



ROUTES TOWARDS THE MEDITERRANEAN

REDUCING RISKS AND STRENGTHENING
PROTECTION

UNHCR APPEAL, JUNE 2019



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

FRONT COVER:

A woman hugs a UNHCR staff member in June 2019 at the Gathering and Departure Facility in Tripoli, Libya after UNHCR secured the release of 96 detainees from Zintan detention centre, where conditions are dire. For more, see <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2019/6/5cf61e4e4/unhcr-secures-release-96-detainees-libyas-zintan-detention-centre.html>.

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"We faced a lot of difficulties on our way to Libya. As we crossed the Sahara with smugglers, we were faced with hunger, the car broke down, there were roadblocks where we were told to pay money. We were abandoned by the smugglers but fortunately we found another car to take us to Libya."

"We found dead bodies of those who had died in the desert from starvation. I lost a lot of my family on that road, I don't know where they are now."

"My husband was working in Tripoli. He was kidnapped. They beat him and punished him. They demanded a ransom but we had nothing to pay them."

"The driver dropped us in the 'middle' [of the desert] because we didn't have enough money. I tried to pay him with my gold jewellery but he refused to take it. Later, my jewellery was stolen by militia on the road."

"I cannot sleep at night. When I think of what happened, my heart starts beating faster. My mind is somewhere else."

Mariam, 30, a mother-of-two from Sudan

KEY FIGURES

116,600

Arrivals to Europe by sea
in 2018

21,800

Arrivals to Europe by sea
in 2019 (as of 11 June).

Morocco and Libya remain
the most active points of
departure to Europe across
the Central and Western
Mediterranean Sea.

Arrivals from Libya to Europe
decreased by **86%** in 2018

Arrivals to Spain who departed
from Morocco and Algeria
represented **45%** of all arrivals via
the Mediterranean routes to Europe
in 2018 compared to **15%** in 2017.

Arrivals to Europe who departed
from Libya represented **11%**
in 2018 compared to **59%** in 2017.

1,900

People have arrived in Europe from Libya in 2019 (as of 11 June).

331

Recorded deaths or persons missing at sea after departing from
Libya in 2019 (as of 11 June).

On average, *one person has died for every six* people who
have arrived in Europe from Libya so far this year, despite
a decrease in arrivals.

In 2018, **18%** of arrivals to Italy
were children and **10%** were
women.

In Spain, **11%** of arrivals were
children and **11%** were women.

So far in 2019, **17%** of arrivals to Italy were children
and **6%** were women.

In Spain, **10%** of arrivals were children
and **14%** were women.

ARRIVALS
BY COUNTRY
2017-2018
JAN-DEC

SPAIN*
2017 28,300 2018 65,400

ITALY (Sea arrivals)
2017 119,400 2018 23,400

GREECE
2017 35,400 2018 50,500

8,178

54,815

1,012

5,607

1,445

12,977

1,320

350

18,014

32,471

2,448

766

Western Mediterranean route

Central Mediterranean route

Eastern Mediterranean route

*In 2018, 1,307 people arrived by sea to the Canary Islands and 1,085 people were disembarked in Spain after being rescued off the coast of Libya.
Includes Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)).
The boundaries and names shown and the designations on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

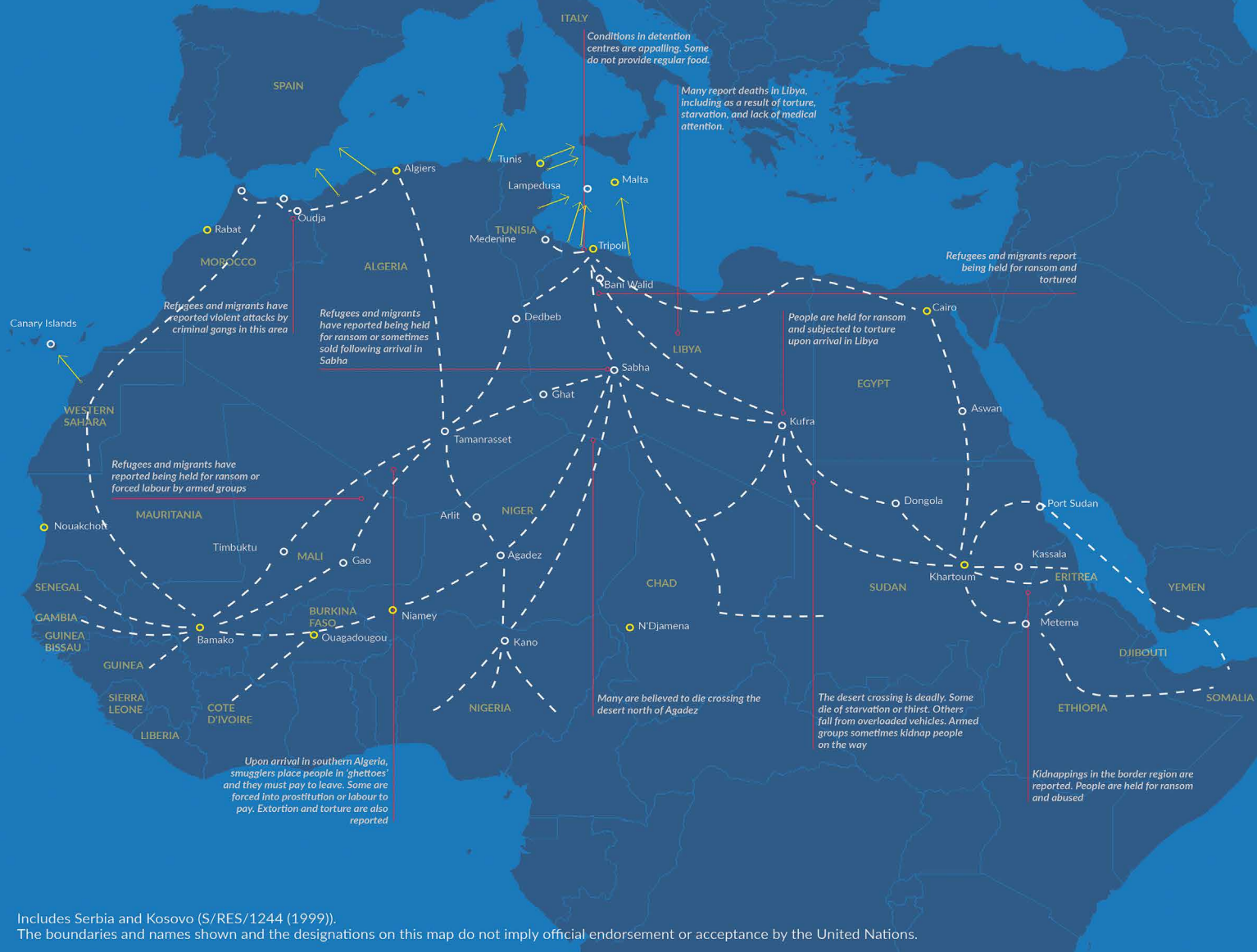
1,312

People are believed to have
died or gone missing in the
central Mediterranean Sea
in 2018.

507

People are believed to
have died or gone missing
on the Central and West-
ern Mediterranean Sea in
2019 (as of 11 June).

ROUTES THROUGH AFRICA TO EUROPE



Note: The map does not include increased arrivals by air to Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.

UNHCR is implementing its strategy to assist thousands of refugees and migrants across countries in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, who have fled violence and persecution in their home countries and face increasing dangers on their journey to safety. UNHCR is also assisting those who subsequently cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

A major shift took place in 2018, whereby the route from Morocco to Spain became the primary crossing to Europe by sea, leading to an expansion of UNHCR's strategy to include the Western Mediterranean Route.

INTRODUCTION



Passengers wait to begin boarding a long-distance bus to Agadez, Niger at a bus station in Niamey. The trip takes more than a day.

Thousands of refugees and migrants continue to risk their lives at the hands of traffickers and smugglers on dangerous journeys from Sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa. They face grave threats to their safety. Many are travelling in the hope of reaching Europe through the increasingly perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea. As of early June, one person died on the Central Mediterranean Sea for every six people who reached European shores after departing from Libya in 2019. Conversely, in 2018, one person died for every 14 people who arrived by sea in Europe from Libya (compared to one death for every 38 arrivals in 2017). In the Western Mediterranean Sea, some 800 people died or went missing at sea in 2018.¹

However, the total number of people arriving in Europe from Libya has reduced substantially since 2016. In 2018, the Western Mediterranean route from Morocco to Spain became the main point of entry to Europe, a marked shift from 2017 when the Central Mediterranean route from Libya was most frequently used.

People on the move along the Central and Western Mediterranean routes² face serious risks and often fall victim to grave human rights violations, such as torture, trafficking, sexual exploitation or other forms of abuse.³

¹ UNHCR, *Desperate Journeys: January to December 2018*, January 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67712>.

² The Central Mediterranean route refers to journeys towards North Africa often resulting in attempts to cross the sea towards Italy and Malta from Libya, Egypt or Tunisia. The Western Mediterranean route refers to journeys towards Morocco and Algeria often resulting in attempts to cross to Spain by land or sea.

³ UNSMIL and OHCHR, *Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya*, 20 December 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/LibyaMigrationReport.pdf>.

Other life-threatening risks along the route include extra-judicial killings, sexual violence, arbitrary and prolonged detention, starvation, extortion, being left to die in the desert, and forced labour.⁴

Despite UNHCR and other organizations having strengthened their presence and assistance to reach more people on the move in need of international protection, the exposure to risks and abuses along the route has only increased. For example, at disembarkation points along the Central Mediterranean coast and in Niger and in Tunisia, humanitarian organizations are witnessing a rise in the number of people who had previously been in Libya and who are suffering from extremely poor health situations, including severe malnourishment.⁵ Such poor health conditions correlate closely with extended periods in captivity at the hands of traffickers

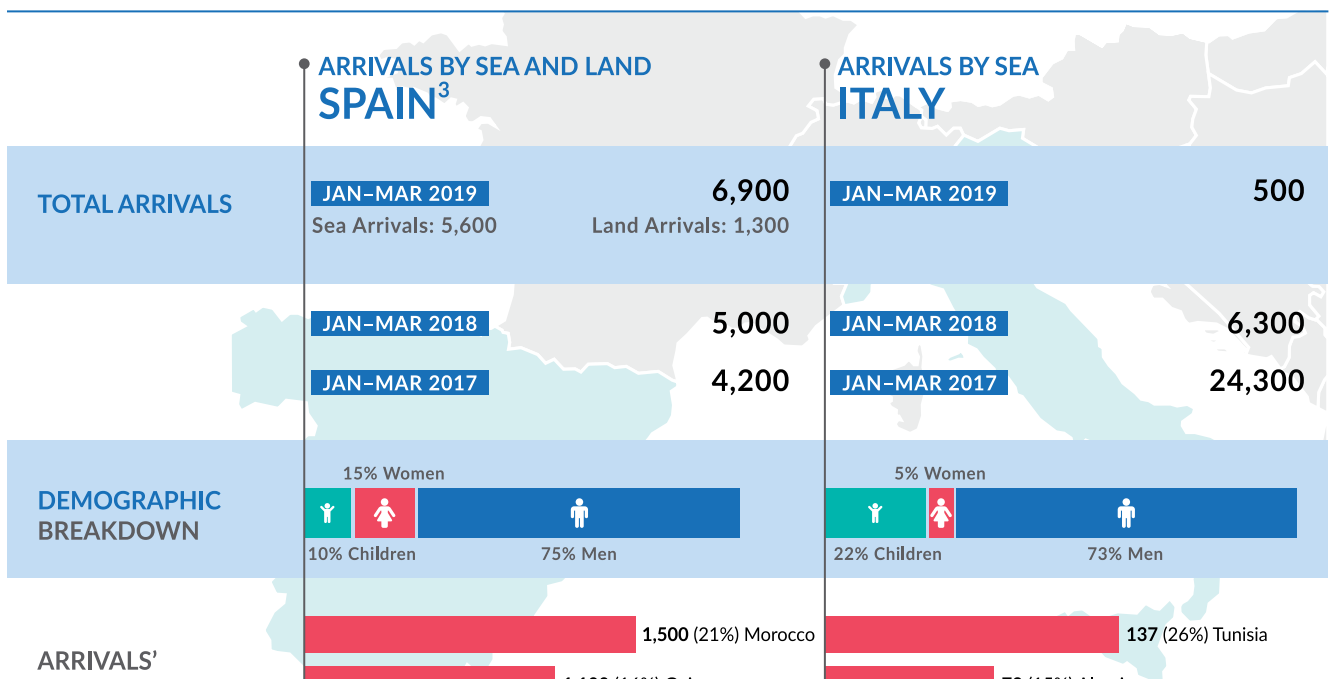
and smugglers, according to the testimonies of people arriving in Europe from Libya and interviewed by UNHCR.⁶ Some reported being held by armed groups for a year or more, usually for ransom or for forced labour.⁷

⁴ See, for example, UNSMIL and OHCHR, *Detained and Dehumanised: Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya*, 13 December 2016.

⁵ The Local, *Migrant rescued at sea dies hours after arriving in Italy*, 14 March 2018, <https://www.thelocal.it/20180314/eritrean-migrant-segen-rescued-mediterranean-starved-deathmalnutrition-italy-sicily>; InfoMigrants, *Stories of migrants that landed on Lampedusa at weekend*, 17 July 2018, <http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/10675/stories-of-migrants-thatlanded-on-lampedusa-at-weekend?ref=tw>.

⁶ See, for example, UNHCR, *Desperate Journeys: January to December 2018*. In addition, a recent report by the Women's Refugee Commission also reiterated that "sexual violence, including sexual torture, against female and male refugees and migrants appears widespread in Libya. Sites of sexual violence include official detention centers, clandestine prisons, in the context of forced labor and enslavement, during random stops and at checkpoints by armed groups, in urban settings by gangs, and in private homes." See Women's Refugee Commission, *More than One Million Pains*, March 2019, <https://bit.ly/2GCay4N>.

⁷ See, for example, Time, *The Families of Migrants Held Hostage Are Using Facebook to Raise Money for Smugglers' Ransoms*, 5 February 2019, <http://time.com/5510517/facebook-smuggling-libya-ransoms/>.



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