

Committee: International Organization for Migration

Agenda Item: Addressing Mass Migration from Africa and the Middle East to Europe and Ensuring Humane Border Management

Student Officer: Demir Bölek, Perla Palamutçuoğulları - Deputy Chairs

Introduction

Mass migration from Africa and the Middle East to Europe is one of the most significant challenges of the 21st century. This phenomenon has created a combination of armed conflict, political instability, economic inflation, climate change, and lack of access to services as basic as hygiene and food. Millions of people have hoped to find safety and opportunity beyond their national borders emigrating to more developed countries, most being in Europe. Owing to its geographic presence and its long standing commitment to human rights, Europe has become a prime destination for most immigrants seeking a life far from warzones and closer to a better future.

However, the scale and persistence of these migration flows have created complex and disproportionate population growth for European countries often leading them to complicated dilemmas. Governments are tasked by their national laws and constitutions with protecting national security, managing limited resources, maintaining public order, while upholding international obligations such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, ensuring respect for human dignity. This tension often results in polarized debates over border security, shelter procedures, and integration policies.

Therefore, the situation underlines the urgent need for humane, coordinated, and sustainable approaches to border management. Efficient solutions must balance security with care, ensuring that vulnerable people are not exposed to violence, or any type of human rights violations from human traffickers or armed groups . Building legal pathways for migration with a

strong base, enhancing cooperation with countries, and improving the search and rescue facilities are essential components of a comprehensive response.

Definition of Key Terms

Mass Migration: According to IOM, mass migration can be defined as the movement of large groups of people in response to push factors such as conflict, poverty, environmental disasters, or political instability, which can lead to complex challenges for the receiving countries.

Refugee: A person who is forced out of their country of origin, usually because of war, persecution, natural disasters, terrorism or human rights violations. Someone who leaves by choice, or moves inside borders is not considered a refugee.

Immigrant/Migrant: If someone moves inside their borders, or internationally, primarily by choice they are called migrants. Typically migrants leave their home for better education, job opportunities and an improved quality of life. When large numbers of people move to a country for these reasons, it can lead to mass migration, creating significant social, economic, and political impacts in both origin and destination areas.

Asylum: Asylum, is the protection given by countries to their refugees. When someone applies for asylum they are asking the government to keep them safe and not force them back to where they fled from. Asylum is based on international law, including the 1951 Refugee Convention. It is a legal right for people facing life threatening situations.

Border Control: Measures that are taken by the government to monitor and secure the movement of people across borders are called “border control”. It is

aimed to prevent illegal entry, trafficking, and other risks while also making sure that legal migration is safe and in order.

1951 Refugee Convention: An international agreement that defines what a refugee is, and what their rights are. It also establishes countries' legal obligations to protect refugees and is the main framework that guides asylum procedures worldwide.

Civil War: A large scale conflict that takes place within the borders of a country is called a civil war. These wars happen between groups, often involving the government and rebel forces. This leads it to last a long time, causing widespread destruction and displacement.

Civil Unrest: Civil unrest is a broader term for conflict, such as protests, strikes and riots. It may involve violence but it is on a smaller scale and lasts shorter than a civil war.

Major Actors Involved

European Union

The European Union is an international union that consists of 27 countries all found in Europe. This union aims to achieve balanced migration and secure borders. They also want to ensure the safety of immigrants through legal frameworks and humanitarian programs. The EU works closely with FRONTEX, UNHCR, IOM, and geographically important transit countries such as Türkiye and Libya.

Libya

While Libya is one of the most preferred transit countries for emigrants to Europe, it is also one of the most dangerous. The state being unstable has caused a vast area of it to be controlled by militias and criminal groups. Emigrants prefer this route due to its proximity to Italy, but this makes them

vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Libya is central to this agenda because improving stability and reducing human trafficking there would directly affect the conditions of migrants into Europe.

Türkiye

Türkiye has one of the largest refugee populations in the world, hosting over 3 million refugees, the majority of them being Syrians. This makes Türkiye a critical transit point for migrants attempting to reach Europe. Türkiye is especially a key element in this agenda because in 2016 the EU-Türkiye Statement of 2016 was agreed to. Through this agreement, Türkiye works to limit irregular migration to Europe in exchange for financial support.

Germany

Germany has had a big influence on shaping Europe's migration and asylum policies. Germany supports humanitarian actions by funding international organizations such as UNHCR and IOM, helping to expand legal pathways for asylum, and implementing national programs that focus especially on education, employment, and social inclusion, making Germany a leading voice on refugee protection and hospitality.

Italy

Italy is one of the key entry points into Europe for migrants arriving from the Central Mediterranean route. Italy's shores welcome thousands of migrants each year, making the country central to the EU asylum procedures and search and rescue operations. The historical Operation Mare Nostrum, which brought over 150.000 migrants to safety, was also coordinated by Italy, this action also influenced other European countries and organizations to act on this matter.

Syria

Due to the civil war that began in 2011, Syria has been one of the main sources for refugees. The war between the government, opposition groups and extremist organizations has led to widespread violence and human rights violations, over time forcing millions of people out of their homes. Most of the Syrians were first internally displaced but gradually crossed international borders, seeking safety in countries like Jordan, Türkiye, Libya, and eventually Europe.

FRONTEX

FRONTEX is the EU's border and coast guard agency. It is a primary actor in managing migration to Europe. FRONTEX supports member states by coordinating border security, monitoring migration routes, and helping to rescue people at sea. Right after Italy's "Operation Mare Nostrum" ended in 2014, FRONTEX launched their own mission, "Operation Triton". FRONTEX assisted Italy by conducting surveillance and rescue missions in the Central Mediterranean. By preventing deaths and countering smuggling networks, FRONTEX plays an essential role in ensuring safer and more orderly migration into Europe.

General Overview of the Issue

Major Displacement Crises in Africa and the Middle East

Syrian Refugee Crisis

Following the initiation of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, nationwide peaceful protests against the Assad regime began in Syria. The peaceful nature of the protests were rapidly disrupted as a result of police violence against a group of protesters in the City of Daara. As the protests got progressively more violent a Civil War became inevitable. Eventually Civil War broke out between the forces of the Assad Regime and many rebel groups such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The nation endured brutal fighting amidst the chaos of the war. As a result of this, vast amounts of people fled the country with the hope of finding a better life.

As of 2025, even after the end of the 14 year-long Civil War, the Syrian Refugee Crisis remains as the largest displacement crisis in the world. Currently around 6.8 million Syrian people seek refuge in foreign countries (UNHCR, 2025), most of them in transit countries such as Turkey.

Libyan Civil War

Since 2011, Libya endured two civil wars which lasted until 2020. The first civil war broke out between the rebel forces and the forces of Colonel

Muammar Gaddafi. After eight months of fighting, Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown and killed. After the war, a transitional government was established. However, peace was not maintained for a long period. Eventually, after the election in 2014, fighting broke out between the forces of the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the House of Representatives (HoR). After 6 years of fighting a permanent ceasefire was achieved between the parties and the war was concluded on 23 October 2020.

Currently, Libya is still politically divided into two separate administrations: the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the Government of National Stability (GNS). Libya's political instability coupled with the devastating damages it received from a decade of armed conflict has caused many Libyans to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. A significant portion of these refugees tried their luck to escape into Europe but very few were successful. Some of those were denied access and forced to return to Africa while many were tricked by human traffickers. A notable portion was also caught by Libyan authorities. Those who were caught were placed in detention centers and subjected to serious human rights violations.

Afghan Refugee Crisis

Throughout recent history Afghanistan has been a long-troubled nation. Following the retreat of American soldiers, the civil unrest in the nation catalyzed a major internal conflict once again. The extremist group known for its commitment in Sharia law and its view of women, the Taliban has obtained control of the government through violent fighting. There exists a strict list of laws and harsh punishments, an authoritarian government backed by the religion of Islam. This environment has fueled a need to escape for many Afghans, which later placed them as the third most displaced nationality in the world (UNHCR, 2025).

Nearing the end of 2025, Afghans have spread out all over the world, taking refuge in neighboring countries or going to farther lengths and seeking a life in the EU or the UK. They did not arrive as small groups but as large communities to other nations and have affected life there. The arrival of these refugees sparked cultural conflicts and humanitarian crises in many nations.

Sudanese Civil War

On 15 April 2023, fighting broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) which would then escalate into the ongoing Sudanese Civil War. Prior to the war, Sudan was already hosting many refugees because of the South Sudanese refugee crisis. Because of the war, with each passing day, the tragic humanitarian conditions in Sudan keep getting worse. As a result, after the beginning of the war, 3.2 million people including the ones that have arrived from South Sudan were displaced into neighboring countries, creating one of the worst displacement crises in the world. (UNHCR, 2024). This crisis has also resulted in countless asylum seekers being displaced into countries that are not stable enough to host them. Though some asylum seekers sought asylum in neighbouring countries, a considerable number of them who fled up north ended up crossing the Libyan border hoping to reach Europe via sea.

Humanitarian Issues

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking continues to be one of the most serious humanitarian concerns associated with mass migration from Africa and the Middle East to Europe. As traditional migration routes enter the influence of criminal organizations, migrants and refugees are forced into irregular channels controlled by criminal networks that take advantage of their vulnerability. Along the Central Mediterranean route trafficking organizations generally, located in transit countries, systematically kidnap, extort, compel forced labor, and sexually exploit migrants, with detention camps in parts of some countries serving as human trafficking platforms.

Moreover, human traffickers along the Mediterranean and Balkan routes charge usurious fees and subject migrants to horrendous conditions. Because of this, many migrants lose their life in their effort to reach Europe, and those who are able to reach Europe suffer permanent psychological damage. A lack of safe and legal paths, combined with weakened governance structures in key transit countries, enables trafficking networks to thrive.

Maltreatment in Detention Centers

A major part of this issue is constituted by the inhumane treatment of undocumented migrants in detention centers. Some transit countries, most notably Libya, place large quantities of migrants without documentation in detention centers. The problem regarding detention centers has been apparent for the better part of the decade. In these detention centers, refugees and migrants are systematically subjected to cruel acts by guards, members of militias, and armed groups. For example, migrants who fail to pay ransom money for their kidnapped relatives or who refuse to follow an order from the guards are beaten with metal pipes and/or tortured with electric shocks. In some cases, refugees are subject to violence for no apparent reason. For instance, “Ikenna” a refugee in a detention center at Libya told Amnesty International reporters that the guards had broken his leg “For no apparent reason but just for fun” (Amnesty International, 2020). Situations like this cause the refugees to suffer from not only physical damage but also permanent psychological damage or trauma. Additionally, refugees in detention centers, more specifically the women also suffer from sexual violence from guards and members of armed groups.

Furthermore, the living conditions in the detention centers are extremely harsh. According to Amnesty International reports, the quality of food and the scarcity of potable water in detention centers raise genuine concerns. As “Samuel” a refugee and a previous detainee at a detention center told Amnesty International reporters: the detainees are forced to rely on the food and water provided by the local NGOs because the Libyan officials fail to provide them with basic human necessities (Amnesty International, 2020). Therefore, the lives of many detainees are dependent on the humanitarian assistance provided by NGOs. Moreover, these migrants are also subjected to forced labor. Many detainees are forced to work in construction, cleaning, and maintenance without remuneration or their consent.



Image 1: Asylum seeker forced to work (Human Rights Watch, 2019)

The EU's Border Management

On April 10th, 2024, the pact on Asylum and Migration was adopted by the European Parliament despite the genuine concerns raised by multiple NGOs. The pact is composed of ten legislative files and has the initial purpose of achieving more secure European borders. The pact requires migrants and refugees to get through a qualification process. However, whether the pact complies with international law is questionable. The pact also determines detention and deportation as primary approaches rather than a last resort. The European Union's approach towards migrants is of crucial importance to tackle this issue. Many asylum seekers are facing even harsher conditions in transit countries than what they would have faced in their homeland. Which is why they try to escape from those countries into Europe. Hence, the European Union's unwillingness to cooperate through offering refuge for migrants to ensure their safety and well-being has to be addressed in order to solve the issue.

Timeline of Important Events

Date:	Event:
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March 15 2011 - December 8 2024	Syrian Civil War
20 October 2011	Libyan Regime Collapse
3 October 2013	Lampedusa Shipwreck
18 October 2013 - 31 October 2014	Operation Mare Nostrum
1 November 2014 - 1 February 2018	Operation Triton
11-12 November 2015	Valletta Summit between EU-Africa
18 March 2016	EU-Türkiye Statement
21 September 2016	Egypt Migrant Boat Disaster
1 February 2018 - Present	Operation Themis
27 May 2020	Mizdah Massacre
2023 - Present	Increase in Mediterranean Crossings

Related Documents

EU Pact on Migration and Asylum:

https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en

IOM- World Migration Report:

<https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/foreword/foreword>

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2240:

[https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2240\(2015\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2240(2015))

Past Solution Attempts

Over the past decade, political and humanitarian efforts to tackle the issue of unrestricted migration from Africa & the Middle East to Europe have been made. However, the said attempts have had little success due to a lack of

international coordination and the efforts being harmed by structural imbalances and criminal networks. For instance, the 2016 EU/Turkey Statement was intended to bring down irregular migration to the EU by strengthening border control and increasing deportations. Yet, without the embracement of shared responsibility, and the establishment of legally defined parallel channels, the attempt proved ineffective. In similar fashion, the Operation Sophia, an initiative against criminal networks in the Mediterranean, of the EU was not able to resolve the issue because of the political disagreements among Member States.

Humanitarian evacuations from transit countries, as well as bilateral agreements between European and North African states also aimed to improve protection for migrants. However these measures offered short term solutions that were not comprehensive enough to address the root causes of the problem such as the lack of a multilateral legal framework for migration.

Possible Solutions

One of the core issues regarding the matter is the lack of international cooperation. As a result of brutal wars and constant violence, living conditions in some countries are extremely unfavorable. Because of this, a flow of migration is inevitable in the short term. The safe distribution of these migrants has to be ensured without placing too much burden on countries who do not have the economic or political stability to host the migrants. The key for achieving this initiative is taking steps for the adoption of multilateral international agreements between unstable transit countries and neighboring, stable, European nations.

Additionally, another core issue is the humanitarian abuses the migrants face through their journey of finding a better place to live. In order to address this effectively, joint action against transnational criminal organizations that take advantage of vulnerable migrants can be pursued.

Moreover, one of the root causes of the entire problem is the absence of a consensus among Member States regarding the proper documentation,

processing, and recognition of migrants. Hence, to obtain a long term solution steps should be taken towards establishing a strong multilateral legal framework.

Also, another urgent issue is the safety and living conditions of migrants detained in detention centers. The transit countries in which these detainees are present are not, in their current state, able to offer safe shelter and humanitarian aid to detainees. Therefore, a programme can be developed to build and fund accommodation centers for migrants where humane living conditions will be provided.

Useful Links

Guardian on the issue

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/03/more-than-2200-people-died-trying-to-reach-europe-2024>

BBC on the issue

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-66202565>

Data portal for the arrival of migrant in Europe through the Mediterranean

<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/europe-sea-arrivals>

UNODC on the issue

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html>

Reuters on the issue

<https://www.reuters.com/graphics/MIGRATION-EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN/myvmxjemwpr/>

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