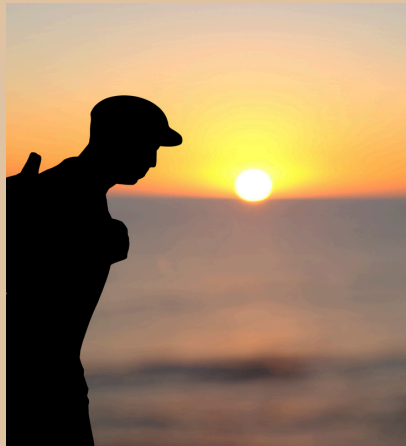


# African Migration



## **Migration Dynamics and Human Rights Challenges in North Africa**

Irregular migration encompassing movements to, through, and from North Africa remains the predominant characteristic of migration dynamics in the subregion, with pervasive human rights violations against migrants. Functioning as a critical departure zone, North Africa serves as the origin for thousands of migrants embarking on perilous journeys, predominantly along the West and Central Mediterranean routes. Within this context, well-established smuggling and trafficking networks have proliferated, particularly in transit states such as Libya (UNODC, 2021). Reports from Libya's maritime departure points document systematic abuses, including physical violence, torture, and forced labor (Amnesty International, 2022). Women and girls face heightened risks of gender-based violence, particularly during desert crossings and in border regions (IOM, 2023). The Central Mediterranean route remains the world's deadliest migration path, with over 20,000 recorded fatalities between 2014 and 2022 (Missing Migrants Project, 2023).

In response to these challenges, the European Commission introduced an **EU Action Plan** in November 2022, proposing 20 measures aimed at curbing irregular migration, enhancing search-and-rescue operations, and fostering intra-EU solidarity (European Commission, 2022). While some provisions particularly those emphasizing responsibility sharing have garnered support, critics, including several NGOs, argue that the plan replicates past failures and lacks operational feasibility (MSF, 2023).

### **Xenophobia, Racial Discrimination, and Migrant Vulnerabilities**

Recent hostilities against sub-Saharan African migrants in North Africa underscore entrenched xenophobia and racial discrimination. In Tunisia, political rhetoric in early 2023 framed sub-Saharan migrants as threats to national security and demographic stability, inciting widespread violence (HRW, 2023). Migrants faced physical assaults, arbitrary evictions, and employment termination, prompting repatriation efforts by Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Mali (Reuters, 2023).

The **UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** subsequently urged Tunisia to combat racial violence against Black Africans, including both migrants and citizens (CERD, 2023). Similarly, Libya's documented human rights abuses reveal systemic racism, xenophobia, and criminalization of migrants (OHCHR, 2022).

### **Economic Dependencies: Remittances and Climate-Induced Displacement**

International remittances constitute a vital economic lifeline for North Africa, serving as a primary source of foreign exchange. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this reliance, as tourism revenues critical for economies like Egypt plummeted due to mobility restrictions (World Bank, 2023). Egypt, the seventh-largest remittance recipient globally, accrued over **USD 28 billion** in 2022, while Morocco received **USD 11 billion**, accounting for **8% of its GDP** (KNOMAD, 2023). North Africa's **climate vulnerability** further compounds migration pressures. The subregion faces both slow-onset (e.g., desertification, water scarcity) and rapid-onset (e.g., wildfires, droughts) climate events, driving internal displacement. The **World Bank's Groundswell Report (2021)** projects that climate change could displace millions across North Africa absent substantive mitigation efforts. Libya's adaptive capacity is particularly compromised by protracted conflict, where militias have weaponized water scarcity (ACLEDA, 2023).

In 2022, wildfires triggered 9,500 displacements in Morocco and 2,000 in Algeria, devastating agricultural output (IDMC, 2023).

### **Conflict-Driven Displacement and Protracted Refugee Crises**

Ongoing instability continues to generate cross-border and internal displacement. Sudan's April 2023 clashes between military and paramilitary forces resulted in mass internal displacement and refugee outflows to South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Chad (UNHCR, 2023). Preceding this, intercommunal violence in West Darfur over land and resource access had already displaced 3.5 million internally (OCHA, 2023). Meanwhile, Libya's 135,000 conflict-induced IDPs in 2022 marked the lowest since 2013, though political stagnation persists (IOM, 2023).



## Declining Trends in Africa's Irregular Extra-continental Migration: Policy Impacts and Persistent Risks

Recent data indicate a sharp reduction in irregular migration from Africa to Europe and the Arabian Peninsula, with 146,000 documented interceptions in 2024 a near 50% decline from the 282,000 recorded in 2023 (IOM, 2025). This trend reflects the convergence of heightened border enforcement, geopolitical instability, and expanded interdiction measures across key transit regions.

### European Border Securitization and Interdiction Efforts

The decline in Mediterranean-bound migration is largely attributable to intensified EU-funded border externalization policies, particularly in North and West Africa. For instance, Morocco's migration enforcement operations disrupted 45,000 attempted crossings, dismantled 177 trafficking networks, and conducted 10,800 maritime rescues in 2024 (Frontex, 2025).

Similar efforts in Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt bolstered by EU partnerships have further constrained migratory flows, though concerns persist regarding human rights violations in detention centers (Amnesty International, 2024).

### Gulf Migration: Conflict and Enforcement Along the Bab al-Mandeb

Irregular migration to Yemen the primary gateway to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states plummeted by 54% (to 44,000 arrivals) in 2024. This decline stems from:

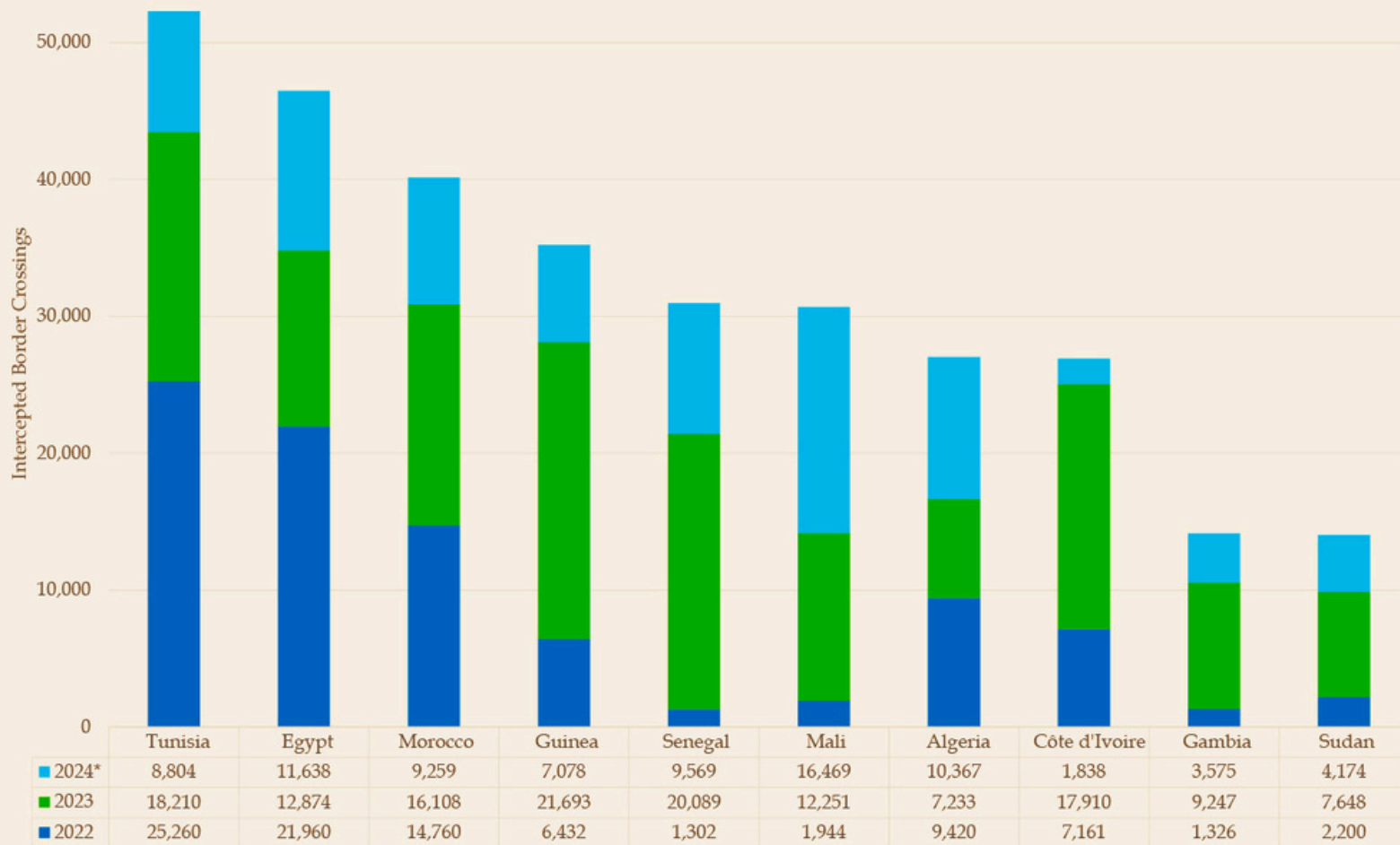
- Escalating conflict in Yemen, rendering transit routes increasingly perilous (ACAPS, 2024);
- Enhanced maritime patrols by Djiboutian and Yemeni authorities, targeting smuggling operations in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait (UNSC, 2025).

### Persistent Humanitarian Costs: Mortality Trends Amid Declining Flows

Despite reduced migration volumes, 4,465 migrant fatalities were recorded in 2024, representing a 15% decrease from the previous year (Missing Migrants Project, 2025). Maritime routes to Europe accounted for 75% of deaths, underscoring the enduring lethality of the Mediterranean and Atlantic crossings. These figures likely underrepresent true tolls due to underreporting of shipwrecks (IOM, 2025).

### Implications and Critical Perspectives

While securitization measures have curtailed migration statistically, critics argue they exacerbate clandestine routing and reliance on smugglers (De Haas, 2024). Furthermore, displacement drivers including climate stress, governance failures, and economic precarity remain unaddressed, suggesting that migration pressures may resurge (World Bank, 2025).



### *The Rise of Intra-African Labor Migration: Informalization, Economic Pressures, and Regional Disparities Growth and Drivers of Informal Labor Migration*

United Nations data indicate a 25% increase in intra-continental African migration over the past decade, rising from 12 million migrants in 2015 to 15 million in 2024 (UNDESA, 2024). This figure likely an undercount due to the informal nature of such movements primarily reflects labor-driven migration, encompassing both seasonal circulation and permanent relocation to urban economic hubs (IOM, 2023).

Afrobarometer surveys reveal that nearly half of Africa’s population has considered emigration, a marked increase from 2016–2018 levels (Afrobarometer, 2024). This trend is fueled by structural push factors:

- Governance deficits, including corruption and weak public service delivery;
- Youth unemployment crisis, exacerbated by demographic growth (Africa’s population is projected to reach 2.4 billion by 2050);
- Environmental and economic shocks, such as resource depletion and climate-induced agrarian decline (World Bank, 2025).

#### **Regional Dynamics: West and Central Africa**

West and Central Africa account for the highest concentration of intra-regional labor flows, with 70% of migration tied to temporary or permanent work (OECD-SWAC, 2024). Key destination economies Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Nigeria attract migrants from neighboring states due to relative economic stability and demand for low-wage labor. For example:

- Ivory Coast hosts 8 million Burkinabé migrants, alongside 402,000 Malians and 112,000 Guineans (INSAE, 2024);
- Nigeria’s informal sector employs over 2 million West African migrants, primarily in agriculture and trade (NBS, 2023).

#### **Resource Depletion as a Migration Driver**

The plunder of natural resources further intensifies migratory pressures. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing costs West African economies 0.26% of GDP annually, destroying 30,000 livelihoods and pushing 140,000 individuals into poverty (EJF, 2024). This mirrors broader patterns of resource-linked displacement, where extractive industries and environmental degradation erode traditional livelihoods (UNEP, 2023).

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