



THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE: WORKING ON THE ALTERNATIVES TO DANGEROUS JOURNEYS 2017

Supplementary Appeal

January - December 2017

JULY 2017

COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

At Kebribeyah camp in southern Ethiopia, home to some 14,000 Somali refugees, a young man explains why young people undertake dangerous journeys to migrate in search of opportunity. Two thirds of the refugees here are below the age of 18, and opportunities beyond secondary school are limited. © UNHCR/D. DIAZ, 26 February 2017.

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At a glance - the Central Mediterranean Route Situation

The context

Between January and June 2017, 2,171 refugees and migrants died or went missing in the central Mediterranean, many of them trying to cross from Libya to Italy

Movements of refugees and migrants from Libya to Europe are increasing. Instability in Libya is hindering protection and creating an environment plagued with human rights abuses.

The scale of movements at the cross-regional level highlights the specific risks refugees and migrants encounter while en route to Libya, and then onto Europe.

Given the specificities of the migration flows, and the context in Libya, the humanitarian response must be both flexible and comprehensive.

The strategy

Three-pronged, with broad objectives and selected activities in sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and in destination countries of Europe

In sub-Saharan Africa, UNHCR will target countries of asylum, origin and transit to mitigate identified protection risks along routes. Interventions will include raising awareness of risks and improving communication with communities likely to travel towards Libya.

In North Africa, UNHCR will work to prevent refoulement; improve access to territory and asylum; conduct awareness raising and advocacy on the dangers of irregular migration; and enhance the overall protection space.

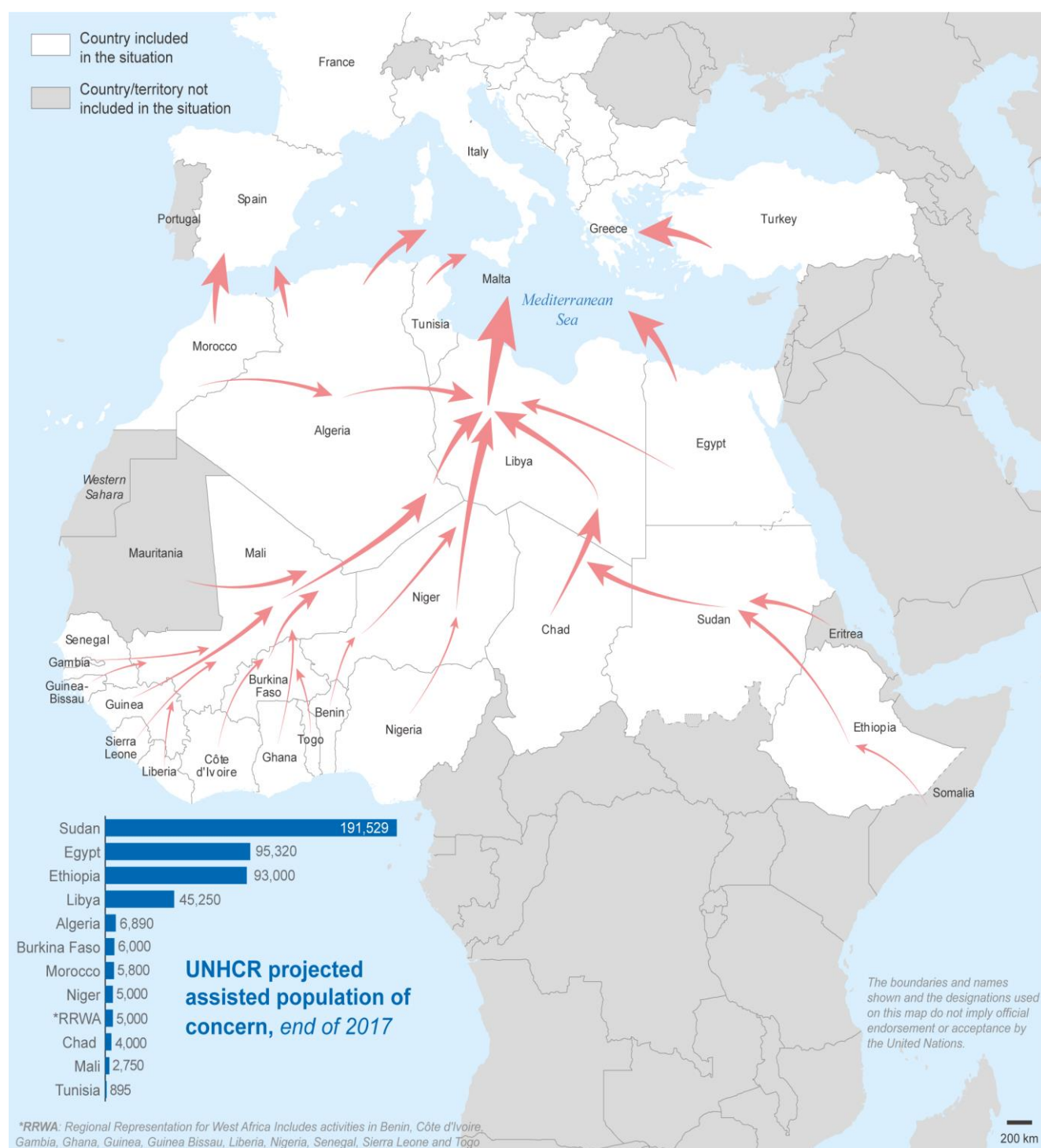
In Europe, UNHCR will continue supporting, complementing and building existing government capacities to ensure effective and safe access to asylum, protection services and solutions for people of concern, with particular attention to those with specific needs and vulnerabilities.

With an estimated **461,434 people of concern** by the end of 2017, UNHCR is appealing for **\$421.2 million¹** for January to December 2017

This Appeal complements activities in a range of related processes and other appeals, with all of the planned activities in accordance with the multi-stakeholder, 'whole-of-society' approach endorsed in the New York Declaration.
A UNHCR Special Envoy will facilitate coordination and cooperation.

¹ All dollar signs denote US dollars. This total includes regional and global activities, and support costs (7 per cent).

MAP - CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE | as of end of June 2017



Introduction

The movement of refugees and migrants across the Sahara and through the central Mediterranean Sea towards Europe, in particular to Italy, is taking a devastating toll on human life. Between January and June 2017, 2,171 refugees and migrants died or went missing in the central Mediterranean, many of them trying to cross from Libya to Italy. Although data is incomplete, there are reports of many others perishing en route, as a result of the rigours of the journey. In addition, evidence is overwhelming that refugees and migrants are also exposed to a vast range of abuses. These include extrajudicial killings, being abandoned to die in the desert, extortion, torture including to extract ransoms, sexual violence and exploitation, kidnapping, human trafficking, family separation, protracted detention in sub-standards conditions, forced labour and other serious human rights abuses.

The reasons pushing people into such dangerous migration are many and varied. Examples include people fleeing ongoing conflict and insecurity in Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, Mali and Libya; the effects of climate change, especially drought and famine, and the non-resolution of past conflicts marked by continued violence and widespread violation of human rights such as in Eritrea; and the chance to seek better employment opportunities. Some people move with a purpose, some with no clear destination in mind, and others are trafficked.

The scale of movements at a cross-regional level has highlighted the specific risks refugees and migrants encounter while en route to Libya, and then onto Europe. Most of those on the move engage smugglers to assist their movement, which not only leads to increasing risks of falling prey to trafficking and human rights abuses, but also contributes to strengthening transnational criminal networks and posing risks to the national security of concerned States.

Countries in West Africa and in the East and Horn of Africa² are facing immense humanitarian pressures, which are having a negative impact on asylum space, as well as the prospect for lasting solutions. All countries along the migratory routes to Libya are signatories to the 1951 and 1969 OAU refugee Conventions. Despite this and international, regional and national efforts to restore or maintain peace and security, including along borders, hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants are in need of safety, protection and relief through asylum and/or migration channels, in neighbouring states and beyond. Even though people of concern to UNHCR tend to be invisible in the current mixed movements, they represent an important element of the phenomenon.

² The Horn Africa region hosts over 3 million refugees and some 9 million IDPs, many of whom have been displaced for over two decades, in particular from South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. The West Africa region is hosting 300,000 refugees and around 3 million IDPs.

People in need of international protection are often therefore crossing several countries, often alongside migrants and smugglers, not being aware, able or willing to avail themselves of refugee status determination options and protection services along the route. The lack of effective protection in the countries to which they initially fled, as well as those they transited through in the region; poor reception conditions; lengthy refugee status determination procedures; lack of livelihood support; and limited access to durable solutions such as resettlement and family reunification are all reasons for moving on until such conditions can be found. The absence of security, livelihood and educational opportunities are also important elements in determining whether someone makes the decision to undertake such risky movements.

In Libya itself, people of concern are living with host communities but, because of the security situation in the country, they have restricted freedom of movement. Others are currently out of reach, detained in official detention centres run by Libyan authorities, or in warehouses or “connection houses” operated by smugglers or traffickers.

In Italy, the reception system for asylum-seekers is under considerable pressure. The most common sub-Saharan African nationalities arriving by sea in Italy were Nigerians, Eritreans, Guineans, Ivoirians, Gambians, Senegalese, Malians, Sudanese, Somalis, and Ghanaians. According to Eurostat statistics³, the average protection rate in Europe for these nationalities was 40 per cent in 2016. By the end of June 2017, 83,000 people—an 18 per cent increase—had arrived in Italy, mostly originating from sub-Saharan African countries. In 2016, 40,889 people, or 23 per cent of the arrivals by sea in Italy, were from the East and Horn of Africa region and 109,645, or approximately 60 per cent, were from the West Africa region. The percentage has dropped to 13 per cent for East and Horn of Africa between January and June 2017 and has increased slightly to 62 per cent for West Africa. Amongst the seven most common West African nationalities, the average protection rate by nationality was 27 per cent and amongst the three East and Horn of Africa nationalities, the average protection rate by nationality was 70 per cent. This amounted to over 68,500 nationals of these countries being granted protection in the European Union+ region in 2016, including over 54,000 granted refugee status or subsidiary protection.

In Europe, UNHCR works with asylum-seekers, refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and unaccompanied and separated children (including those who may not fall under the latter categories). In the European Union context, subsidiary protection is one of the two forms of

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database>.

international protection, together with refugee status, regulated under European Union law. It is granted to persons who face a real risk of suffering serious harm, as defined in European Union law, in their country of origin. Following successive UN General Assembly resolutions since the elaboration of UNHCR's mandate in its 1950 Statute, persons who may not necessarily be 1951 Convention refugees but who nevertheless need international protection fall under UNHCR's wider competence.⁴

This year's large-scale arrivals, coupled with the backlog from 2016, have led to problems and delays in the processing of applications made by those who have disembarked. These include slower identification for relocation, for refugee status determination, or for appointment of guardians for children. In addition, onward movements from Italy have been significantly reduced by the restoration of border checks in neighbouring countries. Those granted protection in Europe include those fleeing conflict and human rights abuses, torture, gender-based violence, persecution—including due to religion, political activities, sexual orientation or gender identity—as well as unaccompanied children and victims of trafficking. It has been estimated, for example, that up to 80 per cent of the Nigerian women arriving by sea in Europe in 2016 may have been trafficked.⁵

Given the multiplicity, scale and complexity of the needs, UNHCR is stepping up its response to help government authorities respond to the many challenges they are confronting. It is UNHCR's field-based assessment that many of those who attempt the dangerous journey to Europe through Libya would not risk it were they better informed of the perils involved at different stages of their journeys. Nor would they risk their life if adequate protection, assistance and solutions were available and effective across the various countries they cross in Africa prior to reaching Libya, and in Libya itself. By the time refugees or asylum-seekers have reached Libya, it is often too late to provide effective protection and safe alternatives, as the situation is very volatile and humanitarian access limited.

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