do anything. As a representative of one CSO summarised: “*We try to work but we suffer from a lack of means. We face many difficulties to implement our activities.*” Given that the development of civil society is a fairly recent phenomenon in Libya, CSOs sometimes lack expertise “*Some local NGOs are trying to help but they do not have the experience and expertise,*” said a respondent in Murzuq.²²³ Most local CSOs supporting refugees and migrants are small operations with no paid staff and organise activities ad hoc when they are provided with funds. Only a few of the organisations mentioned above maintain a physical office, Tahar Alzawi and Sanadohom for instance. Others are usually managed by one or two local residents out of their home, such as Ana Mujaher or Al Ahrar Libya.

Most CSOs are involved in distributing food and non-food items (NFIs) to refugee and migrant communities. They also distribute hygiene kits and material items such as mattresses, blankets and clothes. These operations are mainly organised in cooperation with international organisations that donate the material. Many CSOs partner with the IOM and the UNHCR. A member of Taher Elzawi explained: “*We occasionally distribute blankets and hygiene products. For example, last week we distributed 1,000 kits on behalf of IOM to 180 migrants of different nationalities detained in a centre. We also did distributions in the migrant neighbourhoods.*”

In addition to distributions, several CSOs interviewed provide healthcare to the sick and injured or help them access nearby medical institutions. Some CSOs have access to those held in detention centres that are DCIM or militia-managed. Libya Health Ahrar, for instance, maintains good relations with smugglers who grant them access to their centres to provide healthcare to their occupants. “*We have the means to intervene in some camps run by the smugglers because we have established good contacts with them and they trust us. We offer medical services directly, even in the traffic zones.*” The Red Crescent also intervenes in detention centres: “*We go with a doctor to the detention centres to offer medical assistance.*”

Some local CSOs such as Youth and Donation in Kufra actively collaborate with international organisations and diplomatic missions to support those wishing to voluntarily return to their countries of origin. Other CSOs such as Sada Al Hak and Taher Elzawi are instrumental in collecting data on foreign national residing in the South. A representative from Taher Al Zaawi said: “*We worked in collaboration with IOM to develop a database of migrants [...] we also collaborate with the consulates of Niger and*

²²³ CSOs were for the most part banned under Gaddafi.

Sudan,” while another from Sada Al Haak stated: “In 2015, we conducted a census of migrants in Gatrun to distribute cards in collaboration with the authorities.”

None of the CSOs interviewed in the South provided legal and administrative assistance although some CSOs in the north are currently engaged in such activities.

Support provided to refugees and migrants by CSOs in Tripoli

More CSOs are active in supporting refugees and migrants in Tripoli than in the south of Libya. We interviewed some of them and looked into their activities, some of which could be replicated in southern cities.

Caritas has an office in the Dahra neighbourhood of Tripoli, next to a church where numerous refugees and migrants attend mass. They provide information on the UNHCR’s Community Development Centre (CDC) and guide them through registration with UNHCR. “I take newly-arrived migrants to the CDC for registration. Those who receive their cards can benefit from the medical examination, financial assistance and food distribution,” said the manager of Caritas’ office, an Eritrean national. Caritas also provides maternity assistance, basic medical care, mental health services, distributes food and sets up educational grants for children and young people as well as vocational training for women. Refugees and migrants leaving Libya often donate the belongings they cannot take with them to Caritas, which then distributes them to other people in need.

Local CSO Akran (اركان) has an agreement with the UNHCR to organise workshops for Libyan authorities such as the DCIM, Passports Services, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Finance to enhance their knowledge on the rights of refugees and migrants. They also provide legal support to refugees and migrants involved in litigation against the Libyan administration and collaborate with international organisations in resettlement. Finally, they contribute to a UNHCR-led mapping of asylum seekers communities. An employee of Akran said: “We signed a partnership agreement with UNHCR in July 2016. We are also about to sign another with IOM.”

Another CSO, Tamzin (طمزين), distributes food and NFIs such as clothes and hygiene kits. A representative said: “We also operate in centres for refugees and migrants to meet specific needs. For example, we equipped a centre with an oven when there was a shortage of bread in the city. We also collaborate with international organisations such as DRC, IMC, UNHCR and IOM to distribute aid.”

International Agencies and INGOs Supporting Refugees and Migrants in the South

While a few IOs and INGOs still operate in Libya despite the ongoing crisis, many have concentrated their activities in the north of the country for security and access reasons. Only a handful of organisations are still implementing activities in the South, among them the UNHCR, the IOM and Save the Children.²²⁴

²²⁴ We do not include IDPs here. DRC for example is working on migration issues in the south, but focusing only on IDPs at the time of writing.

IOM

Despite having to relocate international staff to Tunisia in 2014, IOM maintains a presence in Libya with local staff in Tripoli and Sebha. IOM implements various activities in the country, including distributions of food and NFIs, community stabilisation programs and assisted voluntary returns.

Its community stabilisation program, implemented in Sebha and Ghatrun, aims at promoting peace and stability for conflict-affected populations and host communities in Libya. It seeks to promote peace by training local authorities, NGOs and CSOs, as well as supporting inter and intra community dialogue.²²⁵

In terms of humanitarian assistance to migrants in the South, IOM organises relief distributions, often via local partners. The distributions include food and non-food items such as blankets, mattresses and pillows, hygiene kits that contain soap, tooth brushes and tooth paste, emergency rations of food and basic medical equipment and supplies. It also provides critical health care, psychosocial counselling and referral services.

Lastly, IOM works in close collaboration with diplomatic missions of countries of origin to organise voluntary returns. In 2016, it helped 2,775 migrants of various nationalities to return home, in 20% of cases also providing reintegration assistance in the country of origin.

Save the Children

Save the children is active in Ghat where it currently manages a community centre providing basic health care services for refugees and migrants.²²⁶ At the time of writing the centre was funded by IOM through a six-month project scheduled to come to an end in February 2017. At the time of writing, Save the Children was also conducting a survey on the child protection, education and health situation of foreign nationals and IDPs in Ghat.

Save the Children also plans to implement a new program in June 2017 for refugees and migrants in Ghat, funded by the EU trust fund. The activities will aim at promoting the protection, safety and provision of basic services to refugees and migrants, as always with a focus on children.

Other IOs and INGOs

Many IO and INGOs left the south of Libya in 2014 after the resurgence of tribal conflicts but carried on supporting refugees and migrants in the north.

The International Medical Corps (IMC) closed its office in Sebha in 2014, but maintains an office in Tripoli and continues to provide primary health services for refugees and migrants detained by the Libyan authorities in Tripoli, Misrata and Serraj. It also delivers medical supplies and relief items in Tripoli, in collaboration with UNHCR, UNICEF and local partners.

MSF is not present in the South. It runs seven mobile clinics in seven detention centres located in Tripoli and arranges referrals to hospitals in the case of medical emergencies. MSF also organises staff training in public hospitals and provides drugs and medical supplies to these facilities.

Other organisations, such as DRC or ICRC, have kept a toe-hold in the South but at the time of research were not involved in providing services to foreign nationals in transit. DRC, for example, still has an office with the Danish Demining Group (DDG) in Sebha but their focus is on humanitarian mine action and IDPs. In Tripolitania, DRC conducts protection activities for refugees and migrants including relief

²²⁵ IOM Libya Brief, available online at this [link](#).

²²⁶ Through its local partner, Libya's Loyal Sons Organisation.

assistance in detention centres, phone calls to family members, referrals to other stakeholders such as UNHCR, IOM and IMC, psychosocial and medical support, and training for detention centres staff.²²⁷

Other organisations that are actively supporting refugees and migrants in the north but do not have a presence in the South include CESVI and ACTED. CESVI implements cash transfer projects with protection components in Tripoli and Benghazi, sets up child-friendly spaces and distributes NFIs. The CESVI is also an important partner of UNHCR, working to improve living conditions through the CDCs (see next section on UNHCR support). In collaboration with UNHCR, CESVI organised training programs for various nationalities including Palestinians, Sudanese, Syrians, Iraqis, Eritreans, Somalis, Chadians and Congolese. ACTED supports local governance and CSOs across Libya, including some partners working on migration. It also runs a project in collaboration with UNHCR aimed at enhancing understanding of mixed migration routes and patterns and identifying those in need of international protection.

UNHCR

Through its partners, the UNHCR offers humanitarian and medical assistance and support to refugees, rescued and detained people, as well as IDPs.²²⁸ It provides legal protection services such as registration, documentation, counselling, medical care, relief and financial assistance through its Community Development Centres (CDCs) in Tripoli and Benghazi as well as through outreach activities to extend protection and assistance for those who are unable to come to the CDCs.²²⁹

As detailed in section 1.1 Background, despite ratifying the 1969 Organisation of African Union Convention, Libya has yet to enact national legislation to provide the basis for a functioning asylum system. This leaves many gaps regarding the protection and assistance of refugees.

UNHCR staff interviewed in Tripoli pointed out that working with a remote office in Tunis delays the processing of cases, and the lack of institutional capacity for coordination between the different authorities (hospitals, detention centres and Ministry of Interior for instance) severely complicates their activities on the ground.

Registration and Documentation²³⁰

UNHCR Libya identifies and registers persons requiring international protection. Its statistical reports state that a majority of those it registers originate from the following seven countries: Syrians, Eritreans, Somalis, Sudanese, Palestinians, Iraqis and Ethiopians.²³¹

In Libya, the UNHCR provides documentation following registration in the form of Attestation Certificates (a paper sheet with UNHCR's logo, biographic details and a photograph mentioning that the bearer is a person of concern to UNHCR). In 2016, a total of 1,850 individuals were registered and provided with Attestation Certificates, a number that had increased to 2,772 individuals by May 2017.²³² These are accepted by the authorities and enable refugees and asylum seekers to access primary

²²⁷ DRC launched a new protection program for mixed migrant and IDPs in December 2016, with the support of the EU Trust Fund.

²²⁸ All UNHCR activities in Libya are conducted through implementing partners CESVI and IMC.

²²⁹ UNHCR Libya Factsheet, September 2016.

²³⁰ "Registration is the process of recording, verifying and updating information about persons of concern to UNHCR with the aims of protecting them, documenting them, and implementing durable solutions." Source: UNHCR, Ten Point Plan in Action, 2016.

²³¹ See *Libya Registration Fact Sheet 2016*, UNHCR, 16 January 2017.

²³² Source: *Libya Registration Fact Sheet 2016*, UNHCR, 16 January 2017.

education and primary health care, in addition to being an important protection tool for prevention of refoulement or any measures that may directly or indirectly lead to forced return to the bearer's country of origin. The Attestation Certificate is valid for a year, and can be renewed for an unlimited number of times until the determination of the bearer's status has been finalized – this can either be the recognition or denial of refugee status.

UNHCR Refugee Certificates, which are not to be confused with the Attestation Certificates, are issued to every individual who is determined to meet the criteria for refugee status.²³³ They are also issued to family members and/or dependants who are determined to be eligible for derivative refugee status. Because of the conflict, UNHCR suspended registration activities in Libya in July 2014, before gradually resuming its issuing of Attestation Certificates in June 2015, followed by RSD in September 2016. Given the challenging operational context and limited resources, priority was given to new registrations, issuance of Attestation Certificates and renewal of documentation. UNHCR thus carried out RSD interviews for the most vulnerable refugees for the purpose of eventual submission for resettlement. Between September and December 2016, UNHCR Libya issued 25 Refugee Certificates. In 2017, by the time of printing (31 May), 136 individuals had received Refugee Certificates in Libya.

Community Development Centres (CDCs)

Through its implementing partners CESVI and IMC, UNHCR runs three CDCs: two in Tripoli²³⁴ and one in Benghazi.²³⁵ These provide a space where asylum seekers and refugees can receive psychosocial counselling, legal protection services such as registration and renewal of attestations, medical care and humanitarian relief items.²³⁶ Financial assistance is also delivered there. These activities target all of concern to UNHCR with the exception of medical services, which are available to all. A team of 20 to 30 people, all paid staff, work in each centre.

The CDCs receive a large number of requests for registration or renewal of documents every day, around 60 to 70 people at the Tripoli CDC visited by the researcher. Most requests come from Syrians – approximately 70% according to one respondent. The high number is in part a result of the dire situation inside Libya since people hope to be considered for resettlement outside Libya. Applying for asylum and registration with UNHCR, in addition to being a tool for protection against arbitrary arrest and refoulement, also gives access to basic services, including education at primary, secondary and university levels. According to a CDC staff member interviewed, another 20% of registration requests come from Sudanese, and the remaining 10% from Eritreans,²³⁷ Iraqis²³⁸ and Ethiopians.

In order to prevent fraud, all Attestation Certificates must be reviewed and authorised at a senior level within UNHCR. Due to the current remote management situation and the difficulties of processing between Libya and Tunisia, this process currently takes up to three months, compared to only a few days before July 2014.

²³³ In terms of protection, both Refugee Certificates and Attestation Certificates offer same level of protection and access to services. The differentiation is internal to UNHCR, depending on whether the person is an asylum seeker (pending determination) or a refugee (status determined).

²³⁴ The CDC in Trig Eshok covers the eastern area of Tripoli (Salah eddine, Abuslim. Hadhba. Fernaj, Souq Jumaa, Tajura neighbourhoods) while the CDC in Gurgi covers the West of Tripoli (Serraj, Ghot Shahal, Gurgi, Gargaresh, Al Fallah)

²³⁵ The CDC in Benghazi was closed from March to August 2016 due to a new local legislation. Activities have now resumed.

²³⁶ Staff at the Tripoli CDC visited during this research included a doctor and a nurse.

²³⁷ Families who have been in Libya for dozens of years, less than a hundred persons in total according to CDC staff interviewed.

²³⁸ A few families settled in Tripoli according to CDC staff interviewed.

As for medical care, a total of 350 consultations per week are conducted on average across all the CDCs²³⁹. Some cases are transferred to clinics or private hospitals, although CDC staff interviewed mentioned recent administrative complications with public sectors institutions.

In addition to the three CDCs, a Social Centre operated by the CESVI opened in 2016 in Tripoli to offer recreational activities and provide livelihood support. The centre is currently providing English language classes, a course that is popular with beneficiaries.

At the time of research, UNHCR was in the process of reopening an office as well as establishing “support hubs” in southern Libya, with the goal of assisting populations on the move through the region. The role of these hubs will be, amongst other things, to identify people with compelling protection needs through various activities like focus group discussions, counselling and other activities. Through these hubs, UNHCR hopes to undertake core protection activities such as registration, documentation and refugee status determination, in addition to helping the most vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees. The support hubs will also ensure that people who do not fall under UNHCR’s mandate are referred to other agencies that might support them.

Home visits and Outreach Activities

In addition to the CDCs, UNHCR’s protection programmes in Libya include home visits as well as hotlines. UNHCR’s implementing partners carry out regular home visits to: a) identify, and assess as well as ascertain eligibility for financial or medical assistance at home and b) support those who are not able to come to the CDCs such as the elderly and the disabled. Outreach teams of four people usually conduct visits twice a week. In 2016, 442 households had been visited by these teams, and a total of 10,115 refugees and asylum seekers were interviewed whether at the CDCs or at home.

UNHCR also has six hotlines in operation, including: General Protection and Detention (staffed 24/7), General protection, Coast Guards (Rescue at sea), Registration, Community service (all in Tripoli), as well as a hotline dedicated to Benghazi (General Protection, staffed 24/7). In 2016, the five Tripoli-based hotlines received 2,440 calls and the remaining hotline, based in Benghazi, received 821 calls. UNHCR Libya also has a protection email address, through which 210 queries were routed in 2016.

Financial Assistance

UNHCR’s cash assistance program supports approximately 400 extremely vulnerable refugee families across the north of the country.²⁴⁰ Financial assistance either takes the form of a one-time emergency cash grants or a monthly stipend which is reviewed after three months. The size of the grant may vary between LYD 150 to LYD 500 (USD 25 – 83) depending on the vulnerability of the recipients and size of recipient households.²⁴¹ All families registered with UNHCR are eligible. After receiving an application, outreach teams visit the family to determine their vulnerability, after which each case is assessed by a panel to determine their eligibility.

²³⁹ Consultations are open every day between Sunday and Thursday in the two CDCs located in Tripoli. The CDC of Benghazi did not offer health care at the time of research.

²⁴⁰ At the time of research, 367 families benefited from the cash program, another 120 had been approved but had not received money yet, and more families were waiting for the panel to assess their vulnerability. CDC staff interviewed mentioned that approximately 80% of applications were accepted.

²⁴¹ UNHCR looks at the size of the family and specific vulnerability criteria such as single mother families. A family of two members, for instance, will receive an assistance of LYD 300 [USD 50] per month.

Rescue at Sea and Support in Detention Centres

UNHCR aims to enhance the protection environment for refugees and asylum seekers by providing life-saving help, capacity building and material support for key stakeholders engaged in responding to mixed population movement.

UNHCR continues to maintain an alert system with the Libyan coastguard for boats in distress off the coast near key disembarkation points in Tripoli. They are contacted by the coastguard when rescued refugees and migrants are being disembarked so that its humanitarian relief items, hygiene kits, medical assistance can be provided.

In addition, UNHCR undertakes rehabilitation and WASH activities at six disembarkation points to improve the overall reception conditions of rescued people, including protection from the elements through the installation of shaded areas, improved health facilities and improved reception space including for persons with specific needs such as elderly and disabled people, as well as WASH facilities. The objective is to ensure that rescued people are received in dignity and provided with life-saving support. These activities also facilitate the identification of asylum seekers, refugees or others in need of compelling protection and humanitarian support who might require urgent follow up.

Capacity building

Capacity building is one of the main objectives of UNHCR; as such it conducts training on the importance of a comprehensive legal framework and protection for refugees. The workshops target CSOs and local partners and highlights the importance of a comprehensive legal framework and protection protocol for refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and other persons of concern. Promotion of refugee law has always gone hand in hand with providing better understanding of existing refugee protection principles and norms but also the effective implementation of international standards in national legislation and administrative procedures.

In 2016, UNHCR completed a total of nine capacity-building training courses targeting around 300 officials and members of key Libyan organisations in Tunis, which included three “training of trainers” sessions for local partners. This supported UNHCR’s efforts to enhance knowledge of its mandate, role and work in Libya as well as changing the generally negative perception of refugees. Training courses also provided a useful platform to build contacts with local officials for the purpose of facilitating access by the UNHCR to detention facilities and strengthening advocacy for the release of people from detention.

Mapping of Embassies and Consulates in the South and in Tripoli

Due to the deterioration of the security situation in Libya, most diplomatic missions have either closed²⁴² or relocated to Tunisia.²⁴³ The few missions that were still open in Tripoli at the time of writing included the Somali, Sudanese, and Palestinian and Ethiopian embassies.

In the South, the only consulates still functioning were those of Chad, Nigeria and Mali, and all were located in Sebha. Their activities mainly involved supporting IOM in organising voluntary return by providing migrants with travel documents. Other countries of origin, such as Senegal, Congo and Nigeria, do not have consulates but official representatives in Sebha – nationals who are well-established and in a position to support their countrymen.

Some embassies facilitate the issuance of laissez-passers for migrants stranded in detention centres. The Senegalese Embassy for example, which is based in Tunis, issues these to nationals identified by

²⁴² The Eritrean embassy for instance closed approximately a year before this research was conducted.

²⁴³ This is the case for example of the Senegalese and the Syrian embassies.

IOM in detention centres. They only require a Senegalese community leader to be present with IOM staff during censuses in detention centres, instead of the usual exhaustive verification process with contacts in Senegal. The Senegalese Embassy also issues travel documents for nationals from ECOWAS countries who can travel without a visa to Senegal.

Some embassies also visit detention centres to check on the conditions of detention of their nationals. In September 2016, for example, IOM set up detention centre visits in Libya for representatives of seven West African embassies. These visits remain exceptional however due to the poor security situation in the country. According to an interview with a staff member of the Somali Embassy in Tripoli: *“Until 2013 we were able to visit and treat many cases but we can no longer access the detention centres at the moment.”*

In addition to security issues, a lack of financial and human resources limits the capacity of diplomatic missions to support migrants. The Embassy of Senegal in Libya only has four employees, none of whom work full time. Similar working conditions were observed at the Somali embassy in Tripoli, which has only three staff. *“The diplomatic representation of Somalia is currently incapable of providing any support to migrants. Our staff is reduced to three people and we encounter the same security problems in Libya as all foreign nationals do,”* reported a staff member at the Somali Embassy in Tripoli.

Refugees and migrants are sometimes reluctant to interact with their embassies for a variety of reasons, including the risk of political oppression and persecution in their country of origin or because of the irregular nature of their arrival to Libya. Respondents also cited rumours that some official representatives collaborate with smugglers.

“My father was persecuted by the regime; we have been listed as traitors for a long time and we can't even have contact with our embassy here in Libya.”

Female, 33 years old, Eritrea

Support Provided by Libyan Authorities and Public Institutions in the South

Overall, foreign nationals receive little to no support from the Libyan authorities. All public institutions interviewed for this research, including the DCIM, border control units, coastguards, municipalities and medical centres reported suffering from a severe lack of financial and material support.

Key authorities and institutions working with refugees and migrants in Libya include:

- The DCIM, which *“operates under the Ministry of Interior [and] bears the main responsibility for management of detention centres,”*²⁴⁴
- The Libyan Coastguard, which is *“part of the Libyan Navy and operates under the Minister of Defence. It is responsible for search and rescue at sea operations,”*²⁴⁵
- Border Control guards and patrols, who in some areas intercept and rescue refugees and migrants according to interviews with its staff, although it remained relatively unclear what “rescues” entailed;
- The Census Committee for Workers and Migrants (لجنة تسجيل وحصر العمالة الوافدة), which is present in Tripoli and Benghazi, registers migrants and foreign workers;
- The Census Committee for Workers and Migrants (لجنة تسجيل وحصر العمالة الوافدة), which is present in Tripoli and Benghazi and was asked by the municipalities to undertake a mapping of foreign communities. They register foreign workers and subject them to medical

²⁴⁴ Source: *Detained and Dehumanized, Report on Human Rights Abuses against Migrants in Libya*, UNSMIL, 2016, page 17. Report available [here](#).

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

examinations to ensure that they do not have communicable diseases. A total of 345 refugees and migrants have been registered and examined thus far. They also collaborate with specific diplomatic missions such as Niger to organise voluntary returns. Thus far, 285 returns have been supported;

- Organisation of Foreign Workers in the South (جمعية الاجانب العاملين في الجنوب);
- Municipalities in some cases deliver residency cards and register refugees and migrants in irregular situations. They also intervene in cases of accidents or clashes to rescue and provide medical assistance to the victims regardless of nationality. Municipalities also in some instance contribute to voluntary returns and support NGOs delivering humanitarian assistance;
- Public hospitals.

When refugees and migrants are arrested by the authorities in the South, they are often released, sent back the way they came or sold to smugglers because of the lack of detention facilities.²⁴⁶ As for law enforcement authorities, they are under-equipped and underfunded and thus unable to carry out their border management functions.²⁴⁷ Staff interviewed in the South said they could not communicate with central authorities (“*they don’t answer our calls*”) and cited a lack of resources necessary for the return of migrants to their countries of origin.

According to the UNSMIL, both the DCIM and the Libyan coastguard “*are subject to pressure from armed groups, which have proliferated since 2011 and appear to be the most powerful actors in the system of smuggling, trafficking, and abuse. Armed groups have threatened Libyan Coast Guard and DCIM staff to hand over migrants. The UNSMIL has received reports indicating that Libyan Coastguard and DCIM staff members have worked with armed groups, smugglers and traffickers to exploit migrants for profit.*”²⁴⁸

Healthcare in Libyan public hospitals is theoretically accessible to all those in need, whether they are Libyans or foreigners. However in practice only the most critical cases among refugees and migrants are admitted, due to very scarce resources. Those who cannot show identification papers or who cannot pay for treatment are often turned away. “*Sebha’s Hospital is the only large medical facility in the region. It faces difficulties meeting the needs of the local population and so the hospital avoids taking in additional foreign nationals. They also avoid welcoming them from fear of epidemics,*” according to a Red Crescent staff member in Sebha. People with severe medical conditions are sometimes transferred to public hospitals or given first aid by the Libyan Red Crescent.

As a result, refugees and migrants remain deeply dependent on the intervention of international and local organisations for assistance and support.

²⁴⁶ All DCIM-managed detention centres in the south were closed at the time of writing because of insufficient budget and support. Our local research team found it difficult to contact DCIM staff for an interview in Sebha, reporting that they have an extremely limited presence and visibility in the city.

²⁴⁷ In March 2016, the Middle East Eye reported that “*At the Tumo border crossing in Libya, offices for police, passport control and the immigration authority stand empty. Border security has been provided by poorly trained militias from the Tebu tribe. ‘We are here now just to protect and manage the border crossing. We have no support and no power but we try to do our best’, border post commander Salah Galmah Saleh told MEE. ‘We are supposed to do patrols but we have no equipment, no petrol and no money to fix our vehicles, so how can we go out into the desert?’*” Source: An open secret: The people-smugglers of southern Libya, 18 March 2016. Article available online [here](#).

²⁴⁸ Source: *Detained and Dehumanized, Report on Human Rights Abuses against Migrants in Libya*, UNSMIL, 2016, page 17. Report available [here](#).



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSION

Migration flows in to Libya and from Libya to Europe appear to have significantly increased in 2016. The level of vulnerability of refugees and migrants making this journey to and within Libya is also rising, while support services are decreasing and security conditions within the country are deteriorating.

Key evolutions since 2013

With the deepening of the crisis, the situation in Libya has shifted significantly in recent years, and with it migration dynamics. New elements that emerged from this research include:

- Routes and hubs within Libya have evolved. In particular, people no longer transit through the northeast of the country and Bani Walid has emerged as a new hub;
- Countries of origin and profiles of migrants have evolved. In particular, flows from West Africa have increased, involving individuals usually travelling on “step-by-step” journeys;
- Refugees and migrants are now less inclined to settle in Libya or stop in Libyan cities for more than a few weeks, in particular in the South;
- The smuggling industry has grown increasingly professional and transnational smuggling organisations further developed;
- Specific militias and armed groups have started playing a more active role in smuggling;
- Smuggling prices have increased overall;
- The vulnerability of refugees and migrants making the journey to and within Libya has risen, while support services have decreased and security conditions within the country have deteriorated. In particular, fewer CSOs and INGOs are able to continue actively supporting refugees and migrants on the ground, especially in the South.

However, the research also highlights that certain dynamics have remained unchanged, such as the main transit countries to Libya, the most popular entry points into Libyan territory, or the fact that all flows are mixed, regrouping individuals with very different backgrounds and reasons for migrating.

Perspectives for the Future

While it is difficult to predict the evolution of migration flows, there are certain factors that refugees and migrants weigh up before making their way to Libya irregularly and deciding whether to stay in the country or leave for Europe. They include:

- The level of control at border-crossing points and the ease with which they might cross to Europe. Border monitoring activities in Libya are currently weak: border guards and coastguards have limited resources and capacity; other security forces are extremely fragmented and involved in internal conflicts and corruption is widespread. Borders are particularly porous in the Sahara and Sahel, due to the geography of the region;
- The evolution of the crisis and of livelihood opportunities in Libya. The crisis has created migratory pressure on refugees and migrants already in the country and has also enhanced the perception that the doors to Europe are “open”, which increased opportunistic flows;
- The availability of smuggling networks to facilitate movement in Libya: it is relatively easy for refugees and migrants to access smuggling services as there are many. The industry is booming;

- The cost and duration of the journey through Libya compared to other routes. The varying prices offered by existing smuggling networks give refugees and migrants different options. For those who can afford it, they are able to traverse the country very quickly, often in less than two weeks. Cheaper yet longer step-by-step journeys are an option for those with fewer resources;
- The conditions of the journey and the risks involved, in Libya and the transit countries, compared to alternative routes to Europe. The risks and abuses towards refugees and migrants passing through Libya weight on the decision to choose this route over another. However, the number of currently active alternative routes is relatively limited, and respondents noted that the journey through Algeria, for instance, is even more dangerous;
- The possibility of regularisation at some point along the route. The legal framework and current situation in Libya does not allow most refugees and migrants the option to access legal alternatives to migrate or see their status regularised;
- The influence of the diaspora and the presence of networks, friends, relatives or members of one's home community in Libya and in transit countries;
- The evolution of push factors affecting large communities in countries of origin, such as the rise and expansion of terrorism, conflicts and droughts;
- The status of alternative routes through other countries. The increase or decrease of opportunities in other countries affect Libya's migration flow. Irregular migration flows are constantly being redirected as doors open or close elsewhere.

Looking at these indicators, it seems likely that Libya will remain the main hub for refugees and migrants hoping to reach Europe from Africa in the coming years.

Implications for Service Provision and Protection of Refugees and Migrants

The recent evolutions mentioned above have implications for the levels of protection and service provision afforded to refugees and migrants from the international community, such as:

- As refugees and migrants crossing to and through Libya are highly mobile, they would be best reached through mobile teams. In the South in particular, vulnerable individuals tend to stay in the region for short periods of time only, thus a permanent centre would not fit their needs;
- As smugglers of different backgrounds use different roads, tracks, transit cities and neighbourhoods within Libya, usually depending on the area of influence of the armed group or tribe they belong to, protection operations must cover large geographical areas, as opposed to specific cities only;
- As routes and hubs in Libya change quickly given the extreme volatility of the political and security context, operational locations need to be re-assessed regularly;
- Refugees and migrants have become less visible, in particular for those travelling on "organised journeys" who remain under the control of smugglers throughout their stay in Libya and are usually held in private locations on the outskirts of cities. This means cooperation with local civil society is essential to access vulnerable individuals and provide them with support – especially given that the international community is often forced to operate remotely due to the current instability in Libya;
- Refugees and migrants are often unable to reach out for support themselves because they do not have freedom of movement, are impeded by a language barrier, lack reliable information on support available or are wary of the intentions of those providing support. It is therefore necessary to proactively reach out to them in a way that engenders trust;

- Since migration flows are mixed and specific circumstances in Libya make it difficult to distinguish refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, a comprehensive response and referral mechanism is paramount;
- As risks and vulnerabilities along the journey transcend borders, coordinated approaches and programs are necessary not only in Libya but also along the routes from countries of origin to destination;
- Given the current political context in Libya, administrative issues have become particularly prominent and refugees and migrants need enhanced support in this area. Those who came regularly to Libya or whose situation was regularised in the past, for instance, are facing difficulties renewing documentation in the current context.

5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNHCR AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN LIBYA

This section presents recommendations to improve the protection of refugees and migrants in Libya and address the service delivery gaps. However, coordinated approaches and programs are necessary not only in Libya but along western and eastern Africa routes, from countries of origin to destinations. Different responses can be offered to support refugees and migrants towards a dignifying solution to issues faced. Responses should take into account the variety of countries along the way, actors in these countries, and the spectrum of risks and vulnerabilities.

Direct Humanitarian Assistance for Refugees and Migrants in Libya

- Use a different approach to provide direct assistance to refugees and migrants in the South compared to the north. Vulnerable refugees and migrants in the South tend to be difficult to reach, stay for short periods of time, and have less freedom of movement. As such, a permanent centre would not be sufficient to answer their needs. Additional direct relief could take the form of mobile joint interventions in key hubs, where assistance could be delivered weekly or bi-weekly. These might be in Sebha, Ubari, Gatrún, Murzuq, Bani Walid, Rebyana, Tazerbu, and Kufra. Interventions could be coordinated between the UNHCR and the Libyan Red Crescent or other local CSOs, with a team in each city. The political and security context in Libya being extremely volatile, routes and hubs evolve quickly and hotspots would therefore need to be re-assessed regularly. These mobile interventions would represent a solution for the whole Fezzan region instead of Sebha only;
- In addition to healthcare, food and non-food items such as hygiene kits, direct assistance should include psychosocial support, counselling services and temporary shelter. This should have a particular focus on the most vulnerable refugees and migrants, such as UASC, VoT, women vulnerable to sexual abuse; refugees and migrants with health and psychosocial-related needs as well as persons in need of international protection;
- Accompany border monitoring and rescue operations after conducting due diligence checks to provide support to lost or abandoned refugees and migrants in the desert, while delivering on-the-job training and raise awareness of patrols;
- Dedicate resources to the management of dead bodies, picking up corpses from beaches, conducting body identification and locating next of kin;
- Support the renewal of documentation and other administrative processes, in particular for those who intend to stay in Libya. Support could take the form of information, referrals to relevant administrations and resources as well as coordination with embassies that have moved from Libya to Tunisia.

Information Sharing and Referrals for Refugees and Migrants

- Provide information to refugees and migrants in Libya on support available from other organisations, their rights, as well as potential options for more regular migration. This could be achieved through mobile teams working in identified hotspots in the main cities;
- Organize referrals to CSOs, INGOs, IOs, and authorities that could help by maintaining an updated roster of stakeholders actively providing support;
- Support the establishment of trustworthy community networks, committees and of refugees and migrants' organisations in Libya. These groups already rely on those in the same position and in particular those drawn from their own communities, yet networks are not always well-defined and sometimes suffer from a deficit of trust. Reliable, knowledgeable and trustworthy community networks could provide accurate information, protection and general support but also serve as relays for humanitarian assistance. Fostering such networks, however, would need to be done in a sensible fashion, with limited visibility from the UNCHR to avoid hindering their perceived legitimacy;
- Provide information to refugees and migrants on the risks of the journey, policy changes in transit countries and at a European level to allow them to make more informed choices. Smugglers are one of the primary information sources in regard to policies in various European countries and EU asylum laws, and Diasporas rarely send negative news home, thereby fuelling unrealistic expectations. The vehicles through which information is shared also need to be considered carefully. Information centres can be a helpful resource for people in need but they will only be of interest to those actively looking for information. Thus, it is important to supplement information centres with methods of dissemination that work with the current dynamics. For example, making efforts to publicise the information available and encouraging the target group to disseminate it is imperative, given that most migrants report that most of their knowledge comes from others in their position. Moreover, by disseminating information through word of mouth, it allows it to reach those that may not necessarily be seeking it. This would, of course, require coordination between different UNHCR offices in the region, for instance to inform refugees and migrants in previous transit countries along the route on the difficulty to access economic opportunities in Libya and security risks in the current context.

Advocacy and Awareness Raising for Libyan Authorities and Citizens

- Encourage the development of a migration framework and advocate for the decriminalisation of irregular migration;
- Encourage the development of a functioning asylum system in the country, including early identification of those needing protection, adequate reception facilities, identification of durable solutions, structuration and clear definition of the roles of institutions and authorities in charge of migration. There are currently communities of asylum seekers in Libya, or coming through Libya, that use the same smuggling routes as other migrants in order to access asylum in Europe. Ongoing efforts to dismantle these would need to ensure that asylum seekers still have a way to access the protection they need;
- Advocate on the necessity of prosecuting smugglers and enforcing laws against trafficking;
- Continue to work with authorities to ensure that the certificates given by the UNHCR are respected and provide the protection that they should;
- Raise the awareness of the authorities in direct contact with refugees and migrants such as the DCIM, border guards and coast guard on the legal differences between refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Respondents pointed out that many training workshops were being

organised by the international community, yet few of the beneficiaries were actually working with refugees and migrants on the ground;

- Advocate for the improvement of conditions in detention facilities. Additional funding provided to the DCIM to manage detention centres should be accompanied by strong capacity building, awareness raising and M&E mechanisms, as several reports highlighted the involvement of staff in smuggling;
- Conduct awareness-raising media campaigns targeting audiences in Libya on refugees and migrants and the need to fight racism, discrimination, exploitative practices and misconceptions. These campaigns could take the form of TV or radio spots or short videos on social media. The entertainment industry could also be encouraged to deliver more accurate information on the issue, for instance by re-evaluating the way refugees and migrants are depicted in popular series and shows;
- Encourage civil society to work with refugees and migrants, in particular in the case of CSOs already active with IDPs;



ANNEX

6. ANNEX

6.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Without claiming to be exhaustive, this annex details key literature reviewed for this study. It does not include the numerous press articles on migration that were reviewed by the research team.

Title	Author	Date	Thematic Area	Geographical Scope
Eritrea Country Profile	Danish Refugee Council	2016	Country-Specific	Eritrea
Libya Factsheet - September 2016	UNHCR	2016	Country-Specific	Libya
The Strategic Topography of Southern Libya	Andrew McGregor	2016	Country-Specific	Libya
Libyan Civil Society Mapping	Altai Consulting for DFID	2015	Country-Specific	Libya
Libya Migration Profile	Migration Policy Centre	2013	Country-Specific	Libya
The Economic Impact of Migration in Agadez	Samuel Hall for IOM	2016	Country-Specific	Niger
Prisons and Detention in Libya	United States Institute of Peace	2016	Detention	Libya
"Detained and Dehumanised". Report on Human Rights Abuses against Migrants in Libya	UNSMIL	2016	Detention	Libya
Immigration Detention in Libya	Global Detention Project	2015	Detention	Libya
"Libya is Full of Cruelty". Stories of Abduction, Sexual Violence and Abuse from Migrants and Refugees	Amnesty International	2015	Detention	Libya
Detained Youth. The Fate of Young Migrants, Asylum seekers and Refugees in Libya today, Study 1	MHUB	2015	Detention	Libya
"We Are Foreigners, We Have No Rights". The Plight of Refugees, Asylum seekers and Migrants in Libya	Amnesty International	2012	Detention	Libya
Libyan Humanitarian Bulletin 08 October 2016	OCHA	2016	Humanitarian Assistance	Libya
Libya: Humanitarian Support to Migrants and IDPs Situation Report	IOM	2016	Humanitarian Assistance	Libya

Libya Operation Update - 1 May - 31 August 2016	UNHCR	2016	Humanitarian Assistance	Libya
Evaluation of the Humanitarian Repatriation for Stranded Migrants in Libya	Altai Consulting for IOM Libya	2016	Humanitarian Assistance	Libya
OIM Niger : Centres de Transit	IOM	2016	Humanitarian Assistance	Niger
Save the Children Egypt-Libya-Tunisia Assessment Report	Save the Children	2015	Humanitarian Assistance	North Africa
First Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with Third Countries under the European Agenda on Migration	European Commission	2016	Migration Policies	Europe, Africa & Middle East
Migrant and Refugee Governance in the Mediterranean: Europe and International Organisations at a Crossroads	Sarah Wolff	2015	Migration Policies	Europe, Africa & Middle East
The Khartoum Process. A Sustainable Response to Human Smuggling and Trafficking?	Institute for Security Studies	2016	Migration Policies	Europe, North Africa & Horn of Africa
Libya's Migrant Smuggling Highway: Lessons for Europe	Mattia Toaldo	2015	Migration Policies	Libya
Assessment of Priorities for the Development of Libya's Migration Policy: A Strategic Vision	Eurasyllum Ltd for IOM	2014	Migration Policies	Libya
Risk Analysis for 2016	FRONTEX	2016	Migration Policies	Mediterranean
A Survey on Migration Policies in West Africa	ICMPD for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	2015	Migration Policies	West Africa
Protocol relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment	ECOWAS	1979	Migration Policies	West Africa
Assessing the Risks of Migration along the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Routes	IOM	2016	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Europe, Africa & Middle East
Smuggled Futures: The Dangerous Path of the Migrant from Africa to Europe	GITOC	2014	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Europe, Mediterranean & Africa
Going West. Contemporary Mixed Migration Trends from the Horn of Africa to Libya & Europe	RMMS	2014	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Europe, North Africa & Horn of Africa
Addressing Mixed Migration Flows in Eastern Africa	Altai Consulting for Expertise France	2017	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Horn of Africa

Conditions and Risks of Mixed Migration in North East Africa, Study 2	MHUB	2015	Migration Routes & Flows in the Region	Horn of Africa
Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa & Yemen region	Danish Refugee Council	2016	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Horn of Africa & Yemen
Regional Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in 2016: 2nd Quarter Trend Summary and Analysis	Danish Refugee Council	2016	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Horn of Africa & Yemen
Study on Migrants' Profiles, Drivers of Migration and Migratory Trends	IOM	2016	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Italy
Findings of the Danish Refugee Council study of Mixed Migration in Libya	Danish Refugee Council	2013	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Libya
Social and Economic Assessment of Urban Refugees in Three Libyan cities	Altai Consulting for UNHCR	2013	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Libya
Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads	Altai Consulting for UNHCR	2013	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Libya & Africa
Turning the tide. The Politics of Irregular Migration in the Sahel and Libya	Clingendael	2017	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Libya & Sahel
Migration Trends Across the Mediterranean: Connecting the Dots	Altai Consulting for IOM	2015	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Mediterranean
Mapping of the Existing Framework, Capacity and Interventions in Managing Mixed Migration Flows in Somalia	Altai Consulting for RMMS	2017	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Somalia
Youth, Employment and Migration	Altai Consulting for IOM Somalia	2016	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	Somalia
Irregular Migration between West Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean	Altai Consulting for IOM Nigeria	2015	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	West Africa
Labor Market Assessment, Reintegration of Returnees: Senegal, The Gambia, Nigeria, Mali, Niger	Altai Consulting for IOM Niger	2016	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	West Africa
Identification Mission to Support the Development of Migration Profiles in West Africa	Altai Consulting for IOM Nigeria	2016	Migrations Routes & Flows in the Region	West Africa
Analysis: Flow Monitoring Survey. The Human Trafficking and other Exploitative Practices Prevalence Indication Survey. June - September 2016	IOM	2016	Smuggling and Trafficking	Europe
A Study on Smuggling of Migrants	European Commission	2015	Smuggling and Trafficking	Europe, Africa & Middle East
Survive and Advance. The Economics of Smuggling Refugee Migrants into Europe	Institute for Security Studies	2015	Smuggling and Trafficking	Europe, Mediterranean & Africa

Before the Boat: Understanding the Migrant Journey	Migration Policy Institute Europe	2015	Smuggling and Trafficking	Europe, Mediterranean & Africa
Human Trafficking in Smuggling on the Horn of Africa - Central Mediterranean route	SAHAN and IGAD Security Sector Program (ISSP)	2016	Smuggling and Trafficking	Horn of Africa, North Africa & Mediterranean
Smuggling Networks in Libya	Nancy Porsia	2015	Smuggling and Trafficking	Libya
Migrations through and from Libya: a Mediterranean Challenge	Mattia Toaldo	2015	Smuggling and Trafficking	Libya
Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition: Profits and Losses	United States Institute of Peace	2014	Smuggling and Trafficking	Libya
The Niger-Libya corridor: Smugglers' Perspectives	Institute for Security Studies	2016	Smuggling and Trafficking	Libya & Niger
Libya: A Growing Hub for Criminal Economies and Terrorist Financing in the Trans-Sahara	The Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime	2015	Smuggling and Trafficking	Libya & Sahel
Migrants, Transporteurs et Agents de l'Etat : Rencontre sur l'Axe Agadez-Sebha	Julien Brachet	2005	Smuggling and Trafficking	Libya & Sahel
The Changing Dynamic of Cross-border Human Smuggling and Trafficking in the Mediterranean	Nourhan Abdel Aziz, Paola Monzini and Ferruccio Pastore	2015	Smuggling and Trafficking	Mediterranean & North Africa
Human Trafficking of Nigerian Women to Europe	Finnish Immigration Service	2015	Smuggling and Trafficking	Nigeria & Europe
Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A Global Review of the Emerging Evidence Base	IOM	2016	Smuggling and Trafficking	World
Can we put an End to Human Smuggling? Migration Policy Debates, N°9 December 2015	OECD	2015	Smuggling and Trafficking	World
Forgotten Fatalities: The Number of Migrant Deaths before reaching the Mediterranean	Danish Refugee Council	2016	Statistical Data	Horn of Africa & Yemen
Displacement Tracking Matrix Flow Monitoring Libya, Statistical Report #4, December 2016	IOM	2016	Statistical Data	Libya
Libya Flow Monitoring, September-October 2016	IOM	2016	Statistical Data	Libya
Libya: Migration & Assistance overview, 23 September - 6 October	IOM	2016	Statistical Data	Libya

Libya: Registration - Monthly Fact Sheet July 2016	UNHCR	2016	Statistical Data	Libya
Secondary Data Reviews: Libya	ACAPS	2015	Statistical Data	Libya
Assessment of Data Collection and Statistics on International Migration in Libya	IOM	2015	Statistical Data	Libya
EU Migration Assessment. Factsheet on the Profile of Migrants leaving Gao, Mali. March 2016	REACH for the European Union	2016	Statistical Data	Mali
FRAN Quarterly report - Quarter 2. April-June 2016	FRONTEX	2016	Statistical Data	Mediterranean
Migration Flows to Europe, the Mediterranean Digest	IOM	2016	Statistical Data	Mediterranean
Mediterranean Update, 30 Sept.2016	IOM	2016	Statistical Data	Mediterranean
Statistical Report Overview on Niger Flow Monitoring Points - December 2016	IOM	2016	Statistical Data	Niger
EU Migration Assessment. Factsheet on the Profile of Migrants leaving Niger April 2016	REACH for the European Union	2016	Statistical Data	Niger
Sur la Route des Migrants au Niger. Profilage de l'OIM : Migrants en Transit	IOM	2014	Statistical Data	West Africa

6.2. RECODING OPEN-ENDED ANSWERS

The tables below present the categories developed to classify problems faced by migrants in their countries of origin, problems faced in Libya, as well as their most urgent needs in Libya (multiple choice questions: each migrant interviewed might have described several issues).

Figure 62: Recoding problems faced by refugees and migrants in Libya

Recoded categories	Description of the recoded problems
Access to accommodation	Difficulties in accessing housing.
Access to education	Difficulties in accessing education.
Access to food	Difficulties in accessing food.
Access to medical assistance	Difficulties in accessing medical assistance.
Criminality	Theft, kidnapping, blackmailing, armed robbery and any other form of criminality.

Detention	All types of detention or arrests.
Economic situation	Refugees and migrants mentioning difficulties resulting from the deteriorated economic situation including: financial problems, inflation, liquidity problems, low salaries, high cost of living, and difficult living conditions.
Forced labour	Forcing refugees and migrants to work without pay or migrants not receiving the salaries they were promised.
General risks	Risks related to travelling through the desert, “risk of death” and other undetailed risks.
Harassment	Insults, threats, street harassment, and blackmail.
Lack of job opportunities	Difficulties in accessing job opportunities.
Lack of support	Problems resulting from the absence of facilities or organisations providing services and support to refugees and migrants.
No problem	Refugees and migrants declaring not having faced any problems in Libya.
Oppression	General oppression of refugees and migrants in Libya.
Physical violence	Physical abuse, torture, violence bad treatment, rape or sexual exploitation.
Racism	Discrimination, disrespect or insults towards refugees and migrants because of their skin colour or their faith.
Residency status	Problems resulting from irregular entry into Libya, issues faced by refugees and migrants when attempting to regularize their status by obtaining the Libyan nationality, a residency card or the asylum status.
Security situation	Security risks, armed conflict, shootings in the streets, and general safety issues.
Weak rule of law	Corruption, lack of rights, lack of law enforcement, lack of compliance of Libyan authorities with agreements with other states, and administrative difficulties.

Figure 63: Recoding problems faced by refugees and migrants in their countries of origin

Recoded categories	Description of the recoded problems
Criminality	Refugees and migrants facing criminality including armed robbery and robbery.
Discrimination	Refugees and migrants experiencing discrimination because of their faith or ethnicity.
Economic situation	Refugees and migrants mentioning difficulties resulting from the deteriorated economic situation in their country including: poverty, low salaries and payments.
General situation	Refugees and migrants mentioning the general deterioration of the situation in their country including: bad living conditions, social problems, lack of development.
Housing problems	Refugees and migrants declaring facing land problems, displacement, forced migration, requisition of land and property.

Hunger	Refugees and migrants facing difficulties to access food.
Lack of job opportunities	Refugees and migrants facing difficulties to access job opportunities.
No problem	Refugees and migrants declaring having not faced any problems in their country of origin.
Oppression	Refugees and migrants declaring facing oppression, dictatorial regimes, persecutions, ethnic cleansing, genocide.
Other	Refugees and migrants mentioning other problems including: colonization, Islamic regime, ignorance, forced labour, forced national service, lack of education, lack of health facilities, invasion.
Physical violence	Refugees and migrants declaring being physically abused, tortured, having experienced violence or bad treatment, victims of rape or sexual exploitation.
Security situation	Refugees and migrants declaring facing security risks, security issues, war, ethnic conflict.
Threats	Refugees and migrants declaring receiving death threats, being threatened by the government in their home country, being listed or tracked by the government.
Weak rule of law	Refugees and migrants mentioning violations, corruption, absence of governmental authority, the lack of rights, the lack of law enforcement.

Figure 64: Recoding refugees' and migrants' most urgent needs in Libya

Recoded categories	Description of the recoded needs
Clothing	Refugees and migrants in need of clothing.
Financial support	Refugees and migrants in need of financial support and cash.
Food assistance	Refugees and migrants in need of food.
General living conditions	Refugees and migrants saying that they need a general improvement of their living conditions to have a decent life and peace of mind.
Housing	Refugees and migrants in need of accommodation.
Immigrate to Europe	Refugees and migrants who declared that their most urgent need was to travel (by sea) to Europe.
Job opportunity	Refugees and migrants in need job opportunities.
Leave Libya	Refugees and migrants who want to leave Libya and settle in a third country.
Medical assistance	Refugees and migrants in need of medical assistance.
No needs	Refugees and migrants who said they had no specific needs.
Other	Refugees and migrants mentioning other needs such as communication tools or money transfer services.

Protection	Refugees and migrants declaring that they need to receive international protection and that they need to be granted asylum.
Regularization	Refugees and migrants declaring that they need their status in Libya to be regularized (for instance migrants who entered the country regularly but are facing issues renewing their residency).
Return to country of origin	Refugees and migrants who want to return to their country of origin.
Rule of law	Refugees and migrants declaring that they need a country with a government, justice system, law enforcement and protection from the militias.
Salaries	Refugees and migrants declaring needing to receive the salaries they were promised or needing a better income.
Security	Refugees and migrants in need of safety and security.

