



TORTURE ROADS

LACK OF SOLUTIONS
FOR PEOPLE
ON THE MOVE
IN TUNISIA

VOLUME 5
MAY- DECEMBER 2025

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1- METHODOLOGY



34 semi-structured interviews



161 people - documentation of violations



47 cases of children documented

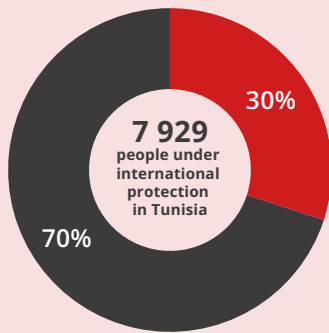


4 humanitarian organizations - data analyzed



4 UN Agencies - validation of figures and trends

2- PRESENCE IN TUNISIA



2 379 refugees (30%)

5 550 asylum seekers (70%)



1525 people have sought international protection without being able to register (June 2024 - December 2025). **75%** came from countries covered by the UNHCR's non-return policy.



More than 20 000 newly registered people on the move sought assistance from the IOM in 2025.

3- MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS

Decrease in land arrivals to Tunisia

2000 per month
November 2024 - April 2025

-76%

480 per month
May - December 2025

Decrease in maritime arrivals from Tunisia to Italy

19 245 in 2024

-75%

4 861 in 2025



66 296 people arrived in Italy in 2025



88 % of crossings to Italy departed from Libya

Main nationalities departing from Tunisia

1. Tunisians 35%
2. Guineans 27%
3. Ivorians 8%
4. Malians 5%
5. Cameroonians 4%
6. Sudanese 3%

4- DEATHS AND MISSING PERSONS



1 340 dead or missing in the central Mediterranean in 2025



At least 30 shipwrecks off the Tunisian coast in 2025



At least 530 dead or missing off the coast of Tunisia in 2025

As of April 7, 2026: at least 765 people are reported dead or missing in the Central Mediterranean

VOLUME 5

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Between May and December 2025, the OMCT confirms the persistence of a continuum of human rights violations.

DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

1- CONTINUUM OF VIOLATIONS



Arbitrary arrests and detention

Hundreds of arbitrary arrests during identity checks, interceptions at sea, camp dismantlements and arrests inside or outside private homes.

Emerging trends:

- Increase in arrests of women and children for "begging offenses" in urban centers
- Use of the El Ouardia center to detain people on the move and return them to their countries of origin



Push-backs and deportations

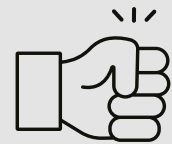
13 400 people were denied entry into Tunisian territory while attempting to cross land borders in 2025

26 600 people deported by Tunisian authorities in 2025

19 100
to Algeria

7 500
to Libya

Violence, torture and ill-treatment



51% of beneficiaries on the move assisted by a partner organization reported being survivors of violence



Sexual violence

28% of those who experienced violence and specified its nature experienced sexual violence



Violence at sea

At least **126** people are reported to have died in 2025 as a result of violent interceptions at sea by the Tunisian coast guard.

+ 300 interceptions off the Tunisian coast leading to the disembarkation of **+ 12 000** people on Tunisian territory

2- NEW FORMS OF ABUSE AND INTENSIFICATION OF VIOLATIONS



Dismantlement of informal settlements

+ 9000 people evacuated to El Amra and Jbeniana between April and June 2025

The operations are accompanied by the destruction of tents, confiscation of goods and documents, excessive use of force, arrests, and deportations.



Human trafficking

- Forced labor
- Organized begging
- Domestic servitude
- Sales of human beings
- Sexual exploitation
- Debt bondage



Emerging trends

Geographic spread of kidnappings for ransom, particularly in Zarzis, Tunis and Médenine.

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FOCUS – TUNISIA'S RETURN PROGRAM



Started in June 2025

Launch of the program



At least 1 200
people returned via
this program in 2025



100 euros
amount paid
at the time of departure

MAIN CONCERNS



Lack of real alternatives

People on the move accept return in order to escape systematic violations of their rights.

The criterion of freedom of choice is not met.



Uninformed decision

The program is promoted via Whatsapp and other social media platforms. No official source detailing the objectives, scope, procedures, or criteria.

Lack of informed decision.



Insufficient verifications

Birth certificates for children and identity documents are not systematically requested. No prior medical examination.

Denial of the right to a legal identity, risk of statelessness and trafficking.



Tight deadlines

Returns are organized on very short notice, ranging from a few weeks to a few days.

No assessment of the voluntary nature of the decision.



Forced returns

Documented case of 18 women and 24 children detained in El Ouardia in late 2025 and then returned to their countries of origin.



Best interests of the child

No formal procedure to determine the best interests of the child.



Family unit

Cases of family separation have been documented, including children separated from their parents.



Reintegration

Returnees do not have access to reintegration programs that promote the sustainability of their return.



The report highlights that the lack of legal and sustainable solutions is fueling a growing sense of despair among people on the move, often driving them to resort to dangerous sea crossings and other high-risk strategies.



SUMMARY

In line with previous reports, this report contains:

- A contextual, quantitative, and qualitative analysis of arrivals and departures, as well as the profile and geographic distribution of people on the move transiting through or residing in Tunisia;
- An updated typology of human rights violations suffered by people on the move in Tunisia between May and December 2025, including references to significant incidents that occurred in the first quarter of 2026. This section draws on qualitative and quantitative data and examines the profile of victims as well as the modus operandi of the alleged perpetrators;
- A timeline of human rights violations, a timeline of operations at sea, and a timeline of developments related to migration and asylum in the Mediterranean region;
- A chapter highlighting concerns about international standards in the return program organized directly by Tunisian authorities since the summer of 2025.



INTRODUCTION

During 2025, arrivals in Italy from Tunisia saw a significant 75% decrease compared to 2024. Irregular crossings declined sharply, with an estimated monthly average of nearly 480 arrivals between May and December 2025, compared to approximately 2,000 per month during the period from November 2024 to April 2025. This significant decrease occurred amid increasingly stringent migration policies on both sides of the Mediterranean.

On the one hand, Tunisia has adopted a clear strategy aimed at reducing the number of people on the move within its territory, notably (i) by encouraging, or even compelling, the departure of people on the move from its shores; (ii) by restricting access for non-Tunisians to legal pathways that could act as “pull factors” for migration flows, with both measures aimed at preventing Tunisian territory from being perceived as a transit point to Europe; and (iii) by making the living conditions of those present progressively untenable, to the point of falling below minimum standards of human dignity, raising serious concerns regarding human rights protection obligations.

In line with previous reports, the OMCT emphasizes that Tunisian authorities continue to employ a strategy of intimidation to encourage people on the move to leave the country, notably through the intensification of operations to dismantle informal camps and the criminalization of people on the move, which exposes them to increased risks of arrest, detention, and deportation. Throughout 2025, it has become increasingly clear that the primary approach adopted by the Tunisian authorities to manage the presence of people on the move within their territory is based on preventing sea crossings, combined with intensified efforts regarding return programs to countries of origin. These include return schemes facilitated by the IOM and a new program established and directly implemented by Tunisian authorities.

On the other side of the Mediterranean, the European Union and its member states are continuing and strengthening their policies of externalizing migration management, notably through increased support for Tunisian authorities, including the provision of equipment to enhance surveillance of land and maritime borders as well as capabilities for movement control and, in some cases, search and rescue operations. Under the European Pact on Migration and Asylum, adopted in 2020 and scheduled for gradual implementation starting in 2026, the European Union is developing a set of instruments aimed at strengthening the management of migration flows, notably by accelerating asylum and return procedures, as well as through greater harmonization of the rules and procedures applicable to return decisions. Tunisia plays a central role in the European Union's migration cooperation, being de facto considered a priority partner in preventing departures and managing migration. Furthermore, within cooperation and dialogue frameworks, Tunisia is regularly designated as a safe country of origin for its nationals and is increasingly being incorporated into the "safe third country" framework in the European debate, which reinforces its role in the strategy of externalizing migration controls.

This report provides an updated overview of human rights violations suffered by people on the move in Tunisia between May and December 2025, identifies certain violations that emerged as more prevalent during the second half of 2025, as well as significant developments that took place in early 2026. Among the new forms of abuse and the intensification of violations during this period, the OMCT notes in particular the intensification of operations to dismantle informal camps, new forms of human trafficking, the emergence of a return program organized directly by the Tunisian authorities, all within a context of shrinking civic space.

In this context, and in line with previous reports, Tunisia cannot be considered a "safe third country": people on the move residing and/or transiting through Tunisia continue to be exposed to multiple violations of their fundamental rights. Thousands face criminalization, arbitrary arrests and detention, forced and arbitrary internal displacement to desert areas along the borders, deportations to Libya and/or Algeria, excessive use of force by security forces, physical and psychological violence by Tunisian citizens, sexual violence, and violent practices during attempts to cross maritime borders.



CONTEXT

Presence and nationalities of people on the move¹ in Tunisia

As of December 31, 2025, 7,929 people were under international protection in Tunisia, including 2,379 refugees (30%) and 5,550 asylum seekers (70%). Of the 1,525 people who applied for international protection between June 2024 and December 2025 but were unable to register,² 75% were from countries covered by UNHCR's non-refoulement policy, meaning they had a strong presumption of eligibility for refugee status.

It is also important to note that the majority of people on the move residing in or transiting through Tunisia are irregular migrants without international protection. In 2025, more than 20,000 people sought assistance from the IOM.³

Irregular Arrivals and Departures

Irregular arrivals in Tunisia by land—either at official border crossing points or by crossing the borders with Libya and Algeria in desert and/or mountainous areas—have drastically decreased, with an estimated 480 arrivals per month between May and December 2025, whereas this number stood at approximately 2,000 per month between November 2024 and April 2025.⁴

Irregular sea crossings to Italy from Tunisia saw a sharp 75% decline in 2025. While 19,245 people had reached the Italian coast from Tunisia in 2024, that number dropped to just 4,861 in 2025.⁵ The OMCT estimates that the National Maritime Guard carried out more than 300 interceptions off the Tunisian coast, resulting in more than 12,000 disembarkations following these operations at sea.⁶ The main nationalities involved in departures from Tunisia are Tunisians (35%), Guineans (27%), Ivorians (8%), Malians (5%), Cameroonians (4%), and Sudanese (3%).⁷

Deaths and Disappearances

The Central Mediterranean route remains one of the deadliest migration routes. The IOM estimates that 1,340 people died or went missing in the Central Mediterranean in 2025.⁸ According to data collected by the OMCT, at least 30 shipwrecks occurred off the Tunisian coast in 2025, resulting in the death or disappearance of at least 530 people. The first months of 2026 were also particularly deadly: as of April 7, 2026, at least 765 people were reported dead or missing in the Central Mediterranean, according to IOM. This is the highest figure recorded at the start of the year since 2014.⁹

1. According to the OMCT report on the subject, this report uses the term as an umbrella category that includes migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers; unaccompanied and separated children; victims of trafficking; migrant workers; and migrants (including those in an irregular situation)

2. Many people are deprived of any protection and assistance due to the government's suspension of the registration of new asylum seekers.

3. Humanitarian source.

4. Humanitarian source.

5. **UNHCR, Italy Sea Arrivals Overview, March 2026. MMC Quarterly Report North Africa, Q4.**

6. Interviews with several humanitarian organizations operating in Tunisia, Libya, and Italy. The OMCT refers to landings rather than individuals, given that people generally attempt to cross the Mediterranean multiple times over the course of a few months.

7. UNHCR Tunisia Monthly Operational Update (March 2026)

8. **IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Dead and Missing.** In 2024, an estimated 1,810 people died or went missing in the Central Mediterranean.

9. **"More than 180 presumed dead in the Mediterranean, bringing the death toll to nearly 1,000 since the start of 2026," 04/07/2026, IOM.**

A CONTINUUM OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The OMCT's in-depth research confirms that between May and December 2025, the following violations continued:

- **Criminalization, arbitrary arrests, and detention of people on the move:** The OMCT and its partners have documented hundreds of arbitrary arrests resulting from identity checks in public spaces, interception operations at sea, interventions aimed at dismantling informal settlements, as well as arrests in front of or inside private homes. An emerging trend appears to be an increase in arrests of women and children for “begging” in urban centers.¹⁰ During the period under review, authorities used the El Ouardia administrative detention center to detain people on the move, including women and children, who were subsequently returned to their countries of origin.¹¹
- **Violations of the principle of non-refoulement through push-back operations and deportations:** Throughout 2025, the OMCT estimates that 13,400 people were denied entry into Tunisian territory while attempting to cross land borders, and that 26,600 people were deported by Tunisian authorities—19,100 to Algeria and 7,500 to Libya.¹²

“My sister and I were arrested by the Tunisian National Guard in Tataouine, turned back at the border, and abandoned in a desert area. My sister fell and injured her leg. An officer raped me in the desert. We were separated and lost sight of each other. I managed to get back to Tataouine, but I don't know where my sister is.”

A victim of arbitrary internal displacement, December 2025

- **Violence, excessive use of force, torture, and ill-treatment by state agents:** According to data collected by the OMCT and its partners, people on the move continue to regularly suffer physical and psychological violence during identity checks, arrests, following interceptions at sea, during operations to dismantle informal settlements, or during internal displacement or deportations. According to an OMCT partner organization, between May and December 2025, 51% of beneficiaries assisted by this organization reported being survivors of violence.¹³
- **Sexual and gender-based violence:** Research conducted by the OMCT has confirmed that in Tunisia, sexual and gender-based violence against people on the move takes many forms: rape and sexual assault by state and non-state actors, intrusive searches following interceptions at sea, sexual exploitation by criminal groups, as well as the use of survival sex within communities on the move themselves.¹⁴ The OMCT's research reveals that between May and December 2025, among people on the move who had experienced violence and specified its nature, 28% had experienced sexual violence.¹⁵
- **Dehumanizing practices during maritime border crossings:** In the absence of regular migration channels, people on the move continue to attempt the crossing of the Mediterranean to reach Europe by sea, in the hope of finding safety and protection there. In 2025, at least 126 people reportedly died as a result of violent interceptions at sea by the Tunisian coast guard.¹⁶

10. Interviews with several humanitarian organizations.

11. The El Ouardia center is unofficially used as a detention center for people on the move, even though it is not registered or administered as a place of deprivation of liberty.

12. Humanitarian source.

13. Humanitarian source. These data are drawn from the databases of a humanitarian organization to which OMCT had access. These figures are calculated as a proportion of the total number of people who approached this organization between May and December 2025 (572 people).

14. Survival sex refers to the practice of exchanging sexual relations for goods or services essential to survival, such as food, shelter, or money, due to extreme precariousness, particularly among marginalized groups.

15. Humanitarian source. These data are drawn from the databases of a humanitarian organization to which OMCT had access. These figures are calculated as a proportion of the total number of people who approached this organization between May and December 2025 and detailed the type of violence they experienced (572 people).

16. Humanitarian source.

The situation of people on the move who are stranded or confined in desert areas or in the coastal zone of Sfax—a torturous environment

What does international law say?

Torture and ill-treatment are not limited to isolated acts, but can also result from a set of cumulative conditions and practices creating a framework of severe and prolonged suffering. The concept of a torturous environment refers to a situation in which a specific group of people or a population in a given geographical area is subjected to a combination of structural conditions and institutional practices—such as deprivation of liberty, permanent insecurity, lack of access to basic needs, physical and psychological violence, or the constant threat of expulsion or detention—which, taken together, produce a level of suffering equivalent to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.¹⁷

And in practice in Tunisia?

In its previous research, the OMCT had already demonstrated the applicability of the concept of a torturous environment to the situation of people on the move abandoned in the desert border areas between Tunisia and Libya and between Algeria and Tunisia. In this report, the OMCT provides an analysis of the concept of a torturous environment as it applies to people on the move stranded or confined in the coastal area of Sfax, who face multiple violations of their rights—inadequate shelter, limited access to drinking water and difficulty accessing health services, restrictions on freedom of movement, repeated clearance operations, constant exposure to security operations and threats of arrest or forced displacement and deportation.

NEW FORMS OF ABUSE AND ESCALATION OF CERTAIN VIOLATIONS

During the period under review, the OMCT also identified new forms of abuse and an intensification of certain violations.

- **Intensification of dismantlement operations:** The OMCT observed an intensification of dismantlement operations targeting informal tented settlements in El Amra and Jbeniana beginning in April 2025, leading to the evacuation of more than 9,000 people between April and June 2025 alone. These operations continued on a recurring basis at the end of 2025 and during the first quarter of 2026.¹⁸ Testimonies collected by the OMCT and its partners indicate that these operations are generally carried out without prior notice to those affected and are often accompanied by the destruction of tents, the confiscation and/or destruction of personal belongings and documents, as well as excessive use of force, and can lead to arrests or deportations.¹⁹

17. Committee Against Torture, General Comment No. 2, CAT/C/GC/2, 2008, paras. 1 and 17, and Special Rapporteur on Torture, A/HRC/13/39, 2010, para. 60.

18. An operation that took place on May 30, 2025, involved up to 3,500 people being moved in a single day. See Webdo, "Tunisia: Toward an Acceleration of Voluntary Returns of Migrants," May 30, 2025. See also Webdo, "Tunisia: Dismantling of an informal migrant camp in El Amra," June 20, 2025. See also the ARTE documentary, "Tunisia: The Exiles' Hell," June 2025.

France24, "Migration Crisis in Tunisia: Authorities Accelerate the Dismantling of Camps," May 30, 2025.

19. Interviews with civil society organizations that have provided assistance to victims of the dismantling of informal camps.

The Reality: Dounia's Story

In July 2025, Dounia lives with her two-year-old son in a tent amid olive groves near El Amra. One night, the Tunisian National Guard intervenes to clear the informal settlement where they live. The officers set the tents on fire without ensuring that no one was inside. Dounia suffered severe burns to her leg, and her son sustained burns to his lower limbs and head.

- **Human Trafficking:** During the period under review, the OMCT and its partners continued to document cases of human trafficking in the form of economic exploitation through forced labor, forced begging, domestic servitude, as well as cases of sales of human beings and sexual exploitation. Among emerging trends in 2025, the OMCT observed a geographic expansion of cases of kidnapping for ransom, particularly in Zarzis, Tunis, and Medenine.²⁰ The OMCT and its partners also documented instances of debt bondage.

FOCUS: RETURN PROGRAM ORGANIZED BY THE TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES

The OMCT has documented the emergence of a return program organized directly by the Tunisian authorities, which reportedly began in June 2025. These returns take place against a backdrop in which the Tunisian authorities have publicly expressed their intention to significantly increase the number of people on the move returned to their countries of origin.²¹ According to the experts consulted for this study, at least 1,200 people were reportedly returned through this program in 2025. The OMCT has analyzed this program in light of international standards on return to verify its compliance and makes the following observations:

- **Lack of alternatives and coercion to return:** People on the move in Tunisia are forced to accept return in order to escape systematic violations of their rights. This fails to meet the criterion of freedom of choice, which requires that a decision to return be free from any form of external coercion, whether physical or psychological.²² Furthermore, individuals receive a sum of 100 euros upon departure.²³ The organization and promotion of these returns reportedly involves people on the move who are paid by the authorities to encourage others to sign up.²⁴
- **Lack of informed decision:** According to the research conducted, the program is promoted via WhatsApp and other social media platforms. No official source detailing its objectives, scope, implementation procedures, or eligibility criteria has been identified. This lack of information limits the ability of potential beneficiaries to make an informed decision based on a thorough understanding of the program, its benefits, and the risks involved.

20. Interviews with several humanitarian sources.

21. "Sub-Saharan Migrants: Tunisia Aims for 10,000 Voluntary Returns in 2026," March 11, 2026, Business News.

22. ASGI, Pushbacks in the Mediterranean: ASGI Guide to Strategic Litigation, 2026, p. 13. Migreurop, "Voluntary humanitarian refusal: a choice you cannot refuse," 2025. See also the report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation in Libya and the coercive nature of "voluntary" returns from Libya to countries of origin: OHCHR, "Nowhere but back: Assisted return, reintegration and the human rights protection of migrants in Libya," 2022.

23. "In Tunisia, an opaque repatriation program is gaining popularity among migrants," 01/08/2026, Le Monde.

24. "Tunisia: Authorities accused of forcing 'voluntary returns' of migrants," 02/04/2026, InfoMigrants.

- **Insufficient verification of identity documents or family relationships:** According to sources consulted for this study, birth certificates and legal identity documents for children are not systematically requested, implying a lack of verification of family ties between parents and children. This situation raises potential risks related to human trafficking, particularly the possibility that adults may leave the country accompanied by children whose parentage has not been properly verified. Furthermore, reportedly, no prior medical examination is conducted. However, these verifications are not mere administrative formalities, but rather an obligation of the Tunisian state. The state must conduct an individual assessment prior to any return process in order to respect the fundamental principle of non-refoulement.²⁵
- **Lack of mechanisms to verify the voluntary nature of the return:** Returns are organized on extremely short notice, ranging from a few weeks to a few days—with no assessment of the voluntary nature of the decision or identification of potential risks in the country of origin.
- **Documented cases of forced returns,**²⁶ notably the case of 18 women and 24 children (some unaccompanied or separated) detained in El Ouardia in late 2025 and subsequently returned to their countries of origin.
- **No formal procedure to determine the best interests of the child:** The OMCT expresses particular concern regarding the situation of children, especially unaccompanied children or those separated from their parents. While international standards stipulate that a child may not be returned to a country without a determination of their best interests,²⁷ the return program organized by the Tunisian authorities does not include any formal procedure to determine the best interests of the child. Furthermore, no mechanism appears to have been established to contact family members or identify a responsible person capable of receiving unaccompanied children upon their arrival in the country of origin.
- **Family unity:** The OMCT and its partners have documented cases of returns that have led to family separation, including children separated from their parents or women separated from their partners. These findings raise serious concerns regarding respect for the right to maintain family unity.
- **Lack of support for reintegration in the country of origin:** According to the information gathered, returnees do not appear to be supported by comprehensive reintegration programs aimed at ensuring the sustainability of return, particularly due to the risks of onward movement, increased vulnerability to exploitation, and potential exposure to further human rights violations.

25. The requirement to conduct an individual assessment stems in particular from the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits a State from returning a person to a country where they risk persecution, torture, or inhuman or degrading treatment, Art. 3 of the United Nations Convention Against Torture. Furthermore, in Objective 21 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, A/RES/73/195, States commit to conducting individual assessments prior to any return process. This is a non-binding legal instrument to which Tunisia acceded in 2018.

26. According to the IOM, the voluntary nature of return is based on these cumulative criteria: Freedom of choice: The decision must not be subject to any external coercion, whether physical or psychological; Informed decision: The decision must be based on accurate and objective information; Legal capacity: The person concerned, or their legal guardian, must be capable of making this decision with full knowledge of the facts. Furthermore, as highlighted by the Global Compact on Migration, States commit to conducting individual assessments prior to any return process to countries of origin, while respecting procedural safeguards. IOM, "Fact Sheet: Contributing to Safe, Orderly, and Dignified Migration through Voluntary Return and Reintegration Assistance."

27. Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Tunisia on January 30, 1992. See also UNICEF, "Child-Sensitive Return: Upholding the best interests of migrant and refugee children in return and reintegration decisions and processes in selected European countries," 2019. ; IOM, UNICEF, United Nations Human Rights Europe Regional Office, Child Circle, ECRE, Save the Children, PICUM, Guidance to respect children's rights in return policies and practices: Focus on the EU legal framework, September 2019. Art. 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Art. 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

CHRONOLOGY OF VIOLATIONS

Thanks to the hard and often risky work of numerous organizations and human rights defenders, the OMCT has been able to characterize a succession of episodes of human rights violations against people on the move in Tunisia between May and December 2025. The chronology below reviews the evolution of the situation of people on the move, whose rights are continually violated and whose voices remain insufficiently heard. It includes the main episodes of violations, legal proceedings against defenders and human rights organizations of people on the move, as well as hate speech and statements.¹ Without claiming to be exhaustive, this chronology is the fruit of continuous monitoring and triangulation of information and sources² by the OMCT and its partners.

04/05

20
25

AROUND A HUNDRED PEOPLE SETTING OUT FROM THE SFAX COAST ON SEVERAL BOATS **ARE INTERCEPTED BY THE TUNISIAN COASTGUARD** AND HAVE THEIR PHONES CONFISCATED BEFORE BEING FORCIBLY REMOVED TO THE BORDERS WITH ALGERIA.³



06/05

An anti-racism association in Tunisia **condemns the «prolonged and unjustified» detention of its president.** She was arrested in May 2024 as part of a series of repressive actions targeting human rights defenders in Tunisia.⁴

09/05

According to the world press freedom index, Tunisia **fell 11 places** to 129th out of 180.⁵

12/05

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE ON THE MOVE OF SUB-SAHARAN ORIGIN DEMONSTRATE AROUND SFAX TO **DEMAND DIGNIFIED TREATMENT FROM THE TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES.**⁶

20/05

A man of Cameroonian nationality **is stabbed to death by Tunisian citizens** attempting to steal his belongings in the Ariana Governorate, Tunis.⁷



26/05

Forced displacement of people in 4 buses by the National Guard towards the Algerian border near Tozeur:

*«After we were dispersed at the border, I walked for at least two weeks I think, I had nothing...».*⁸



28/05

UN experts and special procedures send joint letter to Tunisian authorities **regarding administrative and judicial harassment, arrest and detention of human rights defenders in Tunisia** since 2024.⁹

29/05

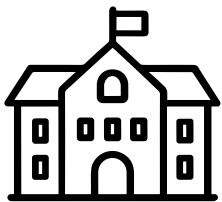
AN INFORMAL CAMP HOUSING OVER 3,500 PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IS DISMANTLED BY THE TUNISIAN NATIONAL GUARD AT EL AMRA, KM 21, IN THE GOVERNORATE OF SFAX.¹⁰

02/06

A Gambian man dies at El Amra, km 21, on the side of the road. He was reportedly killed by tear gas fired by the Tunisian National Guard.¹¹

03/06

A deputy at the Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP) warns of *«the number of sub-Saharan multiplying following childbirth»*, calling these births *«a great and imminent danger for Tunisia»*. He describes the situation in Tunisia as *«a metastasizing cancer»*.¹²



10/06

A member of parliament for the Sfax Sud constituency publishes a video warning **against sending children of sub-Saharan migrants to school.**¹³

20/06

The spokesman for the Tunisian National Guard announces that the Tunisian state has begun **to provide air tickets to people on the move in an irregular situation, without going through the IOM.**¹⁵

20/06

AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT HOUSING OVER 1,500 PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IS **DISMANTLED BY THE TUNISIAN NATIONAL GUARD** AT EL AMRA IN THE GOVERNORATE OF SFAX. THIS IS THE 5TH SUCH OPERATION SINCE APRIL 2025. THE TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE PROVIDED **NO INFORMATION ON THE LOCATION OF THE RELOCATION.**¹⁴



01/07

A man suffering from tuberculosis dies in front of the IOM offices in Tunis.¹⁸

03/07

Dismantling of an informal camp by the Tunisian National Guard in the governorate of Sfax at km 36. Tents are burnt.¹⁹

14/07

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, declares that repression in Tunisia is even more severe than in Libya and that the authorities there no longer allow asylum seekers to register, making it difficult to consider Tunisia a «safe third country».²¹

15/08

250 people were reportedly detained at the port of Sfax. Some were released - notably pregnant women - while others were put on buses and deported to Libya and Algeria.²⁵

30/06



A LAWYER AND MEDIA COLUMNIST IS SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS IN PRISON, SPARKING A WAVE OF INDIGNATION.¹⁶ THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS EXPRESSES HER DEEP CONCERN AT THIS NEW SENTENCE.¹⁷

14/07

The Minister of the Interior reaffirmed that «Tunisia will never be a land of settlement or passage for irregular African migrants». He stressed that the operations to dismantle the informal settlements had been carried out with due respect for humanitarian principles, and had been accompanied by measures to facilitate the voluntary return of people on the move to their country of origin.²⁰

25/07



Hundreds of Tunisians protest against the President of the Republic: «Tunisia has turned into an open-air prison...Even those who are not behind bars live in a state of temporary freedom, constantly at risk of being arrested for any reason».²¹

02/08

An academic denounces on social networks an act of racism by a cab driver who allegedly replied: «I'm not racist, but the law forbids me to take «Africans»».²³

06/08



New legal development in the case of an anti-racism association whose president was arrested in May 2024. Several charges, previously dropped, are reintroduced against her and other members of the organization.²⁴

24/08

The National Union of Tunisian Journalists denounces the closure of the "Instance nationale d'accès à l'information", which had been set up in 2017²⁷ and enabled many citizens and journalists to demand access to public data or reports.²⁸

07/09

Between five and six boats that had left the coast of Sfax the previous day were intercepted by National Guard maritime units. According to corroborating accounts, the passengers arrested were deported to Libya.³⁰

08/10

The Court of Cassation rejects the cassation appeal in the case against several Tunisian civil society activists involved in defending the rights of people on the move. All charges initially brought against them are upheld.³⁶

24/08

An altercation between a group of people on the move reportedly caused the death of a man from sub-Saharan Africa in Sousse. The courts have ordered the opening of a judicial investigation into the man's stabbing.²⁶



02/09

On the night of September 1 to 2, Tunisian authorities reportedly arbitrarily arrested 82 people on the move in the villages of Mazdour, Ksar Hellal and Jemmel, and deported them to the desert.²⁹

28/09

55 people that departed from the coast of Sfax are intercepted by the Tunisian coastguard. During the interception, the boat overturned and all the people fell into the water, before being rescued and disembarked at the port of Sfax.³¹ They were allegedly deported in Libya.³²



01/10

A group of 40 people on the move of sub-Saharan origin, including 15 children and 7 pregnant women,³³ are forcibly moved to a desert area



in Tunisia close to the Algerian border.³⁴

08/10

At the 76th plenary session of the UNHCR Programme Executive Committee, Tunisia reaffirms its categorical refusal of any «disguised settlement of irregular migrants» on its territory and calls for redoubled efforts to facilitate the voluntary return of people on the move or their resettlement in a third country.³⁵

10/10

Interception by the Tunisian coastguard of a boat leaving Sfax with 35 people, after 3 days at sea. After disembarking at the port of Sfax, some were reportedly deported to Libya.³⁷

06/11

A new Amnesty International report denounces the arrests of people on the move in Tunisia, dangerous interceptions at sea, deportations and forced internal and arbitrary displacements, and highlights the forms of torture and sexual violence suffered by people on the move transiting or residing in the country.³⁹

22/11

Operation to dismantle informal settlements in the governorate of Sfax at km 22 by the National Guard, destroying boats and makeshift tents, leaving several dozen people homeless.⁴⁵

03/11

A boat with 56 people on board departed from Zouara in Libya and was intercepted by the Tunisian coastguard. The people on board were reportedly deported to Libya and detained at the Al Assa detention center.³⁸



12/11

DISMANTLING OF AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT BY THE NATIONAL GUARD AT KM 21. SIX PEOPLE ARE SERIOUSLY BURNED.⁴⁰

13/11

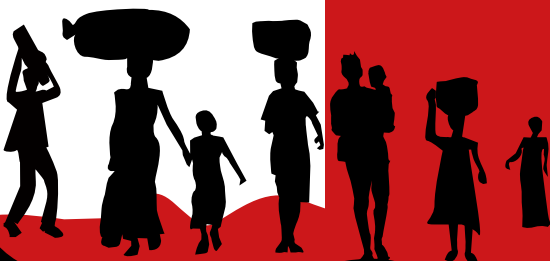
A group of people on the move, comprising 18 women and 24 children, is arrested in Tunis for begging and detained at the El Ouardia administrative detention center in the southern suburbs of Tunis⁴¹. On November 15, security forces reportedly tried to put them on buses to forcibly move them to desert areas, but the women protested, and the group was returned to the center.⁴² On December 10, some of the women were returned to their respective countries of origin - notably Nigeria and Sierra Leone.⁴³

22/11

Citizens' march in central Tunis to denounce injustice and demand the rule of law, regardless of political party. Demonstrators denounced arbitrary arrests and detentions, restrictions on press freedom and restrictions on civil society organizations.⁴⁴

27/11

Tunisia is examined by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In its concluding observations, the Committee recommends that the Tunisian state, among other things, take effective measures to monitor the spread of racist hate speech targeting sub-Saharan migrants, refrain from collective expulsions and respect the principle of non-refoulement.⁴⁶



Opening of the trial of a civil society organization whose three employees have been in pre-trial detention for 19 months. The defendants are **accused of housing and facilitating the illegal residence of migrants, within the framework of a partnership with the municipality of Sousse. Requests for their release have been rejected.**⁴⁷

13 people on the move of Sub-saharan origin are arrested in Tazarka, near Nabeul. They are charged with illegal entry into Tunisia and drug-related offences. A member of the Tunisian Parliament denounces the significant increase in the number of people on the move in the Cap Bon region, particularly in Tazarka and Korba, and calls for their gradual repatriation.⁴⁸

NOTES

- As the monitoring work is carried out mainly in French and English, the extent of hate speech disseminated online and in the Tunisian media is not represented in this timeline.
- Sources include interviews with civil society organizations on the ground and with experts working in Tunisia, a review of press articles and academic research papers, viewing and analysis of publicly available videos and photos, as well as referrals from partner organizations and human rights defenders.
- Alarm Phone on X.** This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the central Mediterranean.
- «One year of detention for Saadia Mosbah: Mnemty denounces targeted repression», 06/05/2025, Business News. «Saadia Mosbah: the imprisoned icon of Tunisian anti-racism», 06/16/2025, Nawaat.
- «Tunisia: press freedom in free fall», 09/05/2025, Reporters Without Borders. «Tunisie : recul alarmant dans le classement RSF 2025 sur la liberté de la presse», 10/05/2025, Inkyfada.
- Refugees in Tunisia on X, Marino Dubois on Facebook
This episode was confirmed through Key Informant Interviews with humanitarian sources.
- Refugees in Libya on X.
- «Nobody hears you when you scream»: the dangerous turn of Tunisia's migration policy», 06/11/2025, Amnesty International, p. 7.
- Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, AL TUN 3/2025, 28 mai 2025.
- «Migration: la Tunisie démantèle un camp illégal à El Amra abritant 3500 migrants», 29/05, Tunisie Numérique. «Dismantling of migrant camps in El Amra», 29/05/2025, Business News.
- Refugees in Libya on X and Refugees in Tunisia on X
- «Tarak Mahdi: migrants spread like a metastasizing cancer!», 03/06/2025, Business News. «More than 6,000 births of children of irregular African migrants recorded in a few months», 03/06/2025, La Presse.tn.
- «La scolarisation des enfants de migrants est une menace pour l'Etat, selon Fatma Mseddi», 11/06/2025, Business News.
- «El Amra: Démantèlement d'un cinquième camp de migrants», 20/06/2025, Mosaïque FM.
- «Tunisian government offers return tickets to migrants in Sfax, without going through IOM», 06/24/2025, InfoMigrants.
- «Condamnation de Sonia Dahmani: vague d'indignation et dénonciation d'un «dénî de justice», 30/06/2025, Business News.
- Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur HRDs on X
- Marino Dubois on Facebook
This episode was confirmed through Key Informant Interviews with humanitarian sources.
- Marino Dubois on Facebook
This episode was confirmed through Key Informant Interviews with humanitarian sources.
- «Khaled Nouri: la Tunisie refuse d'être une terre de transit pour la migration irrégulière», 15/07/2025, Nessma.
- «Filippo Grandi: "Migranti, la situazione è critica. Il piano Mattei diventi europeo", 14/07/2025, Corriere della Sera.
- Tunisia an «open-air» prison, sau protesters at anti-President Saied march», 25/07/2025, Al Jazeera.
- «Refused in a cab because black: an academic denounces ordinary and repeated racism», 02/08/2025, BusinessNews.
- «La justice relaunch les poursuites contre l'association Mnemty et Saadia Mosbah», 06/08/2025, BusinessNews.
- Marino Dubois on Facebook
- «Sousse: une enquête ouverte après le meurtre d'un migrant subsaharien», 24/08/2025, Mosaïque FM.
- The Access to Information Authority was an independent public body, with legal personality and financial autonomy, created by Organic Law n°2016-22 of March 24, 2016 on the right of access to information. Its nine members, elected by the Assembly and appointed by decree, represented various bodies: magistrates, lawyers, teachers, journalists, statisticians

- and civil society. INAI's mission was to guarantee the right of access to information, arbitrate between the administration and citizens, and promote transparency in public action.
28. «Tunisie: fermeture de l'Instance d'accès à l'information, nouveau tour de vis du régime», 24/08/2025, RFI. "Disparition de l'instance d'accès à l'information : en Tunisie, un verrou de plus", 21/08/2025, Inkyfada.
 29. Marino Dubois on Facebook
 30. L'actualité on Facebook
This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant
 31. Alarm Phone on X
This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the central Mediterranean
 32. Alarm Phone on X and L'actualité sur Facebook
This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the central Mediterranean.
 33. This episode was also reported by Refugees in Libya on X
 34. This information was gathered by OMCT through an interview with a humanitarian source.
 35. «Tunisia: firm rejection of «disguised settlement» of irregular migrants», 08/10/2025, Webdo.
 36. Cassation appeal rejected in activists' case, Business News, 08/10/2025.
 37. Alarm Phone on X
This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the central Mediterranean.
 38. Alarm Phone on X
This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the central Mediterranean.
 39. «Tunisia. Widespread violations of the rights of refugees and migrants reveal a risk of EU complicity», 06/11/2025, Amnesty International.
 40. Marino Dubois on Facebook and L'actualité on Facebook
 41. "La situation est préoccupante: en Tunisie, des femmes et enfants migrants arrêtés et détenus arbitrairement pour mendicité risquent l'expulsion", 19/11/25, InfoMigrants.
See also David Yambio on X
 42. The El Ouardia center comes under the authority of the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior's Department of Borders and Foreigners. It is unofficially used as a detention center for people on the move, although it is not registered or administered as a place of deprivation of liberty.
 43. The OMCT was able to gather information on this episode through four interviews with key informants who documented the case and the violations.
See also L'actualité on Facebook
 44. "A Tunis, une foule vêtue de noire fait front contre l'injustice", 22/11/2025, Business News.
 45. L'actualité on Facebook
 46. United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations on the report of Tunisia, December 23, 2025, CERD/C/TUN/CO/20-22, §28.
 47. «Tunisie: ouverture du procès de six membres de la branche tunisienne de France terre d'asile», 15/12/2025, InfoMigrants.
 48. «Nabeul: MP Noura Chabrek calls for repatriation of irregular migrants massively present in Cap Bon», 12/23/2025, Business News.

CHRONOLOGY OF OPERATIONS AT SEA

The chronology below contains a selection of incidents, mainly shipwrecks, documented as part of the ongoing monitoring and triangulation of information by the OMCT and its partners. The events listed highlight the persistence of irregular departures from the Tunisian coast, interceptions by the Tunisian authorities of boats departing from Tunisia, and search and rescue operations involving boats departing from Libya and entering Tunisian territorial waters. The chronology below also highlights the high number of people who have lost their lives at sea during attempted crossings from Tunisia and points out that the operations in place do not guarantee effective access to assistance for boats in distress, nor adequate protection of human life at sea. Finally, this chronology highlights a lack of coordination between the authorities concerned, particularly between Tunisia, Italy, Libya and Malta.

05/05

20
25

A BOAT WITH 45 PEOPLE ON BOARD, WHICH LEFT LIBYA ON APRIL 26, **SANK OFF THE TUNISIAN COAST BETWEEN MAHDIA AND CHEBBA, KILLING 14 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 3 CHILDREN.**⁴⁹



17/05 - 18/05

Several humanitarian vessels carry out **rescue operations in the Tunisian search and rescue zone.** On May 17, through three rescue operations, the Ocean Viking rescued a total of 273 people and disembarked them at the port of Ancona in Italy.⁵⁰ On May 18, the NGO SOS Humanity rescued over 100 people in distress.⁵¹ **At least 8 people die, including 4 children; their bodies are found along the coast of El Amra in Tunisia.**⁵²

07/06

A humanitarian ship rescues 54 people from Libya off the Tunisian coast, having found **refuge on an oil rig after their boat sank three days earlier.** Among those rescued was a woman who had given birth to a baby boy the previous day on the oil rig.⁵³ **At least 21 people died in the sinking.**⁵⁴

10/06

«DOZENS OF BODIES» ARE FOUND ON THE BEACHES OF SFX AND MAHDIA.⁵⁵

30/06

A boat from La Louza, 80km from Sfax, sinks about 70km from Lampedusa. The Italian coastguard rescued 87 people, including 23 women and 10 children, and recovered the body of a woman who had died in the wreck. At least **5 other people are reported missing** in the Tunisian-Maltese rescue zone.⁵⁶



22/08

Sinking of a boat off the coast of Sfax with 131 people on board: **25 people die and 26 are missing, including 5 children.**⁶³

18/09

A boat off the Tunisian coast overturned, **killing 39 people** - most of them from Cameroon.⁶⁵

11/07

A boat with 64 people on board left Sfax on July 8 and sank: 27 people were rescued by the Italian coastguard; 33 by the Tunisian coastguard; while 4 were reported missing.⁵⁷ Up to 30 people are said to have thrown themselves into the water to reach the Italian ship, in the hope of being taken to Europe rather than Tunisia. SOS Humanity condemns the Tunisian and Italian coastguards' **lack of assistance to the 4 people reported missing.**⁵⁸

29/07

A BOAT THAT LEFT SFAX ON JULY 26 WITH AROUND 90 PEOPLE ON BOARD SANK, **KILLING TWO CHILDREN AND ONE ADULT.**⁵⁹ THE SHIPWRECKED PEOPLE WERE RESCUED BY A MERCHANT SHIP AND LANDED IN ITALY.⁶⁰

07/08

A boat with 52 people on board, which set sail from Sfax on August 4, broke down after three days at sea. **Three people threw themselves into the sea in an attempt to reach a merchant ship seen in the distance and were reported missing.** The others were rescued by a fishing boat and landed in Italy.⁶¹ A six-year-old child, whose condition had deteriorated during the days spent drifting at sea without food or water, died in Palermo hospital on August 19.⁶²

15/09

A 20-year-old woman loses her life in a shipwreck off Lampedusa. The boat, which had set sail from Sfax, was carrying around fifty people who were rescued by the Italian coastguard.⁶⁴



03/11

A boat with 64 people on board from Abu Kamash in Libya is intercepted by the Tunisian coastguard.

Those intercepted were reportedly severely beaten and detained in Sfax.⁶⁷

04/12

A boat leaving the coast of Sfax, carrying 50 people including 25 unaccompanied minors, is rescued by the Italian coastguard off Lampedusa. During the crossing, 5 people fell over-board and are missing.⁶⁹

19/12

A boat carrying 64 people, including pregnant women and children, had engine problems off the coast of Sfax and was rescued by the Tunisian coastguard. Two other boats were intercepted off the coast of Sfax. In all, around 109 people are landed in Sfax and then deported to Libya.⁷¹

22/10

40 people on the move from sub-Saharan Africa, including 12 children, die when their boat sinks off the coast of Mahdia. 30 people were rescued by the Tunisian coastguard.⁶⁶

07/11

A BOAT FROM SIDI MANSOUR IN TUNISIA CARRYING 64 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 9 CHILDREN, SINKS 10KM OFF THE COAST. 59 PEOPLE ARE RESCUED BY THE TUNISIAN COASTGUARD, AND 3 ARE REPORTED MISSING, INCLUDING TWO CHILDREN.⁶⁸

16/12

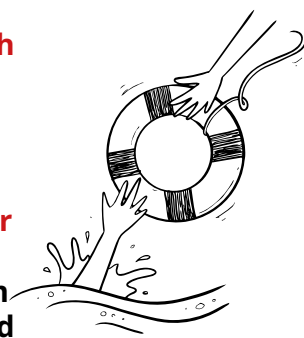
A boat leaving the coast of Sfax with 56 people on board, including two women and two babies, breaks down. The distress call to the Tunisian coastguard was reportedly



answered: «If you're Sudanese, we're not coming to save you.» After more than 20 hours in distress at sea, the people were rescued by the Tunisian authorities and brought back to the port of Chebba. They were then deported to the Libyan border.⁷⁰

19/12

Sinking of a boat from Libya with 117 people on board, including Egyptians, Eritreans, Somalis and Sudanese, not far from the border between Tunisian and Libyan waters. Only one survivor was rescued by a Tunisian fisherman. Despite appeals from civil society, it has been reported



that the Tunisian and Libyan authorities have not launched any search and rescue operations.⁷²

NOTES

49. IOM Missing Migrants Project 2025
50. Dipartimento per le Libertà Civili e l'Immigrazione, Cruscotto statistico al 21 maggio 2025. In total, based on public information from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 393 people arrived by sea in Italy on May 17 and 483 on May 18, 2025. See also «Migranti sbarcati al porto di Ancona: saranno distribuiti in 5 regioni. A bordo un caso di tubercolosi», Ancona Today, 05/21/2025.
51. «Mediterranean: more than 350 migrants rescued in two days», 05/19/2025, InfoMigrants.
«More than 270 migrants rescued off Tunisia by the vessel Ocean Viking», 18/05/2025, RFI.
«273 migrants rescued off the Tunisian and Maltese coasts», 18/05/2025, Kapitalis.
52. IOM Missing Migrants Project - Excel Table 2025
53. «Around 50 migrants, including a woman who had just given birth, rescued from an oil rig off Tunisia», 10/06/2025, InfoMigrants. See also Alarm Phone on X. This episode was also confirmed by an interview conducted by OMCT with a search and rescue organization at sea.
54. IOM Missing Migrants Project - Excel Table 2025
55. "Tunisie: des dizaines de corps de migrants retrouvés sur des plages de Madhia et Sfax", 11/06/2025, InfoMigrants.
«Death concealed on Tunisian coasts», 10/06/2025, FTDES.
56. "Méditerranée: un mort et plusieurs disparus dans un naufrage au large de Lampedusa", 30/06/2025, InfoMigrants.
«Migrant boat sinks in Tunisian-Maltese rescue zone», 06/30/2025, Kapitalis.
57. "Migranti in mare alla vista della motovedetta tunisina, in 27 salvati dalla guardia costiera", 12/07/2025, Repubblica.
58. "Tunisian and Italian coast guards may have left 4 people behind in the Mediterranean, SOS Humanity says", 18/07/2025, InfoMigrants.
59. SeaWatch on X and AlarmPhone on X. This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the central Mediterranean.
60. "Méditerranée: deux enfants meurent lors du sauvetage d'une embarcation de migrants en difficulté", 30/07/2025, InfoMigrants.
61. Marino Dubois on Facebook
This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the central Mediterranean.
62. "Lampedusa, morte cerebrale per una bimba di 6 anni sbarcata sull'isola", 19/08/2025 - Corriere della sera.
63. L'actualité on Facebook and IOM Missing Migrants Project - Excel Table 2025
64. L'actualité on Facebook
This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the central Mediterranean.
65. Refugees in Tunisia on X
66. «Tunisia: 40 migrants, including babies, drown when their boat sinks», 22/10/2025, InfoMigrants.
67. Alarm Phone on X. This episode was also confirmed by the OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the Central Mediterranean.
68. Alarm Phone on X. This episode was also confirmed by the OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the Central Mediterranean.
69. "Mer Méditerranée: cinq migrants portés disparus au large de Lampedusa", 05/12/2025, InfoMigrants.
70. "Group gets intercepted by Tunisian National Guard and sold to Libyan Border Guard for fuel: when does this violence end?", 04/02/2026, Alarm Phone. This episode was confirmed by interviews with search and rescue organizations conducted by the OMCT.
71. Alarm Phone on X ; Marino Dubois on Facebook ; L'actualité on Facebook. This episode was also confirmed by the OMCT through an interview with a key informant documenting episodes of shipwrecks and interceptions at sea in the Central Mediterranean.
72. "Alarm Phone fears yet another deadly shipwreck in the Central Mediterranean", 24/12/2025, Alarm Phone.
«Central Mediterranean: 116 people reported missing in biggest shipwreck of the year», 12/30/2025, InfoMigrants.



This report is based on primary and secondary research and programmatic learning.
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