

**MMC Eastern and Southern  
Africa | Egypt and Yemen**

**QUARTER 1 2024**



# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Eastern and Southern Africa | Egypt and Yemen

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the Eastern and Southern Africa region plus Egypt and Yemen (ESA). The core areas of focus include the Eastern route, from East and the Horn of Africa towards the Arabian Peninsula; the Southern route from East Africa and the Great Lakes towards South Africa; the Central Mediterranean Route (also called the Northern Route) from East and the Horn of Africa towards North Africa; as well as intra-regional mixed migration dynamics. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any of the countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels. For more information on MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit [mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and follow us at [@Mixed\\_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

### **MMC's understanding of mixed migration**

“Mixed migration” refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people engaged in mixed migration have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Mixed migration describes migrants travelling along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly, and wholly or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

#### **Front cover photo credit:**

Michael Kirby Smith (2013)

Ethiopian migrants outside the Migrant Response Centre in Haradh, Yemen, May 2013.

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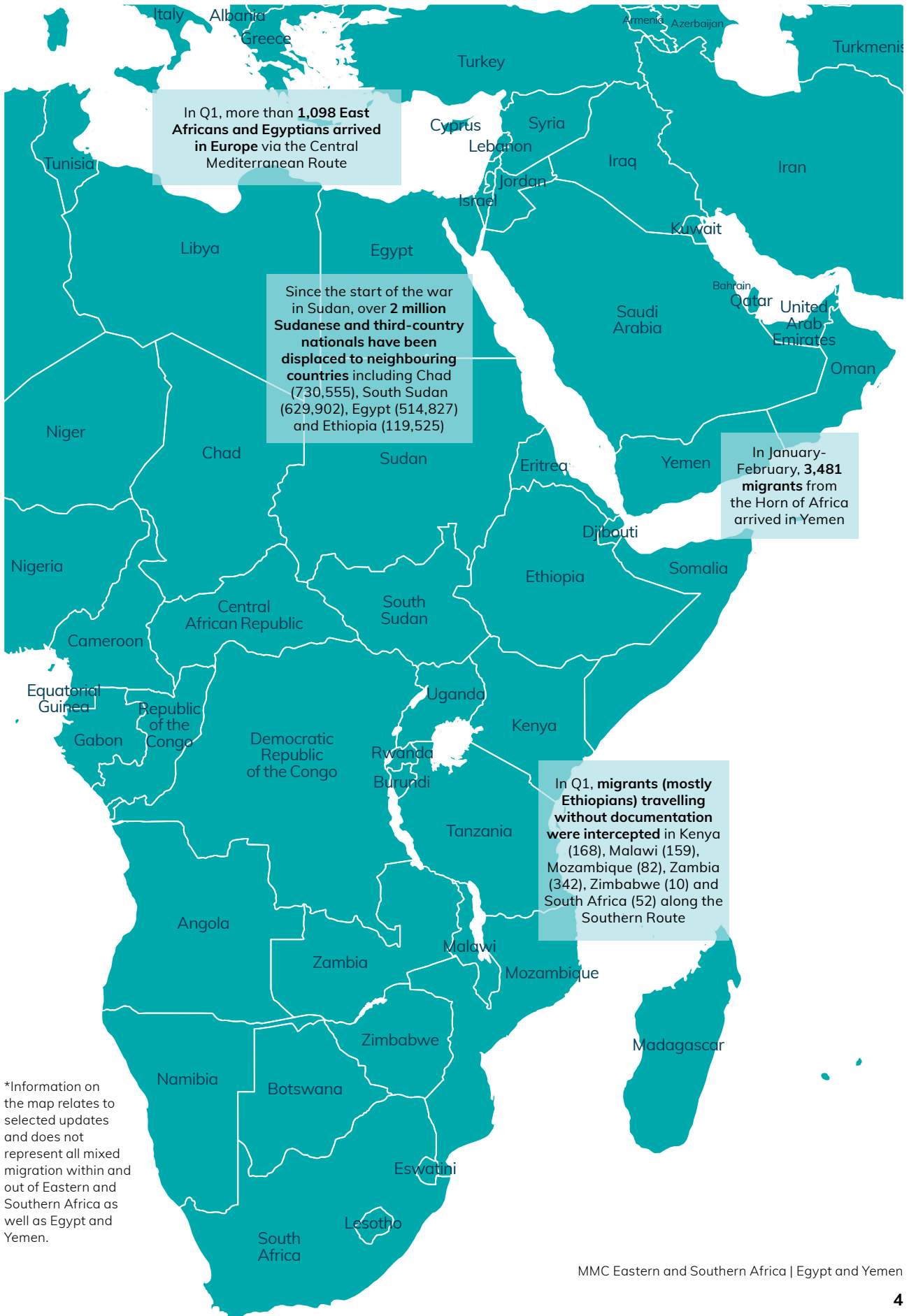
# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Eastern and Southern Africa | Egypt and Yemen

## Quarter 1 - 2024

## Key Updates

- The war in Sudan continues to fuel internal displacement and cross-border movements:** compared to the [previous quarter](#), [cross-border movements](#) have increased by 50% in Egypt (514,827), 47% in Libya (7,610), 36% in South Sudan (629,902), 19% in Chad (730,555), 18% in Ethiopia (119,525) and 14% in the Central African Republic (CAR) (29,444).
- Military campaigns lead to continued decrease in arrivals in Yemen:** in January-February, [3,481 migrants](#) entered Yemen, marking an [84% decrease](#) when compared to the first two months of 2023.
- Increased presence of East African arrivals along the Central Mediterranean Route:** in contrast to the [previous quarter](#), in [Q1](#), Sudanese, Eritreans and Ethiopians are among the top nationalities to arrive in Italy, despite an overall decrease of 40% in arrivals in the Mediterranean.
- The EU and Egypt sign new migration agreement:** In [March](#), the European Union and Egypt agreed on a new deal to collaborate on migration issues in Egypt, and on “stemming migration from North Africa to Europe”. The deal includes a EUR 7.4 billion aid package to support Egypt’s economy.
- British parliament votes in favour of Rwanda deal:** despite a [Supreme Court ruling](#) from last November rejecting the government’s attempts to send migrants, including asylum seekers, from the UK to Rwanda, the British parliament [voted in favour](#) of exploring options to overcome the Supreme Court decision in January.
- Ethiopia resumes repatriations from Saudi Arabia:** after a similar campaign took place in 2022, Ethiopian authorities [announced](#) the resumption of repatriations from Saudi Arabia in 2024. The programme is set to target around 70,000 nationals who “live in difficult conditions”.
- Ethiopians and Zimbabweans intercepted along the Southern Route:** in Q1, in [Kenya](#), 168 Ethiopians were apprehended while en route to South Africa. Moreover, 159 Ethiopians were intercepted in [Malawi](#), 82 in [Mozambique](#), 342 in [Zambia](#) and 10 in [Zimbabwe](#). 52 individuals, of which 49 were Ethiopians and three Zimbabweans were arrested in [South Africa for irregular entry and unauthorised work](#).

## Regional Overview\*



# Mixed Migration Regional Updates

## Mixed Migration within East Africa and the Great Lakes

### War in Sudan continues to force internal and cross-border displacement

The war in Sudan hit its one-year mark at the time of writing. Since conflict broke out on 15 April 2023, internal and cross-border displacement has continued to increase, making Sudan the [largest displacement crisis globally](#). As of 29 March, 6,622,565 people in Sudan have been internally displaced, representing an 11% increase compared [to the end of 2023](#) (5,942,580). Moreover, 2,031,858 have fled Sudan to neighbouring countries, marking a 31% increase compared to the end of the previous quarter (1,555,344).

For the first time since the outbreak of conflict, the number of people crossing borders increased at a higher rate than the number of people displaced internally. This may indicate that more and more Sudanese and third-country nationals are leaving Sudan and engaging in longer distance and cross-border movements as the war persists. For those who have crossed borders, a majority have fled to Chad (730,555), South Sudan (629,902), Egypt (514,827) and Ethiopia (119,525). Some 29,444 arrivals have been recorded in the Central African Republic (CAR) and 7,610 in Libya. In Q1, reports continue to emphasise that overstretched humanitarian responses in South Sudan and [Chad](#) have led to very difficult conditions for those fleeing the war, with many in South Sudan [stranded](#) in transit camps close to the border for prolonged periods of time.

### Exploitation and sexual abuse of young migrant workers in Tanzania

At the end of March, the Tanzanian newspaper The Citizen [revealed](#) cases of exploitation and sexual abuse of young migrants on tobacco farms in Tanzania's Shinyanga Region. The report details how children and young adults from Burundi, Rwanda and DR Congo are lured to the farms by recruiters with the promise of fair wages and working conditions. Accounts reveal that the victims were promised 150,000-250,000 Tanzanian Shillings (equivalent to 58-97 USD) per month. In practice, some had not been paid for over a year and had endured exploitative and dangerous working conditions and sexual abuse. While the children and young adults remain undocumented in Tanzania, they do not have access to the judicial system to report such abuses.

## The Eastern Route from East Africa to Yemen

### Mixed migration in Djibouti

Between December 2023 and January 2024, IOM DTM [recorded](#) 27,074 entries into Djibouti, representing a slight decrease of 3% compared to the [same period last year](#) (28,032).<sup>1</sup> While [economic reasons](#) were mostly driving Ethiopians moving to Djibouti (86%), conflict was also a motivator (10%). In particular, around one-fifth departing from Amhara noted having left due to conflict, violence and persecution.

### Increased military campaigns lead to shifting routes and longer sea crossings to Yemen

From January-February 2024, [IOM DTM](#) recorded the arrival of 3,481 migrants in Yemen, compared to 21,433 arrivals during the [same period last year](#), representing a 84% decrease. Since August 2023, a joint military campaign by Yemen and Saudi Arabia, including a crackdown on smuggling operations, has led to a significant reduction in arrivals to Yemen, while [increased patrolling](#) by the Djiboutian coastguard has dramatically decreased departures from Djibouti. The campaigns primarily impacted arrivals in the Lahj governorate in Yemen, which was the main point of arrival for departures from Djibouti. Indeed, all arrivals in Q1 were exclusively observed in the eastern Shabwah governorate. 94% of those arriving in Shabwah had departed from Bari, Somalia; whereas the remaining 6% were from Obock, Djibouti. The considerable distance of approximately 450 kilometres between Obock and Shabwah represents a significantly longer journey across the Gulf of Aden, than Obock to Lahj. The vessels used by smugglers are notoriously ill equipped and longer sea crossings mean greater precarity in terms of incidents and shipwrecks.<sup>2</sup> While no media reports have linked the [ongoing political crisis](#) in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to shifting migration trends along the Eastern Route, perceived risks linked to the [recent ship attacks](#), as well as the aforementioned military campaigns, may shape migrants' and smugglers' decision-making.

### Puntland authorities arrest Ethiopians in Bosaso and Ethiopians targeted in al-Shabab attack

In [February](#), Somalia's Puntland regional authorities announced the arrest of a "significant number" of Ethiopians, primarily Oromos, in Bosaso. The individuals were in Somalia without documentation, and likely traveling along the Eastern Route. The authorities claimed that a growing number of Ethiopians from Oromia were coming to Somalia to join terrorist organisations, posing risks to Bosaso and other cities. The arrests come at a time of [rising tensions](#) between Ethiopia and Somalia, after the [1 January announcement](#) of a deal between Ethiopia and the Somaliland region, which includes granting Ethiopia access to Somaliland's coastline for use by the Ethiopian navy, in exchange for recognising Somaliland's independence.

1 Data for February-March 2024 was not available at the time of writing. Furthermore, IOM [notes](#) that a lower figure of entries for January 2024 could be (partially) explained through fewer days of data collection with DTM enumerators participating in other activities.

2 Notes from Migrant Response Plan meeting in January 2024.

[In the same month](#), six Ethiopian migrants and a Somali national were killed, and another six Ethiopians were injured, in an attack in Beled Hawo, in southern Somalia, carried out by al-Shabab. [Local media](#) noted al-Shabab may have deliberately targeted Ethiopians in an attempt to further generate geopolitical tensions in the Horn of Africa and [cause fear](#) amongst the Ethiopian community in Somalia. Beled Hawo borders Mandera, Kenya, and the Ethiopians are believed to have been on their way to Kenya.

## Ethiopia announces new round of repatriations from Saudi Arabia

After a similar campaign took place in [2022](#), and several others over the last decade, Ethiopia [announced](#) in March a new round of repatriations from Saudi Arabia of approximately 70,000 nationals. The programme is targeting “Ethiopians in difficult conditions”, and while the government does not provide details on the nature of their conditions, for instance if they were victims of trafficking or exploitive work conditions, it described them as squalid. Repatriations will include a temporary stay in Addis Ababa, before returns to regions of origin. That being said, [local media indicated](#) the challenges returnees may face with regards to internal conflicts in Ethiopia, particularly in Amhara and Oromia, and the level of destroyed infrastructure and housing in Tigray after the war which ended in 2022. [Previous MMC research](#) found that a large majority of Ethiopians returning from Saudi Arabia in 2022 had faced protection challenges and detention before their return, generating significant needs once back in Ethiopia. The research indicated that longer-term livelihoods and psychosocial support were vital to this group’s successful reintegration.

## Kenya invites 2,500 nurses to apply for jobs in Saudi Arabia

In early January, the Kenyan government [released](#) a public statement on the opening of 2,500 jobs for female nurses in Saudi Arabia. The statement also included assurances from the Kenyan government on the enhancement of “safe, regular and productive labour migration” to Saudi Arabia. The bilateral deal forms part of a larger strategy by the government to secure employment for Kenyans abroad, which is also said to include future agreements with Israel, Russia, Serbia and Germany. In February, local media [reported](#) that despite the jobs being intended for women, 500 Kenyan men had applied, amidst an overall lack of applications to fill the 2,500 positions. The criteria of the vacancy demonstrate the [gendered dimensions of migration](#) to the Arabian Peninsula, with women more often engaging in labour migration in the domestic work and health sectors.

## Routes towards the Mediterranean

### East African and Egyptian arrivals along the Mediterranean routes

Between January and March, [41,268 refugees and migrants](#) arrived in Europe through land and sea routes. [This represents a 40% decrease](#) compared to the previous quarter, and a [14% increase](#) when looking at the same period last year. Egyptians represented the [4th most common nationality](#) to arrive in Italy in January-February 2024, rising from 5th the previous quarter. However, Egyptian arrivals in Italy are 32% lower than [in January-February 2023](#). Turning to migrants from East and the Horn of Africa, while in absolute terms the numbers remain small, Eritreans (248; 6th), Ethiopians (187; 7th) and Sudanese (149; 9th) featured in

the top ten nationalities to arrive, in a considerable shift from Q4 2023. Moreover, South Sudanese (3; 23rd) were among reported arrivals for the first time in over a year, but no Somalis were recorded to have arrived in Italy in the first months of 2024.<sup>3</sup> The increase in East Africans may indicate, depending on when their journeys began, that such migrants are managing to transit Sudan, despite the war. If true, this group is likely to have a high degree of protection needs by the time they reach North African countries, and more so when they reach southern European shores.

## New migration deal between the EU and Egypt

In [March](#), the European Union and Egypt signed a new agreement to collaborate on “stemming migration” from North Africa to Europe, and to “bring stability to the region”. The agreement entails a EUR 7.4 billion aid package to support Egypt’s economy, and lifting the relationship between the EU and Egypt to a ‘strategic partnership’. Of the total budget, EUR 200 million has been earmarked for ‘migration issues’, including border management. This QMMU’s Thematic Focus sheds more light on this new agreement and its implications for mixed migration.

## Migrants in Egypt to pay fines in cash dollars to regularise status

In January, [reports emerged](#) of Egyptian authorities detaining migrants who had outstanding residency fees, or who had overstayed their residency in Egypt. The events follow an official decree which entered into force at the end of 2023. The decree allows foreigners to pay fines to regularise their status. Fines must be paid in cash, either in USD or other foreign currencies. Local media have linked the new measure to Egypt’s rising debt, high inflation and shortage of foreign currency. Moreover, with the largescale arrival of Sudanese refugees, it is [believed](#) this new measure seeks to incentivise regularisation and target the millions of migrants, many of whom are Sudanese, thought to be living in the country irregularly. According to a [Nigerian source](#), Nigerians in Egypt who had overstayed their visas or residency permits paid a 1,000 USD fine to regularise their status and continue to live and work in the country, and thereby avoid detention and deportation. Access to dollars was [noted](#) as a struggle, with salaries being paid out in Egyptian pounds and Egyptian banks restricting access to foreign currency. On 6 March, Egypt [floated its currency](#) to combat inflation and incentivise foreign investment. This measure should also make foreign currency more readily available in the country.

## The Southern Route towards South Africa and mixed migration within Southern Africa

### Ethiopians and Zimbabweans intercepted and deported along the Southern Route

In [January](#), authorities intercepted 62 Ethiopians in Rumphu, northern Malawi, who entered the country irregularly, and were believed to be moving along the Southern. The individuals were discovered in a truck,

<sup>3</sup> No data on nationalities of arrivals in Greece for the first months of 2024 was publicly available at the time of writing.



which was abandoned by the driver as the police approached. In the [same month](#), another group of 82 Ethiopians were apprehended and detained in Manica, central Mozambique, after it was discovered they had entered the country irregularly while en route to Zimbabwe and then South Africa.

At the end of January, the South African police [reported](#) intercepting 25 Ethiopians near Polokwane, Limpopo province. In Zimbabwe, close to the Zambian border at Victoria Falls, 10 Ethiopians were discovered in a house and taken into custody. A local news [report](#) noted they attempted to escape, after which authorities detained the group for three months, while also fining them 300 USD each. According to the source, all individuals came from the town of Hosaena, Central Ethiopia Regional State.

In [February](#), Kenyan authorities intercepted eight Ethiopians in Garbatulla, Isiolo County, and 25 in Loglogo, Marsabit County. In the same month, in a fatal car incident in Meru, three Ethiopians were reported dead while eight others were brought to hospital after having sustained severe injuries. [At the end of February](#), in Kajiado, close to the border with Tanzania, Kenyan police intercepted 90 Ethiopians, including children. Furthermore, 37 Ethiopians were [discovered](#) in Kiambu during a police operation, which also saw the [arrest of four Kenyan police officers](#) for their alleged complicity in human smuggling.

Also in [February](#), authorities in Zambia detained 342 migrants in an irregular situation across the country, without disclosing their nationalities. Another 268 were deported from Zambia during the same month. In Malawi, [police](#) in Nsanje arrested three Ethiopians for irregular entry into the country while en route to Mozambique. At the end of February, the [South African police](#) in Limpopo province arrested three individuals, suspected to be Zimbabweans, for irregular entry into the country and engagement in illegal mining.

Finally, in early [March](#), police in South Africa intercepted 24 Ethiopians and two smugglers who had crossed into the country irregularly from Beitbridge, Zimbabwe. During the same month, South Africa [announced](#) the deportation of 280 Zimbabweans. The group was held in a repatriation centre in Krugersdorp, Gauteng province. After an undisclosed number of migrants had managed to escape earlier from the same centre, the authorities conducted an accelerated deportation of the Zimbabweans. Also in March, immigration officials in northern Malawi arrested groups of [52](#), [27](#) and [15](#) Ethiopians during three separate incidents.

## Ethiopian and Somali asylum seekers lose legal case in South Africa

In February, local media [reported](#) that the Johannesburg high court had dismissed a case of four Ethiopians (two of whom were Tigrayan) and two Somalis against South Africa's government. The six individuals had claimed their prolonged detention in the country while they awaited refugee status determination (RSD) was unlawful, based on South Africa's Refugee Act. Ultimately, the high court maintained there were insufficient grounds for the six asylum seekers to obtain temporary documentation that would allow them to reside in South Africa while they awaited the outcome of their RSD, and considered their detention to be lawful in light of their earlier irregular entry into the country. During the last quarter, South Africa [announced](#) its intentions to withdraw from the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol until such time that it could reform its asylum and immigration policies, while immigration-related concerns have emerged as a key topic of debate leading up to the general elections in May 2024.

## Tanzania and Zambia sign MoU on migration

As part of a set of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), Tanzania and Zambia signed an [agreement on migration](#) during the Second Session of the Tanzania-Zambia Joint Permanent Commission on Defense and Security, held in Zanzibar in February. The Zambian Minister of Defense, Mr. Ambrose Lufuma, highlighted issues of human trafficking and undocumented migration were priorities for both countries. Local media did not disclose further details on the signed MoU.

## France announces revoking birthplace citizenship and moving East Africans from Mayotte to Europe

French authorities [announced](#) in February a plan to amend the French constitution and revoke birthplace citizenship on the Mayotte archipelago, detailing it would no longer be possible to become French without at least one French parent. The decision comes at a time of social unrest and tensions on the archipelago, directed towards the presence of East African migrants traveling along the [\(Western\) Indian Ocean Route before arriving in Mayotte](#). The announcement followed the dismantling of an informal settlement inhabited by migrants at Cavani stadium, in Mayotte's capital Mamoudzou, and the resettlement to mainland France of 300 East African migrants, mostly originating from the Great Lakes region.

Local media [coverage](#) in the same month noted that the unrest in Mayotte was contributing to a decline in departures from the Comoros, which is both a key transit and departure point to Mayotte. In the village of Kangani, on the easternmost island of Anjouan in the Comoros, residents observed migrants who appeared stranded and were waiting for calmer times before crossing to Mayotte. A fisherman who also engaged in smuggling activities [noted](#) that the Mayotte policy shifts were bad news for Anjouan's economy, which relies heavily on the smuggling of migrants to Mayotte. He added that each individual is charged 400-500 EUR to make the crossing, which is four or five times the average monthly salary. Normally, five to six boats depart for Mayotte per day.

## NGO raises alarm over human trafficking in the Seychelles

In January, local media [reported](#) on the alarming number of human rights violations linked to human trafficking in the Seychelles. The Association for Rights Information and Democracy (ARID), a national NGO, recorded at least 150 cases. ARID's chairperson, Ms. Lucianne Sofola, disclosed that migrant worker rights violations remain a big issue in the archipelago. She added that many incidences of human trafficking are not investigated by the authorities, with most survivors sent back to their countries of origin without the provision of adequate protection and access to justice. While the report did not cite where the victims were from, earlier research has [found](#) that up to 25% of the work force on the Seychelles constitutes labour migrants, including Kenyans, Ugandans, Mauritians and Malagasy, as well as Indians, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankans, Chinese and Filipinos, among others.

## East Africans farther afield

### UK parliament votes in favour of Rwanda migrant deal

In [January](#), the UK parliament backed a bill aimed at overcoming a UK Supreme Court [decision from November 2023](#) that ruled against sending migrants, including asylum seekers, to Rwanda. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak noted after the vote that the UK government will go ahead with the plan, while legal and political obstacles remain, and despite earlier [opposition](#) from Home Office staff and [criticism](#) from NGOs. Also in January, The Guardian [revealed](#) that the UK had granted asylum to Rwandans, at the same time as the government had argued in court and parliament that Rwanda was a safe hosting country for all migrants.

The news also came as [accounts](#) emerged from three asylum seekers of sexual abuse and harassment in Rwanda. The asylum seekers, of Tamil origin, had been [transferred to Rwanda](#) for treatment after attempting suicide on Diego Garcia Island, a British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), despite having been granted asylum by the BIOT administration. In February, UNHCR called for the urgent relocation of asylum seekers on Diego Garcia. A [confidential report](#) had found that asylum seekers and refugees on the island are subject to arbitrary detention, abuse and violence, while “under the effective control of the UK government”.

### Ugandans trafficked for cyber-scamming in Myanmar

In February, the Ugandan government [announced](#) 30 Ugandan nationals were found trapped in camps in Myanmar, where they were forced to work as [online scammers](#). The group had been trafficked to the Asian country under the guise of a job opportunity. On 30 March, Ugandan media [reported](#) that 23 individuals had been released after negotiations took place involving the Ugandan embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. They did not give insight into the whereabouts of the remaining seven. The case of the Ugandans is not a standalone incident, with [MMC](#) reporting in Q4 of 2023 on the pervasiveness of the cyber scam industry in Southeast Asia, posing ongoing challenges in combating human trafficking. According to [UNODC](#), cyber slavery in Southeast Asia may constitute one of the largest trafficking operations in history.

Policy experts [warned](#) this year that East African governments need to step up action to avoid their citizens getting trapped in cyber-scam compounds in Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, which are said to be run by highly organised Chinese criminal gangs. [Earlier articles](#) have revealed how particularly East Africans have fallen prey to human trafficking to Southeast Asia for online scamming, with their English language skills being [high valued](#). With high unemployment rates across East Africa and low wages, fake IT jobs advertised in Southeast Asia have [attracted higher educated East Africans](#) for years. The Government of Kenya has [issued](#) official warnings in the past to its citizens on these so-called fake jobs and conducts additional screening of passengers on flights from Nairobi to Bangkok.

### Violent riots between rivalling Eritreans in the Netherlands

On [17 February](#), a standoff between two opposing Eritrean groups led to violent clashes in the Hague, the Netherlands. Rioters threw rocks and torched several vehicles, after which police officers used tear gas

to end the unrest. The clash is the latest in a series of violent outbreaks between rivalling Eritreans, with similar events taking place in Germany and Israel in September 2023. As mentioned in [Q3](#) of last year, the riots highlight the [deep political divide](#) among Eritrean diaspora groups who are either supporting or opposing the Eritrean government, with many opponents of the government having sought political refuge outside Eritrea.

## Malawi approves labour migration to Israel

On [15 February](#), the Malawian parliament announced plans to send up to 10,000 Malawians to Israel to work in farms and industries. The news follows [last quarter's reports](#) on both Malawi and Kenya sending initial groups of workers to Israel, after shortages had emerged since the outbreak of war in Gaza in October 2023, with many foreign workers fleeing the unrest and Gazans having had their permits to work in Israel [revoked](#). The approval also comes after a fact-finding mission, which evaluated the living and working conditions of 700 Malawians already employed in Israel. In a separate announcement, the fact-finding delegation encouraged both the government and Malawian youths to take advantage of available employment in Israel. The approval was given despite the ongoing war in Gaza, and concerns raised by the Malawian opposition in [November](#) on the safety of Malawians deployed to the country.



# Thematic Focus:

## The new EU-Egypt agreement on reducing migration to Europe

On 17 March, the European Union (EU) and Egypt [announced](#) the signing of a new agreement expanding the EU-Egypt relationship to the level of a strategic partnership. As a key host country for migrants close to the EU's borders, as well as source and transit country for migration to Europe, the deal aims to reduce irregular migration from Egypt and the broader North Africa region to Europe, bring stability to the region and support Egypt's flailing economy. Leveraging migration to support Egypt's economy has been a key driver of the deal, with analysts [warning](#) that the largely economic character of the deal could undermine efforts to reform migration policies.

The agreement was signed at an EU-Egypt summit in Cairo, attended by the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, the Prime Minister of Egypt Abdel Fatah al-Sisi and the Prime Ministers of Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Austria and Belgium. Von der Leyen [noted](#) that the political and economic importance behind the deal signified Egypt's strategic position in a currently unstable region. The deal comes after an initial [80 million EUR border management cooperation programme](#) signed by the EU and Egypt in 2022.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was quoted [saying](#) the deal was the outcome of months of intensive negotiations, with particular support from Italy and [Greece](#), as key countries of arrival along the Mediterranean. The three-year agreement amounting to 7.4 billion euro includes 5 billion in soft loans to support Egypt's economy and 1.8 billion to support business investments.

Similar to the 105 million euro [the EU committed to Tunisia in 2023](#) on migration management, the agreement with Egypt earmarks 200 million euro for reducing migration to Europe, with [special attention](#) to combating human trafficking and strengthening Egypt's borders, particularly with Libya. East African migrants and Egyptians intending to reach Europe often transit Libya and sometimes Tunisia, before crossing the Mediterranean towards Italy and Malta. Direct crossings from Egypt to Europe are less common, despite a [recorded increase](#) over the last months of boats from Egypt arriving in Gavdos, Greece's southernmost island.

## Current mixed migration dynamics in and from Egypt

[A 2022 estimate](#) placed the number of migrants in Egypt at 9 million, including authorized migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and those in an irregular situation. The majority are living in Cairo, Giza, Alexandria and Damietta. The main countries of origin include Sudan (4 million), Syria (1.5 million), Yemen (1 million) and Libya (1 million), reflecting the political instability within Egypt's neighbourhood. These figures further underline the EU's key interest in a migration partnership with Egypt, to ensure these populations do not engage in onward movement to Europe.

The stability of Egypt's neighbourhood shows no signs of improvement. As of March, more than [514,827 Sudanese and third-country nationals](#) have crossed Egypt's southern border fleeing the war in Sudan. Amidst failing peace negotiations, more displaced are expected to arrive in Egypt this year. This is despite new [visa restrictions](#) introduced by Egyptian authorities for all Sudanese in May-June 2023. New restrictions have [led to long waiting times](#) at the Sudan-Egypt border, a [flourishing visa forgery business](#) and increased irregular crossings into Egypt by people who do not have the means to support themselves in Northern Sudan while they wait for visas. Restrictive measures have not prevented migration, but have rather unintentionally led to more precarious and irregular journeys, as people fleeing war continue to search for protection and safety.

It is unclear how many new arrivals plan to move onwards from Egypt into Libya (and Tunisia) towards Europe. While Sudanese and other East Africans seem to feature more prominently among arrivals in Italy this quarter, overall numbers have decreased compared to the same period last year (see page 8 of this QMMU). There remains no evidence of an "influx of Sudanese refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea", as Meloni [described](#) in February.

Turning to Egypt's northeastern border, following a Hamas attack in Israel killing approximately [1,200 people and kidnapping another 250](#) on 7 October 2023, more than [33,000 Palestinians have been killed](#) by the Israeli army and 1.9 million have been internally displaced. Moreover, some 1.5 million of Gaza's 2.3 million inhabitants are [crammed into Rafah](#), Gaza's southernmost city and the sole border crossing point between Egypt and Gaza. Egypt so far has [refused](#) to allow Palestinians to flee into its territory, a stance which stems in part from Egypt's support for the creation of an independent Palestinian state and the fear that by allowing Palestinian refugees into Egypt, they will not be able to return Gaza. Despite this, Egypt has been [reportedly](#) planning for a large displacement situation in Sinai with the clearing of an area estimated at 21km<sup>2</sup>. It remains to be seen to what extent the new EU-Egypt deal will touch upon managing an eventual Palestinian displacement situation.

## Protection experiences of those arriving in Egypt

MMC 4Mi data collected in [Sudan](#), [Ethiopia](#) and [South Sudan](#) in 2023 show that a very high share of respondents fleeing the Sudan war having witnessed death, experienced physical and sexual violence and/or experienced harsh conditions leading to injuries and illness. [Evidence](#) also suggests a sharp increase in children and young adults being separated from their families during the fighting and an increase in people's reliance on smugglers, who are often [perpetrators of abuses](#), to navigate through areas of fighting and cross borders where visa restrictions have been erected.

With increased experiences of abuse also comes increased needs once people arrive in Egypt. Egyptian authorities are therefore likely to face greater challenges than before with regards to accommodating and hosting highly vulnerable groups of Sudanese and other nationalities who have fled conflict and violence. Announcements on the new EU-Egypt deal have so far not detailed these challenges, or addressed the [safeguarding of human rights](#) and the political and socio-economic drivers of migration from Egypt. Instead, it focuses on enforcing borders and reducing movements. With such a focus, migrants could face increases in arrests, arbitrary detention and unlawful deportation, as [argued](#) by Ms. Eve Geddie, Amnesty International Director for European Institutions.

In Tunisia, MMC has [reported](#) on a deterioration in the treatment of migrants since the signing of the EU-Tunisia deal, with authorities forcibly displacing migrants to its borders with Libya and Algeria, reportedly leaving them in the desert without water or food. Hence, if human rights concerns and protection needs are not sufficiently addressed in Egypt, the EU may be looking at a rise in cases of abuse and death and a large number of people who are likely to qualify for asylum in Europe.

Precarious lives in Egypt could also inform onward movement intentions. While there are currently no comprehensive, publicly available data on the needs of migrants in Egypt, policy experts note the significant [security and social challenges](#) they face. Egypt has a [comprehensive legal framework](#), providing for the inclusion of migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, in national services including education and healthcare, and in the labour market. Despite this, a UN report from March 2022 [noted that in practice](#) certain entitlements are not available to all. Faced with [discrimination and xenophobia](#), Sudanese and other East Africans are thought to be living in “parallel informal communities” in urban centres with inadequate access to national services, including to education and healthcare.

## Zooming out: what to expect from this deal?

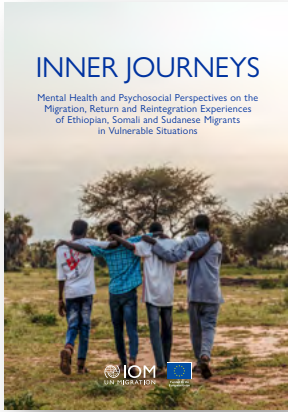
While the deal with Egypt has just been announced, it is not the first of its kind in the region and follows similar deals with [Tunisia](#) (July 2023) and [Mauritania](#) (March 2024). Despite the scale of funding for Egypt being much larger, looking at examples from the region may provide insight into what could be expected for Egypt.

During a [heated debate](#) in Strasbourg in September 2023, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) discussed the lack of results the Tunisian deal had yielded thus far. Some MEPs argued, however, that it was too early to measure results. MMC also [noted in July 2023](#) that instead of curbing migration, arrivals in Italy from Tunisia had been rising, attributing this to various factors. Therefore, despite these multiple deals, irregular migration continues and brings into question the efficacy of the EU’s externalisation policies on migration.

Moreover, past experience teaches us that deals between the EU and North African countries may not yield the [intended results](#). In the case of Mauritania, previous EU-funded projects that have provided support to migration and border management succeeded in temporarily reducing arrivals in the Spanish Canary Islands, only for other mixed migration routes to increase in popularity. Moreover, numbers to the Islands increased again once funding declined, showing a lack of sustainability of actions.

What does this mean for Egypt? While arrivals in Europe might decline in the short to medium term, the question remains how the EU and Egypt will seek to achieve their objective of curbing irregular migration in the long term. Migrants continue to lack sufficient alternative legal pathways. With wars continuing to foment displacement across the region, people are likely to continue engaging in movements to seek ways out of conflict areas. At the same time, highly vulnerable new arrivals from Sudan with direct experiences of abuse may pose further challenges for Egypt as a host country, if not addressed comprehensively through the new deal. If the needs of vulnerable migrants remain unaddressed, this deal may follow the trend set by its neighbours of unintentionally increasing the risks for those seeking protection and safety.

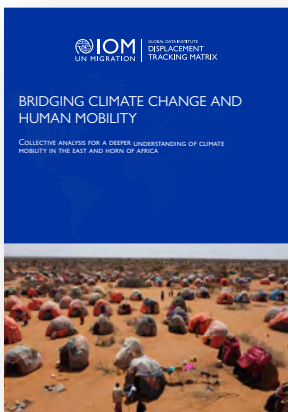
# Highlighted New Research and Reports



## [Inner Journeys: Mental Health and Psychosocial Perspectives on the Migration, Return and Reintegration Experiences of Ethiopian, Somali and Sudanese Migrants in Vulnerable Situations](#)

### **IOM | January 2024**

Based on quantitative and qualitative data collection with returning migrants in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan in 2021-22, this study examines migration, return and reintegration experiences from a mental health perspective. Through interviews with returnees on their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing upon return and reintegration, the report aims to inform policy, programming and advocacy on sustainable reintegration approaches.



## [Bridging Climate Change and Human Mobility. Collective analysis for a deeper understanding of climate mobility in the East and Horn of Africa](#)

### **IOM | March 2024**

This report is based on feasibility analyses and findings coming out of a two-part hackathon organised by IOM and Snowflake in London and Nairobi in October 2023, with MMC attending the Nairobi session. The exercises yielded valuable insights on how to work with advanced analytical techniques while making the case for linking climate change to human mobility in the Horn of Africa. The report aims to inform further data and analysis on the theme.



## [Migration profile report for South Africa. A country profile – 2023](#)

### **Statistics (Stats) South Africa | March 2024**

This report represents the first iteration of a new initiative led by South Africa's national Stats South Africa department to provide a migration profile for the country. Findings indicate the majority of migrants arriving in South Africa originate from countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), while the intended destination of most immigrants remains Gauteng province, followed by the Western Cape.

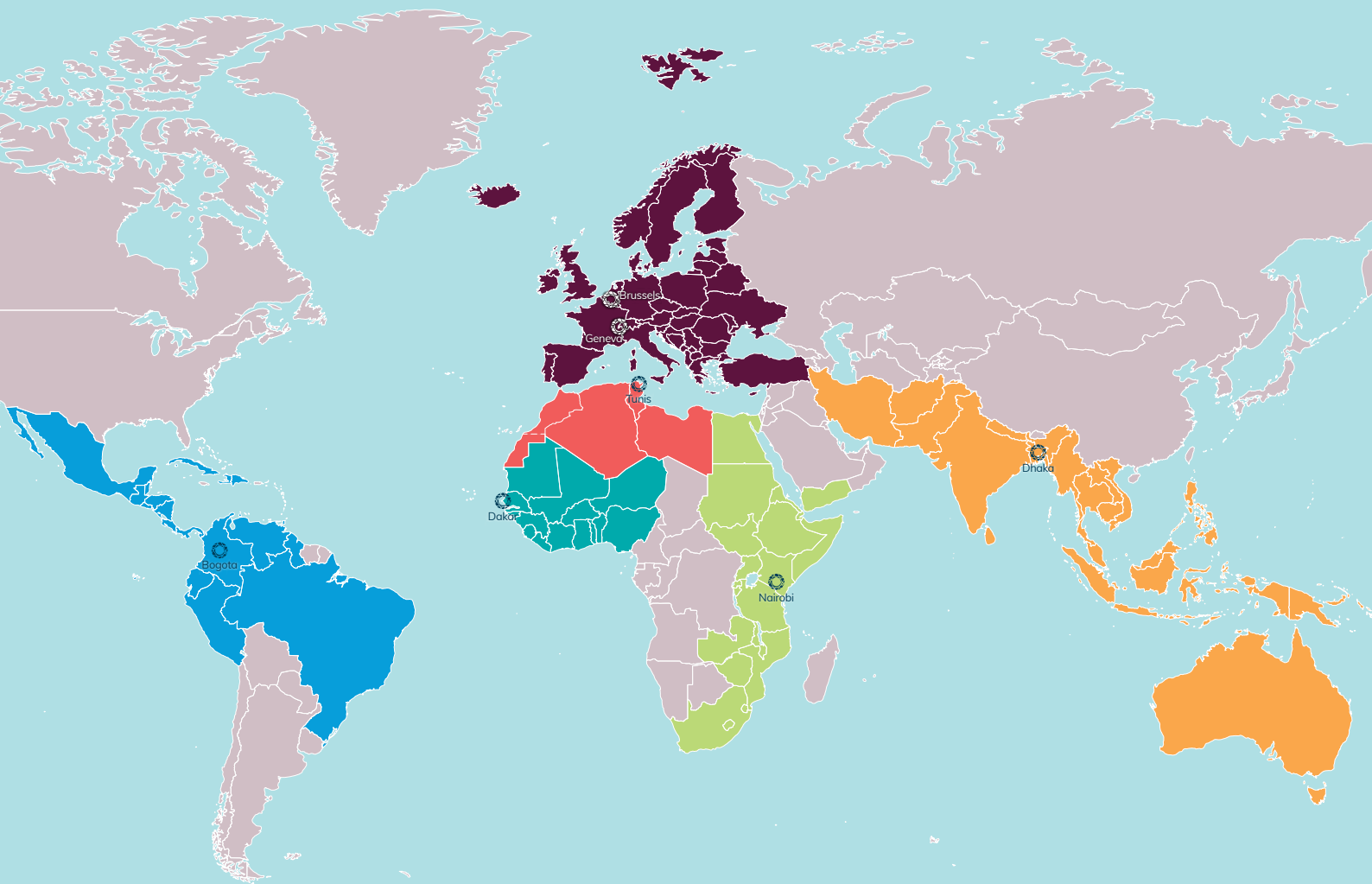




## [Child trafficking and unsafe migration between Kenya and Ethiopia: Transforming social norms and strengthening child protection in Marsabit](#)

### **Strategies for Northern Development (SND) | March 2024**

This study focuses on child trafficking and irregular migration among pastoralists moving between Kenya and Ethiopia, based on a participatory mixed-method approach. Findings include community members in Marsabit exhibiting a relatively low awareness of irregular migration, as compared to human trafficking. Moreover, it found that perpetrators of child trafficking in Northern Kenya are most often neighbours and/or community members.



MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels.

MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based mixed migration responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

MMC is part of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

For more information visit:  
[mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and follow us at [@Mixed\\_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

