



TORTURE ROADS

**LACK OF SOLUTIONS
FOR PEOPLE
ON THE MOVE
IN TUNISIA**

VOLUME 5
MAY- DECEMBER 2025



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVRR	Assistance for Voluntary Return and Reintegration
CAT	Convention Against Torture
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCIM	General Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (Libya)
DSR	Determination of Refugee Status
GBV	Gender-based violence
INLCTP	National Authority for Combating Trafficking in Persons
IOM	United Nations International Organization for Migration
ITS	Informal Settlement – Informal Settlements
KII	Key Informant Interview
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MRCC	Maritime Rescue Coordination Center
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMCT	World Organisation Against Torture
SAR	Search and Rescue
SSA	Stability Support Apparatus (Libya)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



METHODOLOGY



The OMCT's monitoring and research is based on:

- In-depth analysis of reports and communications from international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and national and local associations on the rights of people on the move;
- Extensive documentation of publicly available secondary data, including the analysis of videos, images, GPS coordinates, satellite imagery, and written testimonies, which helped identify instances of violations during the period analyzed;
- A series of semi-structured interviews with a total of 34 representatives of international, national, and local non-governmental organizations (based in Tunis, Sfax, and Zarzis), independent researchers and experts, and organizations operating in the Central Mediterranean, Tunisia, Libya, and Italy;
- Direct documentation of human rights violations involving 161 individuals, including 47 children;¹
- Analysis of secondary data, including access to data from four organizations providing direct assistance to people on the move in Tunisia;
- About ten semi-structured interviews conducted with officials from international organizations to confirm the understanding of quantitative trends and validate the conclusions drawn from fieldwork.

Several limitations inherent in documenting human rights violations suffered by people on the move prevent access to consensus-based quantitative data, such as, among others: the constant mobility of alleged victims, the overlap of different migration flows during the same period and along the same routes, the cross-border nature of the violations suffered by people on the move, and the difficulty of accessing areas where violations are alleged to have occurred. However, after studying in detail and verifying the typology, incidence, and prevalence of violations on Tunisian territory, the report presents conclusions regarding the qualitative aspects of these violations in terms of patterns and consequences for individuals, their families, and their communities.

1. This includes more than 21 individual and group cases involving direct and indirect victims of violations, including 10 direct interviews conducted by the SANAD/OMCT direct assistance program.



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, also 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 the victims as well as the modus operandi used by the alleged perpetrators;
- A chronology of human rights violations, a chronology of operations at sea, and a chronology of developments related to migration and asylum in the Mediterranean region;
- A chapter highlighting concerns regarding international standards concerning the return program organized 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 to Tunisia also fell sharply, with an estimated monthly average of nearly 480 arrivals via land borders between May and December 2025, compared to approximately 2,000 per month during the period from November 2024 to April 2025. This sharp decline occurred against a backdrop of significantly tightened 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 on 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 both voluntary return schemes facilitated by the IOM and a new program established and directly implemented by the 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 sea 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 2026,² 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.³ 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. It is also regularly designated, within cooperation and dialogue frameworks, as a safe country of origin for its nationals, and is increasingly integrated into the logic of "safe third countries" in the European debate, which reinforces its role in the strategy of externalizing migration controls. In this context, and in line with previous reports, according to OMCT's research, Tunisia cannot be considered a "safe third country": people on the move residing in 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.

This report provides an updated overview of human rights violations experienced by people on the move in Tunisia between May and December 2025, identifies certain violations that became more prevalent during the second half of 2025, and highlights key developments that took place in early 2026 (notably Storm Harry and developments at the European level regarding the European Pact on Migration and Asylum). Among the new forms of abuse and the intensification of violations during this period, the OMCT identifies in particular the intensification of operations to dismantle informal camps, new forms of human trafficking, and the emergence of a return program organized directly by the Tunisian authorities, all of this within a context of shrinking civic space.

Faced with the current reality marked by a near-total lack of options, the report emphasizes that the absence of legal and sustainable solutions fuels a growing sense of despair among children, women, and men on the move, often pushing them to resort to dangerous sea crossings and other high-risk strategies. Strengthening safe, regular, and rights-based solutions thus emerges as a key lever for reducing vulnerabilities, preventing human rights violations, and offering credible alternatives to irregular and potentially deadly migration routes.

2. **European Commission, Pact on Migration and Asylum, May 21, 2024.**

3. The European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum consists of the following legislative instruments: Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 15, 2021, on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No. 439/2010; Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing standards on reception conditions for applicants for international protection; Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of such protection; Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union; Regulation (EU) 2024/1349 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a border return procedure; Regulation (EU) 2024/1350 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Union framework for resettlement and humanitarian admission; Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the management of asylum and migration; Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council introducing screening of third-country nationals at external borders; Regulation (EU) 2024/1358 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Eurodac for the comparison of biometric data; and Regulation (EU) 2024/1359 of the European Parliament and of the Council on crisis and force majeure situations in the field of migration and asylum. See also "

4. The concept of "safe third country" is enshrined in European Union asylum law and is elaborated in Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union, which allows Member States to declare an application for international protection inadmissible when a third country is considered safe for the applicant and when certain conditions are met, in particular the existence of effective protection and access to an asylum procedure. This Regulation also provides the legal basis for establishing a list of safe third countries at the Union level; however, as of the date of this report, no European list of safe third countries has been formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, and therefore no country has been officially designated as such at the Union level. In practice, the application of the safe third country concept remains subject to national designations by Member States, in compliance with EU law and international human rights obligations. Tunisia currently appears on the European Union's proposed lists of "safe countries of origin" as part of the reform of the Asylum Procedures Regulation and is increasingly mentioned in political and strategic discussions within the broader context of the European Union's external migration cooperation, without such mention constituting a formal legal designation as a safe third country under EU law.



SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH



The objective of this report is to highlight the scale and nature of alleged human rights violations committed between May and December 2025 against people on the move⁵ and their long-term consequences for this group of individuals, their families, and their communities.

As in previous OMCT reports on this subject,⁶ particular emphasis is placed on violations falling within OMCT's mandate: torture,⁷ excessive use of force and ill-treatment by security forces, denial of access to justice and procedural safeguards, forced displacement, arbitrary detention and any other form of deprivation of liberty.

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5. In accordance with the OMCT report on the subject, this report uses the terms “people on the move/mixed migration/movement flows” and “migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers” interchangeably as an umbrella category encompassing migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, unaccompanied and separated children, victims of trafficking, migrant workers, and migrants (including those in an irregular situation). This term describes the cross-border movements of people whose protection profiles, reasons for moving, and needs are highly varied. Motivated by a multitude of factors, people participating in mixed flows have different legal statuses and exhibit diverse vulnerabilities. While refugees and migrants belong to distinct legal categories, they increasingly travel along similar land and/or sea routes and by similar means of transport. At every stage of their journey, they face extreme risks and human rights violations, including torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (“ill-treatment”), sexual and gender-based violence, abductions, extortion, forced labor, and human trafficking.
 6. Previous reports covered violations committed: between February and June 2023, “Mapping Responses to Human Rights Violations: The Cases of People in Mixed Migration Flows in Tunisia, OMCT Tunisia” (June 2023); between July and October 2023, “**The Routes of Torture Vol. 1: Mapping of violations suffered by people on the move in Tunisia**” (December 2023), between November 2023 and April 2024, “**The Routes of Torture Vol. 2: Mapping of violations suffered by people on the move in Tunisia between November 2023 and April 2024**” (September 2024), between April 2024 and November 2024, “**The Routes of Torture Vol. 3: The Shrinking of Civic Space and Its Impact on People on the Move**” (January 2025), and between November 2024 and April 2025, “**The Routes of Torture Vol. 4: Human Rights Violations Suffered by Children on the Move in Tunisia**” (September 2025).
 7. Article 1 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment defines torture as: “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, to intimidate or coerce the person or a third party, or for any other reason based on any form of discrimination whatsoever, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by a public official or any other person acting in an official capacity, or at the instigation of or with the express or tacit consent of such a person. This term does not extend to pain or suffering arising solely from, inherent in, or occasioned by lawful sanctions.”

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK : THE ABSOLUTE PROHIBITION OF TORTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

OMCT's research confirms that torture and all other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment are widespread at every stage of migration: in countries of origin (where it is often a trigger for migration), along the migration route, and in countries of destination, at the hands of state actors, as well as exposure to violence committed by non-state actors.

Torture and other forms of ill-treatment in the context of migration can take many different forms, including:

- **Physical violence:** punching, kicking, beating with sticks, electric shocks, sleep deprivation, or other treatments inflicting pain and suffering.
- **Psychological violence:** humiliation, racist or discriminatory insults, threats of death or enforced disappearance, intimidation.
- **Sexual and gender-based violence:** sexual assault, rape, or sexual exploitation.
- **Arbitrary arrests and detentions:** imprisonment without due process, detention in degrading conditions such as extreme overcrowding, denial of access to medical care, drinking water, food, or sanitation facilities, prolonged solitary confinement, or incommunicado detention.
- **Violations of the principle of non-refoulement:** deportations and illegal returns to another State where there is a risk of torture or ill-treatment, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement.

These violations undermine the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by people on the move. States have an obligation under international law to prevent, prohibit, and punish all forms of torture inflicted by their agents or on their territory, and to protect all persons under their jurisdiction from such practices.

The study examines the responsibility of the Tunisian state authorities and focuses on violations committed on Tunisian territory, including border areas under the effective control of the Tunisian state.⁸ In accordance with OMCT's mandate, the study investigates the **direct responsibility**—the actions of Tunisian authorities (primarily committed by security forces)—and the **indirect responsibility** of the Tunisian state, also referring to the omissions or tolerance of state authorities regarding violence committed by non-state actors (traffickers, criminal gangs, or smugglers) and/or individuals (Tunisian citizens) against migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as against defenders of the rights of people on the move.⁹

8. Alleged violations committed by the Algerian, Libyan, and Italian authorities have also been reported, but the report does not analyze them.

9. By becoming parties to international treaties, States assume obligations and duties to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights under international law. The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from impeding or restricting the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires States to protect individuals and groups from human rights violations. The obligation to fulfill means that States must take positive measures to facilitate the enjoyment of fundamental human rights.

The Tunisian State's indirect responsibility for acts of torture committed by Its citizens

According to Article 2 of the United Nations Convention against Torture, "Each State Party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial, and other measures to prevent acts of torture from being committed in any territory under its jurisdiction".¹⁰ This provision falls within the framework of the State's general obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights enshrined in the Convention.

In this regard, the obligation to protect requires the State to prevent, stop, and punish acts of torture, including acts of violence committed by non-state actors. In its General Comment No. 2, the United Nations Committee Against Torture specifies that the State bears responsibility when its authorities consent, expressly or tacitly, to the commission of acts prohibited by the Convention.¹¹

Thus, when acts of torture and ill-treatment are committed by non-state actors on the territory of the State, the State may be held responsible due to its failure to fulfill these obligations. Such a failure contributes to creating a climate of impunity and may be interpreted as a form of implicit tolerance, thereby engaging its indirect responsibility.¹²

The OMCT believes that analyzing the human rights situation of people on the move residing and/or transiting through Tunisia is essential, among other things, to support the efforts of the Tunisian authorities to ensure they comply with their obligations under international human rights law, and to promote the adoption and implementation of policies based on equity, justice, and human rights for all.

A better understanding of the needs, profiles, vulnerabilities, intentions, and expectations of migrant individuals, families, and communities—and of those among them eligible for international protection—is important for designing an asylum and migration model specific to Tunisia.

OMCT's reports also aim to:

- Shed light on the development of migration policies by Tunisia's partners in Europe and Africa, advocating for the inclusion of human rights protection in current and future bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements;
- Advocate with Tunisian authorities and their partners to put an end to ongoing violations and investigate serious violations committed in the past;
- Raise awareness within Tunisian society regarding respect for the human rights of all, including migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, by promoting a discourse on inclusivity and equity.

10. Art. 2 of the United Nations Convention against Torture, adopted on December 10, 1984, and ratified by Tunisia on September 23, 1988.

11. United Nations Committee Against Torture, General Comment No. 2: Implementation of Article 2 by States Parties, CAT/C/GC/2, 2008, §18.

12. United Nations Committee Against Torture, General Comment No. 2: Implementation of Article 2 by States Parties, CAT/C/GC/2, 2008, para. 18. The CAT General Comment confirms that the State bears responsibility when its authorities encourage, order, tolerate, or consent to acts prohibited by the Convention, including when such acts are committed by non-state actors. See also *V.L. v. Switzerland* (Comm. No. 262/2005, 2007), in which the Committee found a violation of Article 3 due to the lack of protection against serious domestic violence; *Njamba and Balikosa v. Sweden* (Comm. No. 322/2007, 2010), illustrating the State's responsibility in the face of threats from non-state armed groups; *Tebourski v. France* (Comm. No. 300/2006, 2007), confirming the obligation of non-refoulement when the receiving State fails to protect against violence by extremist groups; and *A.A. v. Switzerland* (Comm. No. 478/2011, 2014), clarifying that the State's inability or refusal to protect amounts to a State-sponsored threat for the purposes of Article 3. These decisions confirm that inaction, indifference, or de facto tolerance by the State may engage its indirect responsibility for prohibited acts committed by private actors.



CONTEXT

THE PRESENCE AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN TUNISIA

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the geographic presence, arrivals, departures, and movements of people on the move to and from Tunisia between May and December 2025, and to assess how the situation has evolved compared to the previous study period (November 2024 to April 2025).

1.1 Arrivals

Tunisia has the following official border crossings:¹³

- Seven international airports (Tabarka-Ain Draham, Tunis-Carthage, Enfidha-Hammamet, Monastir, Sfax-Thyna, Tozeur-Nefta, and Djerba-Zarzis);
- Nine maritime border crossings (distributed among the various ports of Radès, La Goulette, Sousse, Sfax, Gabès, Bizerte, and Zarzis);
- Eleven land border crossings (with Algeria: Malloula, Babouche, Ghardimaou, Sakiet Sidi Youssef, Kalaat Senan, Haidra, Bouchebka, Temaghza, Hazoua – with Libya: Dehiba, Ras Jedir).

Regular arrivals

People on the move continue to enter Tunisia legally through official border crossings, holding various types of visas (tourist, business, student, or for medical treatment, among others). While some of them return to their country of origin when their visa expires, others extend their stay beyond the authorized period. Thus, according to OMCT research, some students from sub-Saharan African countries reportedly come to Tunisia to study but do not leave and remain in the country; others reportedly interrupt their studies to embark on a migration journey to Europe; and others reportedly enter directly with a student visa with the aim of attempting to cross the Mediterranean.¹⁴ A significant decline in the number of students from sub-Saharan African countries enrolled in Tunisian universities was reportedly observed at the start of the 2025 academic year.¹⁵

Furthermore, according to the experts consulted for this study, the year 2025 would be marked by an increase in the number of Bangladeshi nationals arriving in Algeria through legal channels, particularly by plane, before traveling to Tunisia with the help of smugglers and attempting a crossing to Italy from Sfax.¹⁶ This route remains, however, marginal compared to the one taken by the majority of Bangladeshis, who travel by plane to Libya and then attempt the crossing from that country.¹⁷

13. "Contact Information for Customs Offices," General Directorate of Customs in Tunisia, accessed in March 2026.

14. The OMCT gathered information on the procedures for regular arrivals through interviews with organizations and key informants.

15. Interview with a professor at a Tunisian university.

16. Humanitarian source.

17. Mixed Migration Centre, "Navigating new corridors: the evolving route of Bangladesh migration to Italy through Libya", 2026.

Irregular arrivals

Irregular arrivals by land—either at official border crossings 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 2025.¹⁸

In terms of arrivals of people traveling to Tunisia by land, the land border between Tunisia and Algeria remains the main point of entry into the country, particularly through the Tébessa region of Algeria at Ouenza, El Meridj, and El Kouif, providing access to the Tunisian governorates of Kasserine and El Kef. The majority of people on the move crossing this land border travel in small, fragmented groups, combining segments on foot with journeys provided by drivers.¹⁹ Land arrivals from Libya to Tunisia have seen a notable decrease since 2024, due to strengthened border controls and increased bilateral cooperation between Tunisian and Libyan security forces. The movements that have persisted, however, have been facilitated by smuggling networks operating on both sides of the border, with migrants often hidden inside vehicles. These smugglers generally limit themselves to providing transportation and do not offer accommodation or assistance for the remainder of the migration journey.²⁰ From May to December 2025, an estimated **3,500** people arrived by land from Algeria and **350** from Libya. Over the course of 2025, an estimated **11,000** people on the move arrived in Tunisia by land. Throughout 2025, at least 210 people who departed from Libya and were rescued at sea were disembarked in Tunisia, according to a humanitarian organization.²¹

1.2 Departures

People on the move in Tunisia also continue to leave the country, as was the case during the previous study period, whether through regular departures such as returns organized by the IOM or by state authorities, resettlement programs, or alternative admission routes to third countries, or irregularly by attempting to cross the Mediterranean to reach Italy.

Regular departures

In Tunisia, the IOM runs an Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program for people on the move wishing to return to their countries of origin. Between 2023 and 2025, the IOM facilitated the voluntary return of more than 100,000 people across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.²² Of these 100,000 people, more than 17,500 voluntary returns were carried out from Tunisia between 2023 and 2025²³ — making it the third-largest source of voluntary returns in the MENA region, after Libya and Algeria.

In 2024, 7,250 people on the move had benefited from this program.²⁴ During 2025, the number of people who benefited from voluntary return reached **8,853**²⁵ (a record - marking a 22% increase between 2024 and 2025). In July 2025 alone, a total of 1,096 people on the move benefited from voluntary return through the IOM.

18. Humanitarian source.

19. **Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime**, "Tunisia: Crackdowns Disrupt Smuggling and Fuel New Abuses," December 2025.

20. **Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime**, "Tunisia: Crackdowns Disrupt Smuggling and Fuel New Abuses," December 2025.

21. Humanitarian source.

22. According to IOM figures, the IOM facilitated the voluntary return of 25,100 people from the MENA region in 2023, 41,284 people in 2024, and 35,182 people in 2025. See **IOM, A region on the move 2025 - Middle East and North Africa**. p. 58.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

24. **"Tunisia: 150 Gambian migrants repatriated 'voluntarily' by the IOM," October 1, 2025, InfoMigrants.**

25. **IOM, "8,853 migrants assisted in 2025 under the IOM's Voluntary Return and Reintegration Program in Tunisia," January 7, 2026.**

During the previous period studied by OMCT, from November 2024 to April 2025, the IOM facilitated the voluntary return of more than 3,470 vulnerable individuals to their countries of origin. See OMCT, **Torture Roads Vol. 4 - Human Rights Violations Suffered by Children on the Move in Tunisia (November 2024 to April 2025)**, September 2025, p. 14.

Between June and December 2025, the OMCT also noted the emergence of a return program organized directly by the Tunisian authorities. These returns reportedly involved at least **1,200** migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. According to documentation compiled by the OMCT and interviews conducted with representatives of organizations working to defend the human rights of people on the move in Tunisia, these returns reportedly took place without any risk assessment procedures, without respect for procedural safeguards, and without the design or implementation of reintegration plans in the countries of origin (see the chapter 3).

Finally, between May and December 2025, **72** people were resettled in a third country, a number that remains marginal compared to the number of people under international protection in the country as of December 31, 2025.²⁶ In 2025, the available quota was 235 places, and the projected quota for 2026 stands at 250 places. The plan adopted by the European Union in December 2025²⁷ highlights a major decline in European ambition regarding resettlement. The European Union plans to admit only 10,430 people through resettlement and humanitarian admissions in 2026 and 2027, representing an 83% decrease compared to the commitment of 61,000 places made for the 2024–2025 period.²⁸

Irregular departures to Europe

Arrivals in Europe: A total of 104,810 people²⁹ arrived by sea in Europe (Italy, Spain, Greece, and Cyprus) between May and December 2025.³⁰ For the entire year of 2025, it is estimated that there was a 26% decrease in the number of irregular crossings to Europe compared to 2024—including a significant decrease in arrivals via the Eastern Mediterranean route (-27%) and a very slight decrease via the Central Mediterranean route (-1%).³¹

Arrivals in Italy: Irregular arrivals by sea to Italy remained broadly stable in 2025 compared to 2024, following a sharp 58% drop observed between 2023 and 2024³². Between May and December 2025, of the 104,810 people who arrived by sea in Europe, 49,293 landed on Italian shores. Over the course of 2025, **66,296** people landed on Italian shores, including 12,142 unaccompanied minors.³³ The vast majority of those landing in Italy arrive in Lampedusa, which alone accounts for 76% of sea arrivals.³⁴ **Libya remains the main country of departure, accounting for 88% of crossings to Italy this year.**³⁵

26. UNHCR Tunisia Operational Updates – mai à décembre 2025

27. **Official Journal of the European Union, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2026 of 18 December 2025 on the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan (2026-2027).**

28. **ECRE, Joint Statement: EU States must not backtrack on refugee resettlement commitments, 12 janvier 2026.**

29. **UNHCR, Europe Sea Arrivals.** Par ailleurs, au cours de l'ensemble de l'année 2025, 144'903 personnes sont arrivées par voie maritime en Europe.

30. Between November 2024 and April 2025, the number of monthly arrivals in Europe by sea stood at 13,817. Between May and December 2025, the number of monthly arrivals in Europe by sea stood at 13,101. Thus, over the period studied, the average monthly number of arrivals by sea in Europe decreased by approximately 5% compared to the period from November 2024 to April 2025.

31. **Frontex, Irregular border crossings down 26% in 2025, Europe must stay prepared, 15/01/2026.**

32. **"Border control: Tunisia and the EU strengthen a major strategic mechanism," January 22, 2026, Webdo.**

33. **Italian Ministry of the Interior, Daily Statistical Dashboard, December 31, 2025.**

34. Humanitarian source. It is also estimated that approximately 4% of people arriving in Italy by sea arrive in Calabria, and approximately 3% in Sicily.

35. **Mixed Migration Center, North Africa Q4.**

	All of 2025	May – December 2025
Arrivals in Europe	144 903 A 26% decrease compared to 2024	104 810
Arrivals in Italy	66 296 (including 12,142 children) From Tunisia: 4,861 From Libya: 58,408	49 293

In January 2026, only 1,392 people on the move arrived on the Italian coast, compared to 3,479 in January 2025.³⁶ This drastic decrease in sea arrivals in Italy at the start of the year is largely due to poor weather conditions and the onset of Storm Harry, which caused the disappearance and presumed death of several hundred people on the move (see the section below on deaths and disappearances).³⁷

Arrivals in Italy from Tunisia: In contrast, arrivals in Italy from Tunisia saw a **75%** drop:³⁸ while 19,246 people had reached Italy by sea from Tunisia in 2024,³⁹ that number fell to just **4,861** in 2025.⁴⁰

Throughout 2025, Bangladesh (39.9%), Egypt (18%), and Eritrea (15%) continued to be the three most common nationalities among new arrivals in Italy.⁴¹ Regarding individuals who departed from the Tunisian coast and arrived in Italy during this period, the main nationalities are Tunisia (35%), Guinea (27%), Ivory Coast (8%), Mali (5%), Cameroon (4%), and Sudan (3%).⁴²

During 2025, the number of interceptions off the Tunisian coast by the National Maritime Guard is estimated at over **300**, and the number of disembarkations following interceptions at sea conducted by Tunisian authorities—involving people attempting to reach Italy who had departed from Tunisia—is estimated at **over 12,000**. However, this figure is certainly an underestimate in the absence of official data.⁴³

36. Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, Daily Statistical Dashboard as of January 31, 2026.

37. “Calabria and Sicily: Storm surges wash more than 15 migrant bodies ashore,” February 17, 2026, La Repubblica.

38. Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: North Africa, Q4.

39. Migrants: Sea arrivals in Italy down almost 60 percent in 2024

40. UNHCR, Italy Sea Arrivals Overview, mars 2026.

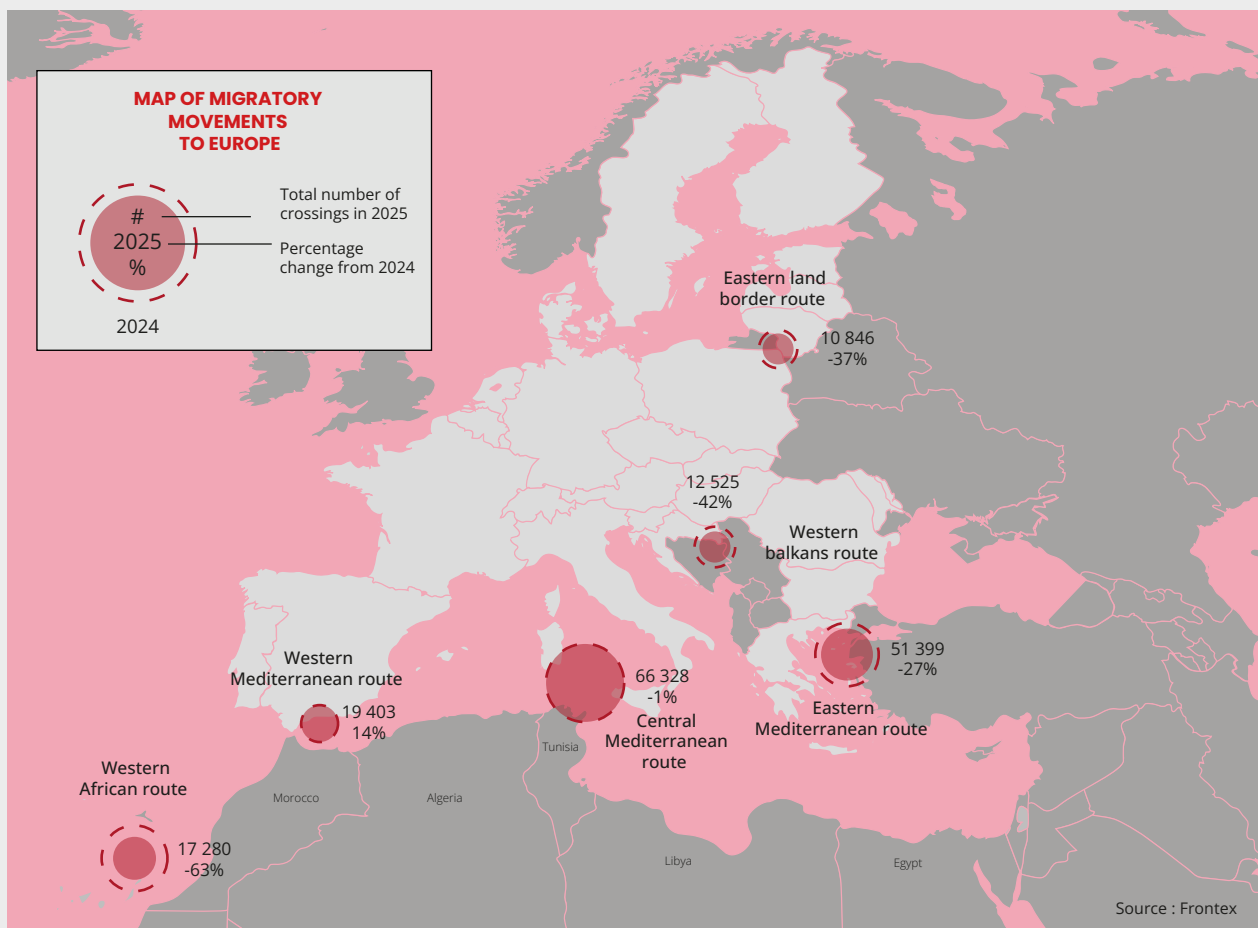
MMC Quarterly Report North Africa, Q4.

41. Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, Daily Statistical Dashboard as of December 31, 2025, p. 7. Tunisia has only a small number of Eritreans, Bangladeshis, and Egyptians on its territory. These figures include arrivals from Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Turkey, and all other countries of departure by sea to Italy.

42. UNHCR Tunisia Monthly Operational Update (March 2026)

43. 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.

Map of migratory movements to Europe in 2025



Impact on other migration routes

According to data collected by the OMCT, from May to December 2025, people on the move continued to leave Tunisia for Libya and Algeria in search of a better situation or more favorable opportunities to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. Indeed, partly due to the growing difficulties in crossing the Mediterranean from Tunisia to Italy, an increasing number of people on the move are choosing to turn to other migration routes.

Thus, in 2025, while arrivals in Italy from Tunisia have dropped by 75% compared to the previous year, there has been a dramatic increase in arrivals from eastern Libya to Greece, particularly to Crete and the island of Gavdos, with an estimated rise of **285%** compared to 2024. This situation led Greece to suspend asylum for people arriving from North Africa since July 2025.⁴⁴

Arrivals from Algeria to Italy also increased by 43% compared to 2024, while those from Algeria to the Balearic Islands in Spain rose by 22% over the same period.⁴⁵ Previously, the vast majority of people on the move arriving in the Balearic Islands were from Algeria. Now, a growing number of people from sub-Saharan Africa are taking this route, despite its dangers.⁴⁶

Finally, as mentioned earlier, departures from Libya to Italy increased significantly in 2025. In total, 58,408 people reached the Italian coast from Libya that year, compared to 42,279 in 2024, representing an increase of approximately 40%.⁴⁷

Violation of the principle of non-refoulement: deportations and illegal returns to Libya and Algeria

Since late September 2023, according to research conducted by OMCT, Tunisian security forces have systematically violated the principle of non-refoulement,⁴⁸ by carrying out both deportations—removing individuals and groups already present on Tunisian territory—and systematic illegal pushbacks at the borders with Libya and Algeria, continuously preventing access to the territory.

Despite the difficulties in documenting these incidents given the cross-border nature of the deportations and illegal returns, the modus operandi and the destinations (notably desert border areas and detention centers in Libya), it is estimated, however, that between May and December 2025, more than **14,200** people were deported by Tunisian authorities (approximately 11,000 to Algeria and 3,200 to Libya), and approximately **6,150** people were denied entry into Tunisian territory while attempting to cross land borders (see the section on deportations and pushbacks in the chapter on violations).⁴⁹

44. [“Greece: End of Asylum Suspension in Crete, Registrations Resume,” 11/05/2025, InfoMigrants.](#)

45. [Mixed Migration Center, Q4 North Africa.](#)

46. The dangers of the crossing between Algeria and the Balearic Islands are significant due to the distances involved and because there is a high risk of losing one’s bearings and ending up in the most hostile areas of the Mediterranean Sea. See the shipwreck of March 11, 2026: [InfoMigrants, “Algeria: 33 bodies of sub-Saharan migrants recovered off the coast of Algiers,” 03/17/2026.](#)

47. [UNHCR, Italy Sea Arrivals Overview 2025.](#)

48. Under Article 3 of the United Nations Convention Against Torture, ratified by Tunisia on September 23, 1988, the absolute prohibition on refoulement is stronger than that provided for under refugee law, meaning that individuals cannot be returned even if they do not meet the requirements for refugee or asylum status under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Consequently, non-refoulement under the United Nations Convention against Torture must be assessed independently of the determination of refugee or asylum status. See AL TUN 6/2024.

49. Humanitarian source.

1.3 Profiles, presence and geographical distribution

The number of people on the move (migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and others eligible for international protection) residing in or transiting through Tunisia is difficult to estimate.

Persons under international protection

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%).⁵⁰ 93% of refugees and asylum seekers registered in Tunisia are from countries covered by UNHCR's non-refoulement policy.⁵¹ Sudanese nationals remain the largest group (50%), followed by Syria (24%), Somalia (6%), Eritrea (2%), Cameroon (2%), and Mali (1%).⁵² The vast majority are men (81%).

Of a total of 1,525 people who applied for international protection between June 2024 and December 2025 but were unable to register,⁵³ **75%** were from countries covered by UNHCR's non-refoulement policy, and thus had a strong presumption of eligibility for refugee status.

In December 2025, 48.1% of people under international protection resided in the governorate of Medenine, 31.5% in Greater Tunis (governorates of Tunis and Ariana), and 3.8% in Sfax. Compared to April 2025,⁵⁴ there has been a slight decrease in the number of people under international protection residing in Sfax and Medenine, and a slight increase in the number of people under international protection residing in Greater Tunis.

As of late December 2025, UNHCR was housing 394 people in its various shelters in Tunis, Medenine, and Zarzis—a significant decrease compared to April 2025 :⁵⁵

- Bhar Lazreg Shelter: 32 people
- Ibn Khaldoun Main Shelter: 89 people
- Ibn Khaldoun Shelter (secondary shelter): 54 people
- Raoued Main Shelter :⁵⁶ 96 people
- Jderia Center :⁵⁷ 123 people

50. **UNHCR, Tunisia Operational Update, December 2025.**

51. Notably Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Syria.

52. **UNHCR, Tunisia Operational Update, December 2025.**

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

54. In April 2025, 51.4% of people under international protection resided in the Medenine Governorate, 30.1% in Greater Tunis (Tunis and Ariana Governorates), and 5.6% in Sfax.

55. As of April 30, 2025, UNHCR was housing 790 people in its various shelters. The following shelters were housing people under international protection and had the following capacities: Bhar Lazreg shelter (36 people), Ibn Khaldoun shelter (129 people), Ibn Khaldoun Shelter secondary shelter (35 people), Raoued main shelter (108 people), Raoued Shelter secondary shelter (39 people), women's shelter (67 people), and the Jderia center (376 people).

56. According to information gathered by OMCT, this center is reported to house unaccompanied minors.

57. This is a center managed by the UNHCR and the Tunisian government for adult men. According to OMCT's research, in 2025 it primarily housed adult men who had been intercepted at sea by Tunisian authorities. In a previous report, OMCT described living conditions at the Jderia center as "catastrophic," with health conditions being of grave concern due to the spread of contagious diseases. See OMCT, Mapping of Violations Suffered by People on the Move in Tunisia, Vol. 2, November 2023 to April 2024.

Migrants⁵⁸

The majority of people on the move who reside in or are transiting through Tunisia are migrants in an irregular situation without international protection, and it is difficult to estimate their number and geographic distribution. In April 2025, according to a statement by a spokesperson for the National Guard, more than 20,000 people had been counted in the regions of Jbeniana and El Amra, in the governorate of Sfax.⁵⁹ However, the number of people on the move in informal camps around El Amra and Jbeniana decreased during 2025, a year marked by movements toward urban centers such as Tunis, Sousse, and Nabeul.

In 2025, more than **20,000 newly registered people** on the move sought assistance from IOM.⁶⁰ The most represented nationalities were Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia. IOM operates a shelter in Tataouine, a shelter in Medenine dedicated to women and families, and two shelters in Zarzis. A new shelter opened in Tunis in September 2025, bringing the total capacity to 700 people.

The presence of children on the move in Tunisia

As of December 31, 2025, among the 7,929 people under international protection, **1,522** were refugee children or asylum seekers registered with UNHCR (19% of the total number of registered persons). 925 were refugees and 597 were asylum seekers, including 313 unaccompanied children. As of December 30, 2025, 172 children were housed by UNHCR, including 129 unaccompanied children.

Of a total of 1,525 people who sought international protection between June 2024 and December 2025 but were unable to register, **220** were children, including 125 unaccompanied children.

Throughout 2025, the IOM registered a total of **3,480** new children, both accompanied and unaccompanied, and provided assistance to approximately 800 unaccompanied minors whose one or both parents had died or gone missing along the migration route.⁶¹ According to data collected by the OMCT, approximately 1,350 unaccompanied children under international protection were living outside these shelters as of late December 2025.⁶²

The number of children on the move currently present in Tunisia remains unknown. The total number of children registered in 2025 with UNHCR and IOM could exceed 5,000. However, this figure is likely an underestimate, as it does not include children or newborns whose parents have not sought assistance or registration from UN agencies.

58. The OMCT uses this term here for the sake of clarity regarding the assessment of the presence of people on the move in Tunisia—distinguishing between persons under international protection and people on the move in an irregular situation without international protection. However, while refugees and migrants belong to distinct legal categories, they increasingly travel along similar land and/or sea routes and by similar means of transport. At every stage of their journey, they face extreme risks and human rights violations, including torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment ("ill-treatment"), unlawful killings, sexual and gender-based violence, abductions, extortion, forced labor, and human trafficking. This distinction is all the more questionable given that the registration of new asylum claims in Tunisia has been suspended under pressure from the authorities since May 2024.

59. **African Manager**, "Ils sont 20 mille à Jbeniana et El Amra !", 7 avril 2025.

60. Humanitarian source.

61. Humanitarian source. A 41% increase in the registration of unaccompanied and separated children on the move was observed between January and June 2025 compared to the same period in 2024.

62. Humanitarian source. Unfortunately, data on the number and types of Child Protection Officer reports concerning children on the move considered at risk during 2025 are not available.

Deaths and disappearances

According to data collected by the OMCT, at least **30** shipwrecks reportedly occurred off the Tunisian coast in 2025, resulting in the death or disappearance of **533** people, including 29 children.⁶³ This estimate is certainly lower than the actual number, as a number of shipwrecks and disappearances at sea go unreported. Tunisia has not released any official data on this subject.

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 2025.⁶⁴ Between January and October 2025, the IOM recorded that 527 people died or went missing off the Libyan coast,⁶⁵ and 346 people died or went missing off the Tunisian coast.⁶⁶

The first few 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 the IOM.⁶⁷ This is the highest figure recorded at the start of the year since 2014.⁶⁸ However, all maritime search and rescue organizations consulted for this study indicate that these figures may be significantly underestimated.

Across all migration routes in and out of the MENA region, it is estimated that 60% of people reported missing along the migration route remain unidentified.⁶⁹ In 2025, at least 270 bodies were recovered from the Mediterranean coast without being linked to any identified shipwrecks.⁷⁰

Furthermore, the OMCT continued to document cases of deaths linked to living conditions (infectious and respiratory diseases, malnutrition, and dehydration) and to the risks to which people on the move are exposed, particularly during deportations, forced internal and arbitrary displacements, and interceptions at sea—without being able to estimate a precise number of deaths.⁷¹

63. Based on data collection by the OMCT and ongoing monitoring of current events.

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

65. **"IOM Spokesperson on Migrant Boat Tragedy off Libyan Coast," 28/10/2025, IOM.**

66. **IOM Missing Migrants Project, 2025.**

67. **"More than 180 presumed dead in the Mediterranean, bringing the death toll to nearly 1,000 since the start of 2026," April 7, 2026, IOM.**

68. **"January–February 2026 is the deadliest period in the Mediterranean since 2014," 02/18/2026, InfoMigrants.**

69. See IOM, *A Region on the Move 2025 – Middle East and North Africa*, p. 62.

70. **360 Afrique, "Irregular migration: more than 3,000 deaths on routes linked to Africa in 2025," 02/27/2026.**

71. In the absence of official data, OMCT cannot provide an estimate of the precise number of people on the move who died during the period under review.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS SUFFERED BY PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN TUNISIA

OMCT's in-depth research confirms that between May and December 2025, the following violations, already reported in previous studies, continue.

2.1 Criminalization, arbitrary arrests, and detention⁷³ of people on the move

Migration to and from Tunisia is governed by the Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners adopted in 1968 and its implementing decree, as well as the Law on Passports and Travel Documents. Tunisia explicitly criminalizes irregular migration and irregular stay on Tunisian territory. According to research conducted by the OMCT, in Tunisia, people on the move continue to be subjected to arbitrary arrests in public spaces, arbitrary detention⁷⁴ as well as secret and/or incommunicado detention,⁷⁵ including children on the move.⁷⁶ According to OMCT research, A total of 45% of children assisted by a humanitarian organization report having been detained before entering Tunisia, along the migration route.⁷⁷

According to testimonies collected during the study period, in Tunisia, arrests follow:

- identity checks in public spaces,
- interceptions at sea
- raids to dismantle informal settlements, or
- arrests in front of or inside private residences.⁷⁸

72. Migration to and from Tunisia is governed by the law regulating the entry and stay of foreigners adopted in 1968 and its implementing decree, and the law on passports and travel documents adopted in 1975 and amended in 2004. Penalties are imposed for the unauthorized departure of both nationals and non-nationals. Fines and prison sentences are also provided for non-citizens who enter or leave the country without authorization or documentation, as well as fines and prison sentences for non-citizens who use false documents or provide inaccurate information.

73. According to General Comment No. 1 (2024) on Article 4 of the Optional Protocol of the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT), deprivation of liberty refers to "any form of detention or imprisonment, or the placement of a person in a public or private custodial facility from which they are not permitted to leave at will, ordered by a judicial or administrative authority or any other public authority."

74. Detention may be authorized by national law and therefore legal under national law, but may be considered arbitrary because it does not meet the requirements of necessity and proportionality. Arbitrary detention is defined in international law as follows: arbitrariness is not synonymous with "contrary to law" but must be interpreted more broadly, encompassing inappropriateness, injustice, lack of predictability, and failure to respect judicial safeguards.

75. Incommunicado detention is understood to encompass situations in which detainees cannot communicate with anyone other than law enforcement officers and, possibly, other detainees. Incommunicado detention may also occur if the person is held in an official detention facility but has no contact with the outside world. This situation entails an increased risk of torture and other serious human rights violations.

76. OMCT, "The Routes of Torture Vol. 4 – Focus Brief 2: The Criminalization of Children on the Move in Tunisia," November 2024 to April 2025.

77. Humanitarian source. These data are drawn from the databases of humanitarian organizations to which OMCT had access. These figures are calculated based on a total of 263 children who reported violations to the humanitarian organization in question. Only children who approached the humanitarian organization in question and reported the violations they suffered are included.

78. Key Informant Interviews with people on the move victims of arbitrary arrests, civil society organisations and other key stakeholders».

While arrest campaigns targeting people on the move continue in areas with high concentrations, the people on the move interviewed for this study express their fear of being arrested and live in a state of chronic insecurity and fear. Some drastically limit their movements, leaving their homes only to go to work or meet other essential needs.

An emerging trend between May and December 2025 appears to be an increase in arrests of women and children for **“begging offenses”** in urban centers, particularly in Tunis. This is believed to be partly linked to the intensification of operations to dismantle informal settlements throughout 2025, leaving many people homeless and causing them to spontaneously migrate toward urban centers.⁷⁹

During the period under review, the OMCT and its partners documented the **continued use of the El Ouardia center**,⁸⁰ particularly for detaining people on the move arrested in public spaces for “begging offenses” or for being in an irregular administrative situation prior to their return to their countries of origin—including women and unaccompanied and/or separated children. By the end of 2025, the use of the El Ouardia center had gradually increased, exceeding its maximum capacity.⁸¹ Detainees at El Ouardia are reportedly not informed of the reasons and legal basis for their detention, are forced to sign documents in Arabic without translation or explanation, face restrictions on access to a lawyer, and are held in degrading conditions (insufficient food, lack of spare clothing, unsanitary environment, lack of medication, and inadequate medical care).⁸²

People on the move who are arrested are almost systematically placed in pretrial detention.⁸³ In Tunisian prisons in general, the number of people in pretrial detention reportedly accounts for more than 60% of the total prison population. Tunisian prisons face significant overcrowding—more than 33,000 detainees across 30 correctional facilities nationwide and 5 juvenile rehabilitation centers—with an incarceration rate of 267 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants in 2025.⁸⁴ Based on testimonies from people detained in detention centers in Tunisia, those deprived of their liberty—including people on the move—report facing inadequate ventilation and lighting, limited access to personal hygiene products, living space below acceptable minimum standards, and food of low nutritional value, while lacking sufficient clothing suitable for the weather conditions.⁸⁵ However, detention conditions in places of deprivation of liberty in Tunisia are difficult to assess, particularly given that (non-governmental) bodies responsible for monitoring and overseeing places of deprivation of liberty have been denied access on numerous occasions since November 2025.⁸⁶

79. Kill with humanitarian organizations Kill with humanitarian organizations. For begging offenses, article 171 of the Tunisian Penal Code provides criminal sanctions in specific circumstances, including fraudulent practices, threats, possession of weapons while begging, the use of false documents, or the exploitation of children for organized begging activities.

80. The El Ouardia center is under the supervision of the Directorate of Borders and Foreigners within the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior. The facility 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.

See OMCT's previous research on the issue: **“An Arbitrary Detention Center in the Heart of Tunis,” 2020**, and **“The El Ouardia Center: A Lawless Zone,” 2022**.

81. The women's section at El Ouardia consists of a room used as a dining hall and two large dormitories with beds, each with a capacity of about 10 people. In this case, the dormitories were housing twice their capacity.

82. Humanitarian source. In the case of the group arbitrarily detained at El Ouardia, the conditions necessary for a truly voluntary return were clearly not met, given the coercive context created by the arbitrary detention and the lack of real alternatives. Furthermore, the procedural safeguards required by international law for a lawful expulsion also appeared to be lacking, notably the absence of an individual expulsion decision, the lack of access to an effective remedy or appeal procedure, as well as the inability to challenge the removal decision. Although these returns were not formally presented as expulsions, the circumstances indicate that the individuals concerned were, in practice, subjected to forced return/expulsion procedures, despite the absence of the procedural safeguards required for a lawful expulsion, which raises serious concerns regarding the principle of non-refoulement.

83. In December 2025, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that the Tunisian authorities ensure that persons on the move are detained only as a last resort, for the shortest possible period, following a case-by-case assessment of the legality, necessity, and proportionality of such a measure. See Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations on the report of Tunisia covering the twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports, CERD/C/TUN/CO/20-22, §26.

84. By way of comparison, this rate is 116 in Egypt, 217 in Algeria, and 185 in Jordan in 2025. See “Tunisia: Faced with Prison Overcrowding, the Justice System Continues to Imprison at Will,” July 26, 2025, Inkyfada. In addition to the 30 adult prisons on Tunisian territory, Tunisia also has five rehabilitation centers for minors in conflict with the law.

85. Furthermore, detention conditions are particularly difficult for undocumented people on the move, who receive no visits and consequently have no access to clothing or money to purchase basic necessities (hygiene products, food). People on the move may also face additional language barriers with prison staff.

86. “New Ban on Prison Visits for the LTDH: Ministry of Justice Under Scrutiny,” 12/08/2025, Business News.
“New Obstacle: An LTDH Delegation Barred from Accessing Mornaguia Prison,” 01/20/2026, Business News.

At the Manouba women's prison, which houses both women on the move and Tunisian women in the same cells, testimonies collected describe severe overcrowding, forcing women to sleep two or three to a bed. At Mornaguia Prison, many detained people on the move—almost all of whom are held on charges of illegal entry or stay in Tunisia—are reportedly placed in a cell where they sleep on the floor, crammed together on mattresses without blankets.

“Mornaguia is hell. It's very cold there. The detainees there are all sick. Some of them had already been detained there for six months, or even eight months in some cases.”

A man on the move detained at Mornaguia Prison, January 2026

Furthermore, several consistent accounts report excessive use of force by prison guards against detainees of Sub-Saharan African origin, particularly in the form of kicking, slapping, and “beatings” directed at detainees being moved from one area to another. Such corporal punishment constitutes acts of ill-treatment or even torture under international law.⁸⁷

The reality: Louise's story

Louise, 26, left her home country, Niger, in search of a better life. She settled at km 24, in one of the informal settlements around El Amra, but in January 2025, her camp was destroyed during an operation by the Tunisian National Guard. She then found a place to live with other people on the move in the governorate of Nabeul. In December 2025, while standing in front of her home, she was arrested by the police due to her irregular administrative status. She was taken to the police station and detained there for six days, along with her one-year-old child. They slept on the freezing floor, on mattresses without blankets. Throughout their detention, they were given only bread to eat.

⁸⁷ According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, “the jurisprudence of the United Nations treaty bodies and the European Court establishes that any form of corporal punishment is contrary to the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (see A/60/316 and A/67/279).” See A/HRC/28/68.

The reality: Malick's story

Malick, 26, is from Mali. During his migration journey, he passed through Libya, where he was deprived of his liberty for two months. He was only able to leave after a ransom was paid, before reaching Tunisia in March 2023. From Sfax, he attempted to cross the Mediterranean three times. Each time, he was intercepted by the Tunisian National Guard's maritime units. During his second attempt, in April 2024, those who landed in Sfax were beaten with sticks by the authorities, then placed on buses and transported to the Libyan border. Malick was then handed over to Libyan militias in exchange for a sum of money. He managed, however, to escape and return to Sfax.

In January 2025, during a third attempt to cross, Malick was intercepted again. He was then detained for three weeks at the Thyna civil prison. In October 2025, while he was living in the Ariana neighborhood of Tunis, he was arrested at his home by the police for illegal residence in Tunisia. He was incarcerated at Mornaguia Prison, in a cell with 125 other people, all from sub-Saharan Africa and detained on the grounds of illegal entry or residence on Tunisian territory.

Upon his release from detention after two months, he moved in with a friend and slept on a couch, having lost his housing in Tunis since his arrest at home. He does not feel safe in Tunisia and avoids going out after 6 p.m. for fear of being attacked in public spaces. He wishes to be resettled in a third country where he can feel safe and protected.

2.2 Forced internal and arbitrary displacement, and violations of the principle of non-refoulement

Violations of the principle of non-refoulement, as well as arbitrary internal forced displacement to desert border areas, continue to pose a major risk to people on the move transiting through or residing in Tunisia, regardless of their legal status—whether they hold a UNHCR refugee card, an asylum seeker card, or are in an irregular situation—and regardless of their vulnerability.⁸⁹

Pushbacks :⁹⁰

- Between May and December 2025, approximately **6,150** people were denied entry into Tunisia while attempting to cross the land borders. Of these, approximately 350 were reportedly forcibly returned to Libya and approximately 5,800 to Algeria.
- Throughout 2025, approximately **13,400** people were denied entry into Tunisia while attempting to cross the land borders—approximately 1,700 are believed to have been forcibly returned to Libya and 11,700 to Algeria.

Deportations⁹¹:

- Between May and December 2025, more than **14,200** people were reportedly deported by Tunisian authorities. Of these, approximately 11,000 were reportedly deported to Algeria and 3,200 to Libya.⁹²
- Over the course of 2025, more than **26,600** people were reportedly deported by Tunisian authorities—including 19,100 to Algeria and approximately 7,500 to Libya.⁹³

Between June 2023 and mid-January 2026, a total of 13,783 people in transit at the border with Tunisia were recorded by Libyan authorities (either following deportation or during an attempt to cross the Libyan border irregularly to enter Tunisia) – 898 of them between May 2025 and January 2026.⁹⁴ The number of people on the move recorded at the border between Tunisia and Libya decreased over the months, falling from 175 in May 2025 to 58 in December 2025—with a peak in October.

88. See also: : **"Inside the Pushback Apparatus in Tunisia: countering mobility, extracting its value and manufacturing infrastructures of solidarity"**, Luca Queirolo Palmas et Camille Cassarini, 2025, p. 41.

89. As highlighted in the previous OMCT report, forced displacement and deportations also affect children of all ages, legal statuses, backgrounds, and nationalities—including unaccompanied children or those separated from their parents. See OMCT, "The Routes of Torture Vol. 4 – Focus Brief 1: Human Rights Violations and Their Disproportionate Impact on Children on the Move," September 2025, p. 14.

90. Illegal pushbacks constitute a violation of the principle of non-refoulement insofar as they involve the return of persons without a prior assessment of their individual situation or their need for international protection. By preventing access to the territory and, consequently, to asylum procedures, these practices deprive the individuals concerned of the opportunity to assert a risk of persecution, torture, or inhuman or degrading treatment in the event of return. However, the principle of non-refoulement specifically prohibits any transfer of a person to a country where they could be exposed to such risks.

91. Tunisian law provides for the expulsion of foreigners whose presence on Tunisian territory constitutes a threat to public order, based on administrative decisions taken by the Ministry of the Interior. If the foreigner violates the rules governing entry into and residence in Tunisia or has committed other related offenses, they will face criminal prosecution. The Penal Code also provides for the possibility of a "residence ban" as an additional penalty for certain offenses committed by foreigners. The cases of expulsion and deportation documented by the OMCT in this research therefore do not fall under either of the two scenarios provided for by Tunisian law.

92. Source humanitarian. This figure is significantly underestimated. Furthermore, in its previous research, the OMCT estimated that more than 12,000 were deported by Tunisian authorities between January and April 2025.

93. Humanitarian source.

94. Humanitarian source. OMCT refers to interceptions rather than individuals, given that people may attempt to cross the border and be arrested multiple times over the course of several months.

	All of 2025	May - December 2025
Pushbacks	13 400 (to Libya: 1,700 / to Algeria: 11,700)	6 150 (to Libya: ±350 / to Algeria: 5,800)
Deportations	26 600 (to Libya: 7,500 / to Algeria: 19,100)	14 200 (to Libya: 3,200 / to Algeria: 11,000)

According to a humanitarian source, more than **55%** of people on the move interviewed reported having been deported by Tunisian authorities, with approximately **90%** of these deportations taking place toward the Algerian border. Furthermore, according to OMCT research, **25%** of children on the move assisted by a humanitarian organization reported having been subjected to deportation and/or internal forced displacement during the year 2025.⁹⁵

The modus operandi of these forced transfers and deportations is the same as that documented in OMCT’s previous research. The individuals targeted are people on the move mostly of sub-saharan origin, regardless of nationality or legal status—particularly of those intercepted at sea and of those expelled from informal camps in the olive groves around Sfax (El Amra and Jbeniana). According to testimonies collected by OMCT, the Tunisian National Guard remains the primary state security force responsible for this violation, thereby placing direct responsibility for these violations on the Tunisian state.

Based on testimonies from individuals deported or forcibly displaced during the period under review, during deportations to Algeria, people are generally abandoned in desert or mountainous areas along the border, without water or food. There does not appear to be effective coordination between Tunisia and Algeria regarding these deportations. On the contrary, Algerian authorities have reportedly frequently attempted to push the individuals concerned back into Tunisia, or in other cases, have arrested them in Algeria and placed them in police custody. It has also been widely documented that Algerian authorities carry out deportations from Algeria to Niger or Libya, exposing people on the move to chain refoulement.⁹⁶

Conversely, when people on the move are deported to Libya, there appears to be a certain degree of coordination between Tunisian and Libyan authorities. According to OMCT’s research, people are generally deported to Libya via Ras Jedir, Wazin, Nalut, or Ghadames, and then held in Libyan detention centers, where serious human rights violations and ill-treatment of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees have been widely documented, including cases of torture, as highlighted in the recent OHCHR/UNSMIL report.⁹⁷

The Al Assah detention center⁹⁸ in Libya, near the Tunisian border, continues to be used to detain people deported from Tunisia to Libya. During the period under review, however, OMCT notes a decrease in the number of people on the move detained at Al Assah, from 460 in June 2025 to 300 in November 2025 and then to 95 in February 2026.⁹⁹ According to experts on Libya consulted for this study, the decrease in the number of people at Al Assah is believed to be due to their transfer to the unofficial detention center at Bir Al Ghanam, operated directly by traffickers.¹⁰⁰ As of December 31, 2025, a total of 4,876 people were estimated to be detained in detention centers across Libya.¹⁰¹

95. Humanitarian source. These data are drawn from the databases of humanitarian organizations to which the OMCT had access. This percentage is calculated based on a total of 263 children who reported violations to the humanitarian organization in question. Only children who approached the humanitarian organization in question and reported the violations they suffered are included.

96. “Assamaka, Niger: More than 34,000 People Expelled from Algeria to Niger in 2025,” 12/31/2025, Alarm Phone Sahara.

97. OHCHR/UNSMIL, “Business as Usual: Human rights violations and abuses against migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees in Libya,” 02/17/2026.

98. Al-Assa is a detention center located in northwestern Libya, near the Tunisian border. It is managed by the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), with one section under the Libyan Ministry of Defense and another under the Libyan Ministry of the Interior.

99. Humanitarian source

100. Interviews with several humanitarian organizations operating in Libya.

101. OHCHR/UNSMIL, “Business as Usual: Human rights violations and abuses against migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees in Libya”, 17/02/2026. p. 35

The reality: Maissa's story

Maissa is a young woman from Côte d'Ivoire. In November 2025, she was in Tataouine with her sister when they were detained by the police due to their irregular administrative status. They were forcibly removed to a desert area on the Libyan border. During the forced displacement, Maissa is raped by a security officer before being abandoned in the desert. She walks for two days and finally manages to escape the desert and return to Tataouine. However, her sister is missing.

Violation of the principle of non-refoulement

Article 3 of the United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT) prohibits States from expelling, returning, or extraditing a person to a State where there are serious grounds for believing that they would be at risk of being subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment.¹⁰² Similarly, Article 33 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees enshrines the principle of non-refoulement by prohibiting the return of a refugee to a territory where his or her life or freedom would be threatened.¹⁰³ While the non-refoulement obligation under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees applies specifically to recognized refugees, the absolute prohibition of torture enshrined in the Convention against Torture goes beyond this framework and broadens the scope of protection, applying to any person, regardless of their status or situation.¹⁰⁴

Under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the principle of non-refoulement derives from Articles 4, 5, 7, and 12, which pertain in particular to the right to life, the prohibition of torture, and safeguards regarding expulsion. Interpreted in light of the case law of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, it prohibits States from returning a person to a country where they would risk suffering serious human rights violations.¹⁰⁵ Deportations of people on the move—whether refugees, asylum seekers, or undocumented individuals—to third countries where there is a credible and documented risk of torture, ill-treatment, or exploitation, such as Libya¹⁰⁶ or Algeria¹⁰⁷—constitute a violation of the principle of non-refoulement and engage the direct responsibility of the State.

102. Article 3(1) of the Convention against Torture: "No State Party shall expel, return, or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he or she would be subjected to torture." Tunisia ratified the Convention against Torture in September 1988.

103. United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted on July 28, 1951. Tunisia ratified this Convention in 1957.

104. **General Comment No. 4 (2017) on the implementation of article 3 of the Convention in the context of article 22, 2018.**

105. **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981.** See also: **Resolution on the Obligations of African States in the Context of the Externalization of Migration Governance and the Extra-Regional Transfer of Migrants to Africa, ACHPR/Res. 645 2025, 30 October 2025.**

Among others, this resolution condemns the engagement of States parties to the African Charter to any agreement with non-African States or entities or in any practices that leads to collective expulsions and forced transfers of migrants carried out without individual examination recalling that such practices are prohibited by Article 12(5) of the African Charter, constitute violations of customary international law, and that the principle of non-refoulement constitutes an absolute obligation under international law.

106. OHCHR, Libya: Urgent action needed to remedy deteriorating human rights situation, UN Fact-Finding Mission warns in final report, 27/03/2023. Voir aussi OHCHR, "Libya: Sites of gross human rights violations must be sealed and impartially investigated", 04/06/2025.

107. OMCT, "Algeria: Sub-Saharan migrants are exposed to violence and deportations," March 26, 2023. Alarm Phone Sahara, "Assamaka, Niger: deportations from Algeria into the desert between January and June 2025. Thousands of people deported, several killed by the unforgiving conditions," 06/25/2025. See also "Suppression of movement, migration control, manufactured precarity, and racialized border regimes in post-Hirak Algeria: in the name of sovereignty, at the service of rent accumulation," 06/18/2025, FTDES.

Deportations put people on the move at risk of being subjected to a chain of refoulement from one country to another, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement. Indeed, according to OMCT research, deportations of people on the move from Algeria to Niger continue, and reportedly even reached a peak in intensity during the year 2025.

While at least 26,031 people were reportedly deported from Algeria to Niger in 2023, followed by 31,404 people in 2024,¹⁰⁸ this number is estimated to have risen to over **34,000** in 2025.¹⁰⁹ These deportations are reportedly accompanied by excessive use of force, sexual violence, and the confiscation of belongings, money, and cell phones.¹¹⁰ According to an OMCT partner organization, many people deported to Niger reportedly passed through Tunisia before being subjected to a chain of refoulement.¹¹¹ Algeria is also reportedly deporting people traveling to Libya and Morocco.¹¹² Furthermore, 2025 saw an increase in deportations from Libya to Sudan,¹¹³ from Libya to Niger,¹¹⁴ and from Egypt to Sudan.¹¹⁵

The reality: Ahmed's story

In January 2026, Ahmed, man from of Cameroon, was arrested while returning from work near Sfax and deported to the Algerian border. After crossing the Algerian border, he was arrested by Algerian security forces. Ahmed was deported a second time, this time to Niger. In Niger, following these chain refoulements, he decided to return to Cameroon.

Meanwhile, in Tunis, his wife found herself alone with three children to care for and no stable source of income. Living in extremely precarious conditions, she had no choice but to beg on the streets to provide for herself and her children.

108. "2024: Over 30,000 people deported from Algeria to Niger," 12/31/2024, Alarm Phone Sahara.

109. **"Assamaka, Niger: more than 34,000 people deported from Algeria to Niger in 2025,"** 12/31/2025, Alarm Phone Sahara.

110. Humanitarian source. See also the account of Abdallah, a person on the move originally from Sudan who was deported from Tunisia to Algeria, then from Algeria to Niger: Inkyfada, **"Chain deportations: accounts of migrants repeatedly banished to the desert,"** 12/18/2025.

See also Alarm Phone Sahara, **"Testimonies of people deported (multiple times): Cameroonian migrants recount the violence they have suffered in several North African countries,"** June 6, 2025.

111. Interview with an organization providing assistance to people on the move in Niger.

112. FTDES, **"Repression of migratory movements, manufactured precariousness, and racialized border regimes in post-Hirak Algeria: in the name of sovereignty, in the service of rent accumulation,"** June 18, 2025.

113. In July 2025, 700 Sudanese nationals were deported from eastern Libya to their country of origin. See: InfoMigrants, **"Libya: Eastern authorities deport 700 Sudanese migrants,"** 07/21/2025.

114. **"Libya-Niger deportations in late 2025,"** 12/31/2025, Alarm Phone Sahara.

115. The New Humanitarian, **"Egypt ramps up Sudanese refugee deportations with little UNHCR pushback"**, 12/04/2025.

2.3 Dehumanizing practices when crossing maritime borders

In a context marked by violations of their rights and limited opportunities for regular migration routes, many 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. This choice, however, exposes them to extreme vulnerability, subjecting them to high risks of death or disappearance in the event of a shipwreck, as well as to often violent interceptions at sea followed by detention, internal, forced and arbitrary displacement, and deportation.¹¹⁶

There is a lack of transparency regarding the number of interceptions, as Tunisian authorities have not shared official data on this subject since June 2025.¹¹⁷ The organizations consulted by the OMCT as part of this study also reported that citizens and civil society organizations are afraid to share information about potential interceptions or shipwrecks, for fear of reprisals by the authorities.¹¹⁸

According to OMCT partner organizations, however, it is estimated that approximately 80% of departures from Tunisia are intercepted; during 2025, there were reportedly more than **300** interceptions by the Tunisian coast guard, including approximately 150 between May and December 2025. These interceptions reportedly led to the disembarkation of more than **12,000** individuals in Tunisia.¹¹⁹ Throughout 2025, at least **126** people are reported to have died as a result of violent interceptions at sea by the Tunisian coast guard.¹²⁰ According to the victims and experts consulted for this study, the Tunisian coast guard is reportedly present day and night off the coast in an attempt to intercept boats.¹²¹

When people on the move disembark at the port of Sfax, their identification documents and means of communication are regularly confiscated or destroyed, and in some cases, they spend more than 24 hours waiting at the port, without access to humanitarian assistance and without any assessment of their specific vulnerabilities. Interceptions at sea are almost always followed by internal, forced and arbitrary displacement or deportation to Libya or Algeria.¹²²

116. The principle of non-refoulement also applies in cases of interception at sea or search and rescue operations. Persons rescued or intercepted at sea may not be summarily returned or sent back to the country of departure, particularly when this would deprive them of an effective opportunity to seek asylum. Return to a country where they risk serious human rights violations is prohibited by Article 3 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

117. **"Tunisia proposes revision of its EU migration deal," March 24, 2026, InfoMigrants.**

118. Interviews with civil society organizations and maritime search and rescue organizations.

119. These figures refer to people disembarked following interceptions rather than search and rescue operations, and are confirmed by a number of interviews with key informants from humanitarian sources.

120. Humanitarian source.

121. Interviews with maritime search and rescue organizations as well as with people on the move who attempted to cross the Mediterranean and failed.

122. Humanitarian source. See also **Alarm Phone, "Exposed to death: deportation from Tunisia after interceptions," 06/28/2025.**

The deadly week of Storm Harry

Storm Harry, which crossed the Mediterranean from January 19 to 21, 2026, caused severe weather, with winds exceeding 100 km/h and waves reaching up to 9 meters high, striking the coastal areas of Tunisia and southern Italy. These extreme weather conditions affected boats carrying people on the move who nevertheless set out to attempt the crossing of the central Mediterranean. According to several NGOs, more than 1,000 people spread across some 30 boats are believed to have gone missing at sea, which some organizations describe as “the greatest tragedy in recent years along the routes of the central Mediterranean”.¹²³ For its part, the UN reports that at least 380 people who left Tunisia during the storm are missing.¹²⁴

It has been confirmed that the following boats departed from the Tunisian coast during this period. However, the figures are certainly underestimated.¹²⁵

- On January 14, four boats that departed from the coast of Sfax, carrying 45, 53, 42, and 36 people respectively (for a total of 176 people), were reported missing.
- On January 18, a boat with 45 people on board, which had departed from Sfax, was reported missing.
- On January 20, a boat carrying 51 people left the coast of Sfax. Fifty people were confirmed dead and one person was rescued. Another boat carrying 54 people that had departed from the coast of Sfax was reported missing.
- On January 21, a boat carrying 49 people, which had departed from the coast of Sfax, was reported missing.

In February 2026, maritime search and rescue organizations reported finding bodies of deceased individuals floating in the waves in the central Mediterranean.¹²⁶ At least 15 bodies washed ashore on the Italian coasts of Calabria and Sicily.¹²⁷ The Libyan Red Crescent also reported finding the bodies of seven people, including three children, on a beach in Qasr Al-Akhyar, 70 km east of Tripoli. These may be victims of shipwrecks caused by Storm Harry.¹²⁸

123. "Up to 1000 could be missing in Mediterranean after Cyclone Harry, NGO says", 04/02/2026, InfoMigrants.

124. IOM, "Hundreds feared missing or dead amid reports of shipwrecks in the Central Mediterranean", 24/02/2026.

125. Sergio Scandura on X

126. SOS Humanity on X and SOS Méditerranée on X

127. "Bodies believed to be migrants wash ashore in Italy after storms", 18/02/2026, InfoMigrants.

128. "In western Libya, seven bodies of migrants, including those of three children, are found on a beach," 02/23/2026, InfoMigrants.

2.4 Torture and ill-treatment

2.4.1 Violence and excessive use of force

The OMCT and its partners have documented an increase in physical violence reported by people on the move in Tunisia. According to an OMCT partner organization, between May and December 2025, **51%** of beneficiaries on the move assisted by this organization reported being survivors of violence.¹²⁹ Among people on the move (adults and children combined) who had experienced violence and specified its nature, **50%** had experienced some form of physical violence.¹³⁰ Furthermore, approximately **62%** of people on the move interviewed by another humanitarian source reported having experienced violence during their stay in Tunisia.

According to testimonies collected by the OMCT, deportations, internal arbitrary and forced displacement displacements, and pushbacks at the borders continue to be accompanied by physical and/or psychological violence. Regarding the types of physical violence suffered, according to interviews conducted with victims and with organizations working to defend the rights of people on the move, men are reportedly more exposed to physical violence, including kicks, punches, and beatings with sticks, as well as the excessive use of handcuffs.

“They tightened the handcuffs so tightly and for so long that I couldn’t feel my fingers anymore. I tried to tell them I was in pain, but no one listened to me,”

said a man who was deported to the border in May 2025

According to OMCT research, psychological violence also remains very common during deportations and internal arbitrary and forced displacements, and includes humiliation, racist insults, or threats. Finally, according to interviews with victims and organizations, women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, which may include intrusive body searches, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or rape (see the section below on sexual and gender-based violence).

2.4.2 Torturous environment

What does international law say about the concept of torturous environment?

The concept of a torturous environment is part of the evolving interpretation of the absolute prohibition of torture and ill-treatment under international law. According to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention Against Torture, torture is defined as the intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, by a public official or with their consent or acquiescence, for a specific purpose such as punishment, intimidation, coercion, or discrimination.

129. 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).

130. 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 suffered (572 people). During the previous period from November 2024 to April 2025, 34% of people on the move who had experienced violence and specified its nature had suffered physical violence.

131. Convention against Torture, Art. 1. Article 16 of the same Convention also requires States to prevent cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, even when the acts do not strictly meet the definition of torture.

However, international doctrine and jurisprudence have gradually recognized that torture and ill-treatment are not limited to isolated acts, but may also result from a set of cumulative conditions and practices creating a framework of severe and prolonged suffering. The Committee Against Torture has thus emphasized that the obligation to prevent torture extends to all situations in which public authorities tolerate or permit conditions *that generate severe and foreseeable suffering*.¹³² Similarly, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture has emphasized the need to adopt a comprehensive and contextual approach to torture, taking into account all the circumstances in which victims suffer prolonged physical and psychological suffering.¹³³

From this perspective, *the concept of torturous environment* refers to a situation in which a specific group of people or a population in a given geographic 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. As the Special Rapporteur on torture has emphasized, victims perceive torture as a comprehensive and cumulative experience, rather than as a series of isolated acts, which requires a systemic analysis of the conditions in which they live.¹³⁴

International jurisprudence has progressively confirmed this cumulative approach. The Committee Against Torture and the Human Rights Committee have affirmed that conditions of detention, prolonged deprivation of basic necessities, or exposure to violence may constitute inhuman or degrading treatment, or even torture, when the threshold of severity is reached.¹³⁵

In the context of migration, United Nations mechanisms have also recognized that the conditions imposed on migrants and refugees in border zones, informal camps, or situations of territorial blockage can create environments amounting to inhuman or degrading treatment when authorities are aware of the situation and fail to act to prevent it.¹³⁶ Thus, a torturous environment can be characterized by several cumulative elements:

- targeting of a specific group
- geographical concentration of violations
- accumulation of deprivations and violence
- direct or indirect involvement of public authorities
- prolonged duration of physical or mental suffering
- inability to escape the situation

This approach allows for the analysis of contexts in which torture results not only from individual acts, but also from a system or environment that produces severe and prolonged suffering, engaging the direct responsibility of the State with regard to the absolute prohibition of torture and ill-treatment.¹³⁷

132. Committee against Torture, General Comment No. 2, CAT/C/GC/2, 2008, paras. 1 and 17.

133. Special Rapporteur on Torture, A/HRC/13/39, 2010, para. 60.

134. Special Rapporteur on Torture, A/70/303, 2015, paras. 28–30.

135. Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 21, 1992; General Comment No. 36, 2018, para. 26; Committee Against Torture, CAT/C/GC/2. The European Court of Human Rights has also recognized that living conditions characterized by extreme deprivation, insecurity, and lack of access to essential services may constitute a violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly in the context of migration (ECHR, *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece*, 2011, paras. 249–263; ECHR, *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy*, 2012; ECHR, *Khlaifia and Others v. Italy*, 2016). In the *M.S.S.* case, the Court notably held that the living conditions imposed on an asylum seeker—lack of housing, insecurity, extreme precariousness, and inability to access essential services—constituted degrading treatment within the meaning of Article 3 (ECHR, *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece*, 2011, para. 263).

136. Special Rapporteur on Torture, A/HRC/31/57, 2016; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, A/HRC/39/45, 2018.

137. Convention against Torture, arts. 2 and 16; CAT/C/GC/2.

The situation of people on the move stranded or confined in desert areas or in the coastal area of Sfax

In its previous research, the OMCT had already demonstrated the applicability of the qualification of torture and of 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. The analysis had highlighted that the prolonged deprivation of water, food, medical assistance, and shelter, combined with delays in accessing humanitarian aid and confinement in desert areas where temperatures exceed 45°C, had caused acute physical and psychological suffering to the individuals concerned, under the effective control of Tunisian security forces. Prevented from leaving the buffer zones, exposed to violence, and kept in extreme survival conditions despite repeated warnings from the victims and organizations, these individuals were subjected to suffering intentionally inflicted to compel them to leave the territory, in a context marked by discriminatory practices. This situation was thus characterized as a torturous environment resulting from a combination of deprivation, violence, territorial confinement, and effective control by the authorities. This legal reasoning remains fully valid and, unfortunately, is still applicable to all individuals, families, and groups who are victims of internal forced displacement and deportation, which continue as of the time of this report's writing.



The situation of people on the move stranded or confined in the coastal area of Sfax presents several characteristics which, when analyzed cumulatively, could be considered to qualify as a torturous environment under international law. Indeed, research conducted by OMCT shows that certain communities of people on the move are subjected to a set of structural conditions characterized by the deprivation of basic needs, constant insecurity, and the absence of effective protection—elements that UN international mechanisms and procedures have already identified as potentially constituting inhuman or degrading treatment.

In several coastal areas, people live without access to adequate shelter, often in informal settlements or olive groves, exposed to the elements and extremely precarious living conditions. Access to drinking water, sanitation facilities, and health services is very limited or even nonexistent, leading to a gradual deterioration in living conditions and health, particularly for women and children. However, international human rights law recognizes that prolonged deprivation of decent living conditions and lack of access to basic needs may constitute inhuman or degrading treatment when the authorities are aware of the situation and fail to act to remedy it.¹³⁸

138. Special Rapporteur on Torture, Report A/HRC/31/57 (2016)

Furthermore, these communities face de facto restrictions on their freedom of movement, particularly due to police threats, repeated operations to dismantle camps, the burning of tents, and the confiscation of personal belongings. Constant exposure to security operations and threats of arrest, forced displacement, and deportation creates a permanent climate of fear and insecurity.

"I was living at km 24 in El Amra with my baby. One night, they came and set the tents on fire. I fled with my baby while they were firing tear gas. Those they arrest are sent into the desert. Today, we're living in a shared apartment, but I'm afraid to go out and get arrested."

A 29-year-old woman from Cameroon, December 2025

Thus, people on the move find themselves confined between the olive groves and the sea, without access to sustainable solutions, without effective protection, and without the possibility of leaving the area safely. Access to the sea is strictly controlled through maritime interceptions and deterrent practices, limiting opportunities to leave while keeping people in a situation of territorial confinement (see the section on dehumanizing practices during the crossing of maritime borders).

The strengthening of maritime controls and repeated interceptions at sea, combined with the lack of alternatives for protection or legal mobility, contribute to fueling dependence on these informal networks, significantly increasing the risk of exposure to extremely dangerous maritime routes as well as to situations of exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking. In an environment marked by fear, precariousness, and the impossibility of escaping imposed living conditions, resorting to smugglers often appears to be the only possible strategy for survival and escape, despite the high risks involved. This dynamic was particularly evident during the first quarter of 2026, when several boats left the Tunisian coast in the midst of a storm, despite extremely dangerous weather conditions.¹³⁹ These departures reflect not only the level of desperation among those affected, but also the perverse effect of maritime blockade policies, which, far from reducing crossings, contribute to making routes more clandestine, riskier, and more costly, while strengthening the power of smuggling networks and increasing the likelihood that people on the move will become victims of trafficking or serious violence along the way.

All of these factors—lack of shelter, lack of access to water and essential services, restrictions on movement, police pressure, destruction of camps, maritime interceptions, and territorial confinement—could qualify as a torturous environment, insofar as people on the move are subjected for prolonged periods to conditions of severe suffering, tolerated or implemented by the authorities, and from which they cannot reasonably escape, which is likely to engage the State's direct international responsibility under the absolute prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.

139. "Tunisia: 19 bodies of migrants recovered in the Mediterranean Sea, about 20 missing," April 1, 2026, InfoMigrants.

2.4.3 Sexual and gender-based violence

People on the move residing in or transiting through Tunisia continue to be victims of sexual and gender-based violence, whether prior to entering Tunisia, in informal camps, in Tunisian public spaces, or during or following security force operations.¹⁴⁰ According to an OMCT partner organization, between May and December 2025, among people on the move (adults and children combined) who had experienced violence and specified its nature, **28%** had experienced sexual violence.¹⁴¹

Over the period studied, OMCT's research confirms that sexual and gender-based violence against people on the move takes several forms in Tunisia:

- Rape (individual or collective) and sexual assault by state authorities, following arrests, interceptions at sea, or during deportation operations or forced displacement to desert areas;
- Intrusive searches by state authorities following interceptions at sea at the port of Sfax;
- Sexual exploitation by criminal groups, including following kidnappings for ransom (see the section below on trafficking);¹⁴²
- Survival sex¹⁴³ within communities on the move themselves.

The reality: **Noussa's story**

Noussa is a woman from a country in sub-Saharan Africa who was abducted while returning home from work in the Sfax region in November 2025. After getting into a taxi, the vehicle veered off course, and she was abducted by a criminal group composed of individuals from sub-Saharan Africa. She was held captive in a house under construction for about a week, during which time the perpetrators demanded a ransom that she was unable to pay due to a lack of financial means.

During her captivity, Noussa was subjected to multiple acts of sexual violence, including repeated rapes. She eventually managed to escape. In January 2026, it was confirmed that she had become pregnant as a result of the sexual violence she suffered during her kidnapping.

140. OMCT, **The Routes of Torture Vol. 4 – Focus Brief 1: Human Rights Violations and Their Disproportionate Impact on Children on the Move**, September 2025, pp. 25–27.

141. 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 contacted this organization between May and December 2025 and provided details on the type of violence they experienced (572 people). The number of people who experienced sexual violence between May and December 2025 has decreased compared to the previous study period, which ran from November 2024 to April 2025. Indeed, during the previous study period, 54% of people on the move who experienced violence and specified its nature had experienced sexual violence.

142. OMCT partner organizations have reported cases of sexual violence against women on the move following kidnappings for ransom in the areas around Sfax, Zarzis, and Medenine. As in previous periods, these kidnappings are accompanied by high-intensity violence, including acts of torture and sexual violence (which may qualify as torture and ill-treatment).

143. 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. See UNHCR - UNFPA, "Responding to the health and protection needs of people selling or exchanging sex in humanitarian settings," June 2021.

In general, the organizations consulted by the OMCT all confirmed that sexual violence in its various forms is widespread in Tunisia¹⁴⁴ and affects both women and men on the move—with certain groups being particularly at risk, such as young women, especially those traveling alone, and unaccompanied boys. Furthermore, access to justice for victims of sexual violence is severely limited due to fear of reprisals, the risk of arrest, or the refusal to register complaints, especially when the perpetrators are state officials. Consequently, sexual violence remains largely underreported.¹⁴⁵

“When we arrived at the border, a National Guard officer told me to take off my clothes. I told him I was dirty and hadn’t washed in three days. He grabbed me by force and raped me. I think the other officers raped other women too. Then he forced me to walk toward the border, completely alone.”

Samia, a victim of forced displacement at the Algerian border in May 2025

Access to justice and access to an effective remedy in cases of violations is essential in the fight against impunity and to address the needs and rights of survivors. However, according to OMCT’s research, the experts consulted for this study, as well as victims of torture and ill-treatment who have testified to serious violations of their human rights, indicate that the vast majority of people on the move do not seek justice, despite the abuses they have suffered, primarily due to:

- **Fear of reprisals and the risk of arrest:** People on the move are reluctant to report incidents to the authorities, even in cases of serious human rights violations, for fear of being arrested, detained, or penalized due to their status, particularly when they lack a valid residence permit.
- **Refusal to register complaints:** Organizations active in assisting migrants have documented several cases of police officers refusing to register complaints. According to one account, a migrant woman who was raped by a police officer reportedly tried to file a complaint by going to a police station, but was reportedly expelled and humiliated.
- **Stigmatization of victims:** Some victims, particularly women on the move who have experienced sexual violence, are also reluctant to report the incidents for fear of being stigmatized—including within their own communities—and due to the sense of shame that may be associated with it.

The fear of approaching the authorities perpetuates a situation of impunity for perpetrators and a lack of justice for victims, with access to justice blocked as soon as victims attempt to file a complaint with the police. This situation discourages many victims of violence, exploitation, or abuse from approaching Tunisian authorities, leaving perpetrators unpunished and encouraging the recurrence of such abuses.

144. According to FTDES research published in 2025, 20.9% of people on the move surveyed (adults and children combined) reported having been victims of at least one sexual assault during their migration journey; 13.5% had been victims multiple times. 16.4% of those surveyed reported having been forced into sexual relations at least once. The study, whose fieldwork took place from March to June 2024, is based on questionnaires completed by 379 people on the move in the Greater Tunis, Zarzis, and El-Amra-Jebeniana regions. See: FTDES, *Sub-Saharan Migrants in Tunisia: Profiles, Experiences, and the Excesses of Migration Policies*, Field Survey, July 2025, p. 104.

145. Nawaat, *“Black Women in Tunisia: Between Fantasies and Dehumanizing Violence,”* April 6, 2026.

The reality: Laila's story

Laila is a 26-year-old woman from Nigeria. After witnessing her mother's murder firsthand, she decided to flee to the capital of her home country, where she begged to survive. During this time spent begging on the streets, she was subjected to rape, sexual harassment, and physical violence. She then decided to flee her home country. Along the way, once she arrived in Niger, she began working for a family that took her in in exchange for labor in the fields. However, the man of the house began sexually abusing her, and she decided to continue on her journey.

She first entered Tunisia in 2020, made her way to the city of Sfax, and filed an asylum claim with the UNHCR. In September 2023, while attempting to cross to Italy by sea with her partner, their boat was intercepted by the Tunisian Coast Guard. The group was deported to Libya, and Laila was raped by officers in front of her husband. Laila and her husband were then placed in a detention center in Libya, where she was repeatedly raped during her detention.

In February 2024, Laila and her husband were released and managed to return to Tunisia. Later that year, she and her husband attempted once again to reach Italy by sea, but were unsuccessful, as they were intercepted again, forcibly moved to the Libyan border, and abandoned in a desert area. While Laila was four months pregnant, she was raped by a National Guard officer despite having reported her pregnancy.

As of December 2025, Laila does not have any documents confirming her legal status in Tunisia, nor does she have a refugee or asylum seeker card from the UNHCR. Today, she is afraid to travel within Tunisia due to the risk of arrest and lacks the financial resources needed to attempt the crossing of the Mediterranean. Aside from voluntarily returning to her country of origin—where nothing awaits her and where she has faced numerous traumas—she has no other options available to her.

2.5 The dissemination of hate speech and racist narrative

In December 2025, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted with concern the deterioration of the situation of sub-Saharan people on the move in Tunisia since February 2023. It noted in particular that many political leaders and influential figures systematically make hateful and racist remarks against people on the move of Sub-Saharan origin, that such speech is spreading on the internet and social media, that no measures are being taken to combat this speech, and that since February 2023, people on the move of Sub-Saharan origin (with or without papers) have been victims of harassment, and of violent attacks by civilians. Consequently, the Committee recommended that the Tunisian State acknowledge the seriousness of the problem of racial discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes targeted at sub-Saharan migrants and take effective measures to address the root causes thereof and to protect the rights of sub-Saharan migrants in an irregular situation.» It recommended the State Party, among others, to take effective measures to monitor the spread of racist hate speech and the dissemination of negative stereotypes targeting sub-Saharan migrants on the Internet and social media, ensure the public condemnation of racist hate speech and take measures to ensure accountability and end impunity.¹⁴⁶

According to OMCT research, from May to December 2025, political and media figures continued to spread racist and xenophobic narrative in the Tunisian public sphere, fueling a climate of hatred and indirectly inciting violence against migrants of Sub-Saharan origin.¹⁴⁷ Despite Tunisia's adoption of a law against racial discrimination in 2018,¹⁴⁸ this racist and xenophobic rhetoric continues to be legitimized by the Tunisian state's official discourse.¹⁴⁹ Racist and xenophobic remarks from the highest state authority as well as from political representatives contribute to reinforcing an unwritten populist and discriminatory policy, on the basis of which violence is perpetrated—whether directly committed, tolerated, or legitimized—raising questions about the Tunisian state's indirect responsibility for violations committed by its own citizens against people on the move from sub-Saharan Africa.

Indeed, the period from May to December 2025 saw tensions between host communities and migrant communities persist. The OMCT's research finds, as highlighted in its previous studies, that physical attacks on people on the move from sub-Saharan Africa by Tunisian citizens continue in a context of impunity. These take the form of robberies, snatch thefts on the street, and physical assaults in public spaces—which can cause serious injuries¹⁵⁰ or even the death of people on the move.¹⁵¹

During the period under review, the OMCT also documented the persistence of hate speech on social media, contributing to a growing polarization of Tunisian society around the issue of migration. This polarization is illustrated, for example, by a rally held in late March 2026 in downtown Tunis, where demonstrators demanded the expulsion of people on the move of Sub-Saharan origin, under the slogan: *"Tunisia for Tunisians"*.¹⁵² Campaigns to demonize and xenophobic rhetoric targeting people on the move from sub-Saharan Africa pose a threat to social peace and the security of all Tunisian citizens. This polarization weakens social cohesion, thereby promoting the spread of racist ideas and an increase in discrimination, including against Black Tunisians.¹⁵³

146. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations on the report of Tunisia covering the twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports, CERD/C/TUN/CO/20-22, §28.

147. Certain instances of racist and xenophobic discourse by political and media figures are reflected in the timeline of this Volume (see the end of the report). Here are some notable examples: in May 2025, a member of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP) denounced the proliferation of migrant camps and declared that they "now represent an imminent danger to the Tunisian state and its demographic composition." In June 2025, this same representative warned of "the growing number of Sub-Saharan Africans resulting from childbirth," describing these births as "a major imminent danger to Tunisia." He characterized the situation in Tunisia as "a cancer in the metastatic stage." In August 2025, a member of parliament from the Sfax South constituency asserted that acts of vandalism committed at the Sfax train station were part of "a broader plan aimed at disintegrating Sfax through the spread of chaos and the settlement of undocumented migrants. See **Tarak Mahdi: Tunisia's demographic composition is in danger,** May 30, 2025, *Business News*; **Tarak Mahdi: "Migrants are spreading like a cancer in the metastatic stage!"**, June 3, 2025, *Business News*; **"Vandalism in Sfax: Several Suspects Arrested, Investigation Opened,"** August 21, 2025, *Business News*.

148. **Art. 2 of Organic Law No. 2018-50 of October 23, 2018, on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.**

149. **"Sub-Saharanans in Tunisia: Saied's falsehoods,"** 02/23/2023, *Nawaat*.

"Sub-Saharanans in the Higher National Security Council," 02/21/2023, *Mosaïque FM*.

150. In May 2025, for example, a man in his twenties of Cameroonian nationality was stabbed by Tunisian individuals in Ariana, Tunis. According to witnesses, the man had committed no offense and had shown no aggressive behavior. He was simply collecting plastic waste to resell. The assailants reportedly attacked him with the intent of stealing his personal belongings. See **Refugees in Libya on X**

151. In March 2026, a man from Sierra Leone died after being attacked by Tunisian citizens in the governorate of Nabeul. He and his friend were reportedly attacked on their way home from work by five Tunisian men who demanded their phones and money. When they refused, the attackers allegedly beat them with machetes and sticks, causing his death. See **Marino Dubois on Facebook**.

152. **"Tunisia for Tunisians: A rally calls for the expulsion of sub-Saharan migrants and targets associations,"** 03/28/2026, *Business News*.

153. Tunisia: Victim of racial profiling, a university professor denounces the normalization of racism on the streets, 08/07/2025, *Espace Manager*.

The continued shrinking of civic space

The multiple human rights violations against people on the move detailed in this report continue to occur against a backdrop of shrinking civic space and increasing infringements on the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression, as highlighted by a previous OMCT study.¹⁵⁴ In December 2025, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination notably recommended that Tunisian authorities adopt effective measures to ensure that human rights defenders and civil society organizations—particularly those working to promote and protect the rights of minority groups, including people on the move—are able to carry out their operations and activities.¹⁵⁵ During the period under review, the OMCT notes that Tunisian civil society is facing new pressures and violations, which manifest themselves through new forms of restrictions.

Between September and November 2025, more than thirty national and international organizations reported that their activities had been suspended based on court rulings following petitions filed by the State Legal Service. This wave of suspensions affected organizations of various kinds, including the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD), the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), and the OMCT, which had their activities suspended for one month,¹⁵⁶ as well as the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LTDH) in April 2026.¹⁵⁷ Issued pursuant to Article 45 of Decree-Law 88,¹⁵⁸ these suspensions follow a wave of formal notices sent throughout 2024 to a very large number of associations. The grievances cited by the authorities mainly concern alleged administrative or accounting irregularities, such as record-keeping (Art. 39-40) or the publication of funding information (Art. 41).¹⁵⁹

This renewed pressure on the civic space comes at a time when Tunisian civil society organizations already lack access to communities on the move and face hateful comments on social media as well as acts of intimidation and harassment.¹⁶⁰ By systematically targeting associations and exerting increasing pressure on their operational space, Tunisian authorities are seriously undermining civil society's ability to operate and defend human rights.¹⁶¹

154. OMCT, *The Roads of Torture Vol. 3: The Shrinking of Civic Space and Its Impact on People on the Move in Tunisia, May–October 2024*.

155. See Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations on the report of Tunisia covering the twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports, CERD/C/TUN/CO/20-22, §18.

156. OMCT - Observatory, "Tunisia: Suspension of OMCT Tunisia, ATFD, and FTDES, three human rights NGOs," 11/06/2025.

157. OMCT - Observatory, "Tunisia: Suspension of the activities of the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights," 04/30/2026.

158. Decree-Law No. 2011-88 of September 24, 2011, on associations.

159. Some suspension decisions also refer to an alleged violation of Article 3 of Decree-Law 88, which enshrines the principles of democracy, transparency, and respect for human rights. The invocation of this provision, which is particularly broad and therefore subject to discretionary interpretation, paves the way for the political instrumentalization of the legal framework governing associations. It could, in the long run, justify the dissolution of organizations, even when they have fully regularized the administrative and accounting issues for which they were criticized. These measures constitute a violation of Tunisia's international and regional commitments, particularly with regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, notably its Articles 19, 21, and 22. In some cases, notifications arrived late (or sometimes not at all) at their destination, and the notified NGOs responded within the 30-day deadline by submitting the requested documentation.

160. Furthermore, the revision of Decree-Law 88 announced in February 2026, presented as imminent, risks codifying current practices into law: increased oversight, arbitrary restrictions on access to foreign funding, and disproportionate sanctions—at the risk of legally enshrining the gradual closure of the civic space in Tunisia. See "Submission of an updated version of the draft law on associations to the registry office," Diwan FM, March 30, 2026.

161. In Libya as well—a country through which many people in transit pass before arriving in Tunisia, and where systematic human rights violations are reported—numerous civil society organizations had their activities suspended during 2025. In November 2025, Doctors Without Borders, the last organization providing medical assistance to people on the move in western Libya, was also ordered to leave the country. See "Libya: Doctors Without Borders 'ordered' by authorities to leave the country by November 9," October 29, 2025, InfoMigrants.

2.6 New forms of abuse and intensification of violations

2.6.1 Intensification of operations to dismantle informal settlements

In April 2025, according to a statement by a spokesperson for the National Guard, more than 20,000 people had been counted in the regions of Jbeniana and El Amra, in the governorate of Sfax.¹⁶² Starting in April 2025 and throughout the period under review, the OMCT observed an intensification of operations to dismantle informal settlements in the olive groves of the Sfax region (El Amra and Jbeniana). The OMCT estimates that there were five such operations between April and June 2025, with some of these operations displacing up to 3,500 people in a single day,¹⁶³ leading to the displacement of more than 9,000 people between April and May 2025, according to a spokesperson for the National Guard.¹⁶⁴

“We are aware that some individuals are leaving the camp to resettle elsewhere or go to other camps, but their resources are gradually running out. For our part, we will continue until everything has been dismantled.”

A spokesperson for the Tunisian National Guard, May 2025¹⁶⁵

According to the civil society organizations consulted for this study, as well as based on testimonies from people on the move who have experienced the dismantling of their camps, the OMCT notes that these dismantling operations carried out by the Tunisian National Guard are not systematically preceded by a warning to the persons concerned. Several consistent testimonies indicate that these operations are generally accompanied by the destruction of tents, the confiscation and/or destruction of personal belongings and documents, the use of tear gas, and in some instances by the excessive use of force or even the dispersal of people using dogs. Since the beginning of 2025, these interventions have intensified and reportedly often take place at night. Tents and self-managed makeshift hospitals are regularly destroyed.¹⁶⁶ According to OMCT research, when the Tunisian National Guard destroys tents by burning them, it does not always rigorously check whether people are inside them.¹⁶⁷

The reality: the story of Dounia and her child

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 evacuate the informal camp where they reside. 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.

162. African Manager, “There are 20,000 of them in Jbeniana and El Amra!”, April 7, 2025.

163. An operation that took place on May 30, 2025, involved up to 3,500 people on the move in a single day. See Webdo, “Tunisia: Toward an Acceleration of Voluntary Migrant Returns,” 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.

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

165. France24, “Migration Crisis in Tunisia: Authorities Accelerate Camp Dismantling,” May 30, 2025. Min 2:50. Translation from Arabic to French.

166. “Tunisia: Authorities accused of forcing ‘voluntary returns’ of migrants,” February 4, 2026, InfoMigrants.

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

According to interviews conducted by OMCT with victims of forced displacement and with representatives of organizations working to defend the rights of people on the move, people on the move arrested during operations to dismantle informal camps are:

- forcibly displaced to border areas, or
- deported to Libya or Algeria, or
- detained in detention centers in Tunisia, in the absence of valid documents for residence in Tunisia,¹⁶⁸ or even if the individuals hold an asylum seeker or refugee card from the UNHCR.

Other displaced people who have not been detained are, with few exceptions, living on the streets, with no alternative housing options available to them.

“They burn the tents, and if they arrest people, they send them into the desert.”

Testimony of a woman on the move whose camp was dismantled in El Amra, December 2025

2.6.2 Increased impoverishment of communities on the move

During the period under review, civil society organizations and experts consulted by the OMCT reported an increased reliance on begging by people on the move of Sub-Saharan origin in urban centers, particularly in downtown Tunis, during the second half of 2025. This reportedly affected in particular women accompanied by their children, as well as unaccompanied children or those separated from their parents. The rise in begging is reportedly linked to the intensification of operations to dismantle informal camps as well as to the extreme impoverishment of communities on the move. According to OMCT’s research, 6% of children assisted by a humanitarian organization reported resorting to begging in Tunisia to support themselves during 2025.¹⁷⁰

The experts consulted report cases of so-called “spontaneous” begging by unaccompanied or separated children, without supervision by third-party adults. They also report cases of forced begging by third parties (whether family members or unrelated adults) involving children on the move, resulting in economic exploitation and potentially constituting a form of human trafficking.¹⁷¹

According to OMCT research, begging reportedly generates an average of approximately 30 TND per day. However, this amount varies widely, as it depends on several factors, including timing, location, and the level of competition.¹⁷² The increased use of begging in urban centers is said to have led to a surge in arrest operations (see the section on arbitrary arrests and criminalization).

168. Law No. 68-7 of March 8, 1968, on the status of foreigners in Tunisia.

169. *“The Routes of Torture Vol. 4 – Focus Brief 1: Human Rights Violations and Their Disproportionate Impact on Children on the Move,” November 2024 to April 2025, p. 30.*

170. Humanitarian source. These data are drawn from the databases of humanitarian organizations to which OMCT had access. These figures are calculated based on a total of 263 children who reported violations to the humanitarian organization in question. Only children who approached the humanitarian organization in question and reported the violations they suffered are included.

171. The key distinction between ordinary begging and human trafficking is that a third party controls, organizes, profits from, or exploits the person who is begging. Three fundamental elements must be present to qualify a situation as human trafficking: (i) an act (recruitment, transportation, etc.); (ii) a means (including threats); and (iii) an end (exploitation). For children, due to their inherent vulnerability, the element of means or coercion is not required.

“United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Forced Begging*, 2013, pp. 2–3

172. Interviews with people on the move, civil society organizations, and a researcher on begging in Tunisia.

The exclusion of people on the move from the social protection system

Social protection is defined as the set of policies and programs aimed at preventing and protecting all people from poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout their lives, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.¹⁷³ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security¹⁷⁴ and that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their families.¹⁷⁵ The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration recommends the establishment of non-discriminatory national social protection systems that guarantee a basic level of social protection accessible to both nationals and people on the move.¹⁷⁶ Social protection is also a key lever for reducing poverty and mitigating inequalities.¹⁷⁷

In Tunisia, the social welfare sector falls under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MAS). Since 2019, the AMEN Social program has brought together all social protection initiatives.¹⁷⁸ It is a non-contributory, multisectoral program targeting needy families and low-income groups, including measures that go beyond the purely financial aspect to incorporate areas such as health, education, access to public services, living conditions, and economic empowerment.¹⁷⁹

However, in Tunisia, the majority of people on the move—despite their situation of extreme precariousness—remain excluded from social protection systems due to their administrative status and the lack of inclusive mechanisms. According to the experts consulted for this study, while hundreds of children and families on the move find themselves in a precarious situation that could justify access to social protection mechanisms, only a minority of families on the move—primarily Palestinian or Syrian refugees holding a valid residence permit—actually benefit from Tunisian social benefits. For the majority of refugee or asylum-seeking families, the refugee card issued by UNHCR is not recognized as sufficient proof: to be eligible, each family must demonstrate regular administrative status (a valid residence permit), a fixed address, and a unique social identifier (social security number).¹⁸⁰ The inability of people on the move to obtain a residence permit, even when they are recognized as refugees or asylum seekers, effectively excludes them from any possibility of inclusion in social protection programs.¹⁸¹ Several initiatives aimed at integrating people on the move without residence permits have been launched in recent years by United Nations agencies, particularly regarding child benefits, but have been met with categorical refusal by the Tunisian government.¹⁸²

173. UNICEF and Oxford Policy Management, Strengthening the Integration of AMEN Social Services and Child Protection in Tunisia, October 2024, p. 2.

174. Art. 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has further highlighted that the constituent elements of social security are as follows: availability, adequacy, affordability, and accessibility. The criterion of availability presupposes the existence and operation of a system established under domestic law that enables the provision of benefits. The criterion of adequacy presupposes that benefits, whether in cash or in kind, must be of an adequate amount and duration. The criterion of affordability requires that the costs associated with paying contributions be affordable for all. Finally, the criterion of accessibility implies that a social security system should cover all persons, particularly those belonging to the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups, without discrimination. See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 19: The Right to Social Security, February 4, 2008, E/C.12/GC/19. See also **OHCHR, The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Social Security**.

175. Art. 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, Articles 9 and 10 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by Tunisia on March 18, 1969, recognize the right to social security for everyone and state that the widest possible protection and assistance must be provided to the family. See also Recommendation No. 202 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on Social Protection Floors, which emphasizes the universality of social protection, and Goal 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for the establishment of social protection systems and measures for all, including social protection floors.

176. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on December 19, 2018, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, A/RES/73/95, §38. Furthermore, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has also emphasized the importance of integrating people on the move into national social protection systems. OECD, Social protection for the forcibly displaced in low- and middle-income countries – a pathway for inclusion, 2022, p. 10.

177. Reliable data show a positive correlation between the establishment of social protection systems and the achievement of the first Sustainable Development Goal, concerning the eradication of poverty. See UNICEF, Framework for the UNICEF Global Social Protection Program, 2019.

178. UNICEF and Oxford Policy Management, Integrating Social Protection and Child Protection in Tunisia: Cash Plus and Integrated Services to Improve Prospects for Children and Families, 2024, p. 7.

179. The AMEN Social program is governed by the following legal framework: - Organic Law No. 2019-10 of January 30, 2019, establishing the AMEN Social program;- Government Decree No. 2020-317 establishing the conditions for access, withdrawal, and objection to the AMEN Social program;- Circular No. 12 of May 10, 2022, which establishes certain operational procedures. However, there is no comprehensive manual of standard operating procedures covering the full management of the program.

180. Economic Research Forum, The Landscape of Social Protection in Tunisia, 2022, pp. 48–49.

At the same time, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations are carrying out their own social assistance programs outside the national system.¹⁸³ However, the shrinking of civic space since May 2024 has had a significant impact on civil society and United Nations agencies, as social assistance and direct cash assistance to people on the move have become extremely difficult to provide and pose risks to civil society organizations.

Thus, while the integration of people on the move into social protection systems is essential to address their vulnerability,¹⁸⁴ social protection remains, in practice, inaccessible to the vast majority of families on the move in Tunisia, due to strict administrative criteria and a political refusal to integrate foreign families.

181. Several experts have, however, pointed out that, given the situation of people on the move who are at risk of arrest, forced displacement, deportation, and other human rights violations due to their irregular administrative status, integration would pose protection dilemmas, as it would expose families to increased risks related to their identification as being in an irregular situation.

182. Several social protection experts told OMCT that the exclusion of these children ultimately costs Tunisian society more.

183. Programs by the United Nations and civil society include, for example, direct cash assistance or the provision of food aid.

184. This need for inclusion has been recognized by several international bodies. In 2016, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that Tunisia continue its efforts to develop a social security system that guarantees comprehensive social coverage providing adequate benefits to all workers and all disadvantaged individuals and families, in order to ensure an adequate standard of living. See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations on the Third Periodic Report of Tunisia, November 14, 2016, §37.

2.6.3 Human trafficking

According to OMCT research, **70%** of children assisted by a humanitarian organization in southern Tunisia report having been victims of human trafficking during the year 2025.¹⁸⁵ Previous OMCT research already details the types and methods of human trafficking in Tunisia.¹⁸⁶ The forms of trafficking documented by OMCT are listed below. Among these, in 2025, OMCT notably observed a geographic expansion regarding kidnappings for ransom, as well as the emergence of debt bondage.¹⁸⁷

- **Economic exploitation** through forced labor, forced begging, or domestic servitude: In 2025, **59%** of children assisted by a humanitarian organization reported being subjected to forced labor in southern Tunisia.¹⁸⁸
- **Sexual exploitation:** Several sources have confirmed instances of sexual exploitation in various forms, including forced prostitution or transactional sex in exchange for food, water, or other basic necessities—including children, particularly girls. In some cases, these practices have also been reported as a means of payment to finance the crossing of the Mediterranean. In 2025, trafficking for sexual exploitation continued to be carried out by criminal networks, composed either of Tunisian nationals or of people on the move themselves.
- **Kidnapping for ransom:** The phenomenon of kidnapping for ransom is not new and has already been detailed in previous OMCT research.¹⁸⁹ The kidnapping process continues to follow several stages in Tunisia: identification of a target, abduction, ransom demand, negotiation, and then release. The amounts demanded vary according to the family's presumed financial resources, most often ranging between 400 and 1,500 euros.¹⁹⁰ The phenomenon of kidnappings for ransom intensified in early 2024, particularly around Sfax and Kasserine. During 2025, kidnappings for ransom were reported in various regions of the country, notably in Zarzis, Tunis, and Medenine. Victims report having been subjected to acts of extreme violence during their captivity.¹⁹¹
- **Debt bondage:** The OMCT and its partners have documented instances of debt bondage: this appears to be a new form of exploitation and modern slavery not previously reported in Tunisia prior to 2025, in which a person is forced to work or remain under someone's control in order to repay a debt. However, this debt is structured in such a way as to make its repayment impossible or endless.
- **Sales during deportation operations:** As in previous reporting periods, victims, partner organizations, and independent researchers continue to highlight alleged cases of the sale of people on the move, including children, to Libyan authorities in exchange for money or fuel.¹⁹²

In December 2025, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended, among other things, that Tunisian authorities ensure the effective implementation of its legislative framework for combating human trafficking, to strengthen procedures for identifying victims of trafficking in cases involving people of sub-Saharan origin, and to ensure that victims are referred to appropriate services so they can receive assistance and rehabilitation services.¹⁹³

185. Humanitarian source. These data are drawn from the databases of humanitarian organizations to which OMCT had access. These figures are calculated based on a total of 263 children who reported violations to the humanitarian organization in question. Only children who approached the humanitarian organization in question and reported the violations they suffered are included.

186. See in particular "The Routes of Torture Vol. 4 – Focus Brief 1: Human Rights Violations and Their Disproportionate Impact on Children on the Move," November 2024 to April 2025, pp. 33–37.

"The Routes of Torture Vol. 2 – Mapping of Violations Suffered by People on the Move in Tunisia," November 2023 to April 2024, pp. 69–72.

187. Furthermore, in 2025, 1,379 survivors of human trafficking were identified by the IOM, highlighting the urgent need for specialized protection systems.

188. Humanitarian source. These data are drawn from the databases of humanitarian organizations to which OMCT had access. These figures are calculated based on a total of 263 children who reported violations to the humanitarian organization in question. Only children who approached the humanitarian organization in question and reported the violations they suffered are included.

189. See, in particular, "The Paths of Torture, Vol. 4 – Focus Brief 1: Human Rights Violations and Their Disproportionate Impact on Children on the Move," November 2024–April 2025, pp. 33–37.

"The Routes of Torture Vol. 2 – Mapping Violations Suffered by People on the Move in Tunisia," November 2023 to April 2024, pp. 69–72.

190. **Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, "Tunisia: Crackdowns Disrupt Smuggling and Fuel New Abuses," December 2025.**

191. Interviews with several humanitarian sources.

192. RR(X), ASGI, Border Forensics. "State Trafficking – Expulsion and sales of migrants from Tunisia to Libya," February 2025. Sales during deportation operations were also confirmed by interviews with three humanitarian sources and interviews with victims.

193. United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations on the report of Tunisia, December 2025, CERD/C/TUN/CO/20-22, §32.

The reality : Mariam's story

Mariam, a 29-year-old woman from a sub-Saharan African country, arrived in Tunisia in September 2023 with her husband and their two children. In June 2024, Mariam attempted to cross the Mediterranean with her two children. She joined approximately 145 other people aboard a boat that departed from the coast of Sfax. The vessel was intercepted at sea by the Tunisian coast guard. The group was disembarked in Sfax and then forcibly transferred to a border area with Libya. Mariam and her two children were detained for three days in a detention facility at the border. After this period of detention, she was transported by the Tunisian National Guard to a desert area at the border and was forced to cross the border into Libyan territory toward a group of armed men, who appeared to belong to Libyan militias. According to Mariam, this operation resembled an informal handover in which the Tunisian National Guard transferred them to Libyan militias. After the transfer, Mariam and her two children were taken to a detention center in Libya, where they were held for a month and subjected to a ransom demand for their release. During their detention, Mariam and her children witnessed acts of physical violence committed against other people on the move, which frightened them. Mariam eventually managed to escape with her children.

As of December 2025, Mariam and her husband are living in Tunisia without passports, and their children were not registered at birth. As a result, the children have neither birth certificates nor any form of legal identification. Although Mariam and her husband hold consular cards, the family lives in a state of legal invisibility, severely limiting their access to rights and services and preventing them from pursuing durable solutions, including humanitarian pathways to a third country.

2.6.4 Smuggling of migrants

The smuggling of migrants is a widespread phenomenon along migration routes. People on the move resort to it particularly when faced with long and especially dangerous journeys, especially when these involve sea crossings. Tighter border controls, the lack of available legal mobility options, and difficult living conditions are factors that drive people on the move to rely on “smugglers.” In response to these increased surveillance measures, smugglers are constantly adapting the routes they use. Smugglers are perceived both as indispensable support for continuing the migration journey and as a source of additional risks for people on the move.¹⁹⁵

Tunisia continues to be a fertile ground for the establishment of networks involved in the smuggling of migrants. According to research conducted by OMCT, these networks are present both at the land borders with Algeria and Libya and at the maritime borders.¹⁹⁶ At the maritime borders, the main departure points from Tunisia are concentrated along the northern coast of the Sfax governorate, between Louata and Sidi Mansour. Despite numerous interceptions off the Tunisian coast, smuggling networks remain resilient, and attempts to cross from Tunisia remain frequent. Migrants of Sub-Saharan origin play a central role in the underground economy of maritime migration, particularly through the construction of metal boats in clandestine workshops.¹⁹⁷

However, the strengthening of control measures by Tunisian authorities and increased surveillance of departure zones led in 2025 to an adaptation of the tactics used by smuggling networks and migrants. As traditional embarkation zones around Sfax and Jbeniana are subject to closer surveillance, departures tend to shift toward less visible locations such as Ghedhabna and Salakta (Mahdia Governorate).¹⁹⁸

The costs of sea crossings are heavily influenced by the season and the quality of the vessels, with payments made primarily in cash.¹⁹⁹ In 2025, the cost of a sea crossing generally ranges between 450 and 500 euros, but in certain cases can reach up to 880 euros for a spot on an overcrowded, substandard boat.²⁰⁰

“Spontaneous” movements, an alarming trend among children on the move

According to data collected by OMCT and partner organizations, at least 15 children on the move residing in Tunisia are believed to have left Tunisia of their own accord for Libya during 2025. The majority of them are reportedly adolescent asylum seekers from Sudan. These spontaneous moves to Libya expose these children to further human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment if detained in Libyan prisons, trafficking and exploitation, and risks to their physical safety during cross-border journeys through desert areas.

194. Livio Amigoni and Ivan Bonnin, “Who are the smugglers? Ethnography on mobility facilitation practices at the Sfax and Ventimiglia borders,” 2025.

195. MMC, “How smuggling really works: drivers, operations, and impacts,” December 2025.

196. See also OMCT, *The Routes of Torture Vol. 2: Mapping of Violations Suffered by People on the Move in Tunisia*, November 2023 – April 2024, p. 68.

197. This information was confirmed by a number of interviews with key informants in Tunisia as well as with search and rescue organizations at sea.

198. Mixed Migration Center, Q4 North Africa

199. Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, “Tunisia: crackdowns disrupt smuggling and fuel new abuses,” December 2025.

200. Mixed Migration Center, Q4 North Africa

201. Researchers have rightly raised the question of whether a movement can definitively be classified as voluntary or involuntary in practice, given the multitude of intersecting causes—both immediate and more distant—that determine the decision to leave one’s home. Consequently, some suggest that voluntary and involuntary population movements represent merely the poles of a spectrum of decision-making regarding mobility, rather than a clearly distinct duality. “Conceptualizing ‘Relocation’ Across Displacement Contexts,” David James Cantor, 2023.

At the same time, about a dozen children reportedly expressed their intention to return to their countries of origin, Sudan or South Sudan, despite the security risks posed by a return and a strong presumption of eligibility for international protection. Most of these children are unaccompanied and are asylum seekers, although some are not registered. According to the data collected, the reasons cited by the children for their intention to return were as follows:

- Denial of access to basic services;
- Denial of access to protection, in a context of security threats and discrimination that generate fear and a sense of instability in Tunisia;
- Psychological distress, including anxiety about the future, depressive symptoms, and isolation;
- Loss of confidence in the possibility of accessing durable solutions, given the suspension of refugee status determinations, the impossibility of obtaining resettlement in a third country, and integration difficulties;
- The absence of support and the absence of their families.

These cases reflect the dire situation of children on the move in Tunisia, who express deep disillusionment with existing protection systems and would rather risk their lives in their country of origin than remain in Tunisia. Returning to Sudan, which is facing the world's most severe humanitarian crisis,²⁰² or to South Sudan,²⁰³ exposes these children to abuses and direct, indiscriminate attacks against civilians,²⁰⁴ sexual violence,²⁰⁵ famine and food insecurity,²⁰⁶ displacement,²⁰⁷ recruitment by armed forces, and a childhood shattered by war and violence.

"I know there are risks in returning to my country, but I no longer have any reason to live."

says David, a 15-year-old asylum seeker

202. UN Info, "Sudan: The World's Largest Humanitarian Crisis," April 10, 2025

203. UN Info, "South Sudan in Food Crisis: 7.7 Million People at Risk," July 22, 2025

204. UN Info, "Sudan is a powder keg with a growing risk of war crimes, warns the UN," 02/27/2025

205. UN News, «Sudan: Sexual Violence Used as a Weapon of Terror,» April 2, 2025

206. UNICEF, «South Sudan: Food insecurity and malnutrition reach alarming levels,» June 12, 2025 and UNICEF, «Sudan faces an unprecedented food crisis,» June 27, 2024

207. UN News, «Sudan war 'a living nightmare for children': UNICEF Representative,» 01/25/2024

3. NEW DEVELOPMENTS:

RETURN PROGRAM ORGANIZED DIRECTLY BY TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES

Voluntary return is generally considered the preferred durable solution for people on the move when conditions are met in the country of origin. However, to comply with international standards, return must adhere to certain principles and procedures, particularly regarding the voluntary nature, safety, and dignity of the return.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, when these conditions are not fully guaranteed or when reintegration in the country of origin is insufficient or difficult, the return may not be sustainable. In such cases, the individuals concerned may be driven to leave again and embark on another migration journey.²⁰⁹

What does international law say about returns to countries of origin?

Return to the country of origin is considered one of the durable solutions under international law and constitutes an important tool for facilitating migration and mobility in an orderly, safe, and regular manner, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 10.7. A return can be described as “sustainable” when the person remains in their country of origin without attempting to migrate again and manages to integrate there in a stable manner. The Memorandum of Understanding between Tunisia and the European Union stipulates that both parties shall support the return of irregular migrants to their countries of origin in accordance with international law and with respect for their dignity.

The IOM defines voluntary return as “assisted or independent return to the country of origin, transit, or another country, based on the voluntary decision of the person concerned”. According to the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, for a return to the country of origin to be considered “voluntary,” the decision to return must be free and informed. There must be no physical or psychological coercion, and there must be genuine alternatives to return, such as access to protection. According to the IOM, the voluntary nature of return is based on these cumulative criteria:

209. OECD, Sustainable Reintegration of Returning Migrants: a better homecoming, 2020, p. 10.

210. Target 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

211. OECD, Sustainable Reintegration of Returning Migrants: A Better Homecoming, 2020, p. 67.

212. European Commission, Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership between the European Union and Tunisia, July 16, 2023.

213. IOM, Glossary on Migration, 2019. See also OECD, Sustainable Reintegration of Returning Migrants: A Better Homecoming, 2020, p. 27.

214. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Note by the Secretariat, May 4, 2018, §30.

215. IOM, “Fact Sheet: Contributing to safe, orderly, and dignified migration through assistance for voluntary return and reintegration.”

- **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, in accordance with procedural safeguards.²¹⁶ This entails refraining from carrying out collective expulsions or repatriations that violate the principle of non-refoulement.²¹⁷ States have an obligation to ensure that returns take place in complete safety, which entails legal security (by guaranteeing the absence of persecution or punishment); physical security; and material security (ensuring access to livelihoods and essential services after return).²¹⁸ Added to this is the requirement for return with dignity, which implies that those concerned are treated with respect and humanity throughout the return process: this includes, in particular, the absence of excessive coercion or degrading treatment, as well as respect for family unity.²¹⁹

International law also includes specific provisions regarding the return of vulnerable groups, including children on the move and victims of trafficking. Children on the move may only be returned to their country of origin after taking into account the best interests of the child²²⁰ and the right to family unity.²²¹ A parent, guardian, or competent official should accompany the child throughout the procedure and ensure that the child is provided with reception, care, and reintegration upon return to the country of origin.²²² Regarding victims of trafficking, their return to the country of origin must take into account the person's safety and any ongoing legal proceedings, and should be on a voluntary basis.²²³

The countries of origin of people on the move also have obligations regarding the readmission of their nationals to their country of origin. Countries of origin have an obligation to readmit their nationals to their territory and to create conditions conducive to their personal safety, economic empowerment, and inclusion in communities, to ensure that these individuals can reintegrate into their country of origin in a sustainable manner. States of origin should also cooperate to identify their nationals and provide them with travel documents that facilitate return and readmission, including by offering consular assistance prior to departure.²²⁴

216. See also **Refugee Law Initiative: GCM Commentary: Objective 21: cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration, 2018.**

217. United Nations General Assembly, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration: Objective 21, A/RES/73/195.

218. UNHCR, Handbook – Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection, 1996, 2.4: Ensuring Return in Safety and with Dignity.

219. UNHCR, Handbook – Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection, 1996, 2.4: Ensuring Return in Safety and with Dignity.

220. 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.**

221. Art. 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

222. United Nations General Assembly, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration: Goal 21, A/RES/73/195.

223. Article 8 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000. Tunisia ratified this Protocol in 2003.

224. United Nations General Assembly, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration: Objective 21, A/RES/73/195.

See also **Refugee Law Initiative: GCM Commentary: Objective 21: cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration, 2018.**

The OMCT is particularly concerned about the emergence of a program of organized returns directly managed by the Tunisian authorities, without any risk assessment procedures, respect for procedural safeguards, or reintegration plans in the countries of origin.²²⁵ This mechanism reportedly began to be implemented in June 2025 and continued at a steady pace throughout the remainder of 2025, leading to the return of at least **1,200** people to their countries of origin in 2025. However, this figure may be significantly underestimated in the absence of official public data and information on this program. These returns are reportedly organized directly through the Tunisian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, and the embassies of Sub-Saharan African countries in Tunisia. There are reportedly weekly group departures by bus from Lac 0 in Tunis, from Sfax, as well as bus departures from Sousse since December 2025.²²⁶

These returns come at a time when Tunisian authorities have publicly expressed their intention to significantly increase the number of returnees in the coming months and years. In February 2026, the Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the return program is “making steady progress” and that the authorities are aiming for 10,000 returns in 2026.²²⁷

The OMCT expresses grave concern regarding these returns organized directly by the Tunisian authorities, particularly regarding the following points:

- **Lack of alternatives and incentive to return:** These returns are taking place in a context where people on the move in Tunisia are deprived of any other real alternative. While the registration of asylum claims and refugee status determination procedures by the UNHCR have been suspended since June 2024, people on the move in Tunisia are forced to accept return to escape systematic violations of their rights—which fails to meet the criterion of freedom of choice, which requires that the decision to return must not be subject to any external coercion, whether physical or psychological.²²⁸ Furthermore, individuals receive a sum of 100 euros upon departure.²²⁹ The organization and promotion of these returns reportedly involve, in some cases, people on the move paid by the authorities to encourage others to register.²³⁰
- **Uninformed decision:** While the decision to return should be based on accurate and objective information, the return program by the Tunisian authorities is primarily disseminated via social media, notably Facebook and WhatsApp groups dedicated to “voluntary return” that can have over a thousand members. In these spaces, individuals presenting themselves as organizers claim to be able to facilitate rapid departures, sometimes “within a few days.” Information available via social media may be incomplete, inaccurate, or potentially misleading, limiting the ability of potential beneficiaries to make an informed decision based on a thorough understanding of the program, its benefits, and the risks involved.

225. “The Tunisian government is offering return tickets to migrants in Sfax, bypassing the IOM,” *InfoMigrants*, June 24, 2025. The OMCT has no quantitative data on this trend.

226. Humanitarian source.

227. “Sub-Saharan migrants: Tunisia aims for 10,000 voluntary returns in 2026,” March 11, 2026, *Business News*.

228. ASGI, *Pushbacks in the Mediterranean: ASGI Guide to Strategic Litigation*, 2026, p. 13. Migreurop, “Voluntary humanitarian return: 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 on the forced 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.

229. “In Tunisia, an opaque repatriation program is gaining popularity among migrants,” 01/08/2026, *Le Monde*.

230. “Tunisia: Authorities accused of forcing ‘voluntary returns’ of migrants,” 02/04/2026, *InfoMigrants*.

- **Insufficient verification of documents, legal identity, or family lineage:** According to sources consulted for this study, birth certificates and legal identity documents for children are not systematically requested, which implies 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, no prior medical examination is reportedly conducted. However, these verifications are not mere administrative formalities but constitute an obligation for the Tunisian State, which must conduct an individual assessment prior to any return process in order to respect the fundamental principle of non-refoulement.²³¹
- **Absence of mechanisms to verify the voluntary nature of return:** Information gathered by the OMCT indicates that departures are reportedly organized on extremely short notice, ranging from a few weeks to a few days. Such short timeframes do not allow for ensuring that the consent of the individuals concerned is free and informed, nor for identifying potential risks in the country of origin. Furthermore, individuals registering for return are not subject to any procedure designed to assess the voluntary nature of their decision.
- **Documented cases of forced returns:** On the contrary, according to OMCT's research, several women, men, and children detained at the El Ouardia administrative detention center were reportedly forced to return through this program implemented directly by the Tunisian authorities (see the box below on the case of women and children detained at El Ouardia in November 2025). In particular, a group of sub-Saharan women detained at El Ouardia in November 2025 for "begging" were reportedly forced to sign a document in Arabic (which they did not understand, in the absence of an interpreter) regarding their return to their country of origin. Some of them were returned to Nigeria and Sierra Leone in December 2025.²³²
- **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,²³³ 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 put in place 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 the separation of families, including children separated from their parents or women separated from their partners. These findings raise serious concerns regarding respect for the right to family unity.²³⁴
- **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 their return. In particular, several indications suggest that limited measures are in place to facilitate effective socio-economic reintegration, particularly regarding access to livelihoods, basic services, and community support structures. The apparent lack of structured reintegration programs raises serious concerns about the sustainability of returns, particularly due to the possibility of onward movements, increased vulnerability to exploitation, and potential exposure to further human rights violations.

231. 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.

232. Humanitarian source. In one case, a woman detained in El Ouardia reportedly stated that she would consider committing suicide if she were returned to her country of origin.

233. 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.

The reality: the arrest of women and children for “begging,” their detention at El Ouardia,²³⁵ and their return to their countries of origin

On November 14, 2025, a group of 18 women and 24 children of Sub-Saharan origin who were on the move was arrested in a public space in Tunis, most of them for “begging offenses”,²³⁶ and then transferred to the El Ouardia reception and orientation center.²³⁷ At the time of their arrest, all of the women had their phones and money confiscated. They were not informed of the reasons for their detention and were denied access to a lawyer.

Among those detained are eight infants aged one year or younger, numerous children aged two to three, as well as unaccompanied or separated children around twelve years old. The group also includes pregnant women and women registered with the IOM. Several women are being detained while their partners or other family members remain free in Tunis. A significant number of children are detained without their parents, some showing signs of severe psychological distress. In the absence of their parents, several children are being cared for informally by other detained women who are not their mothers.²³⁸ Among the women, several report having been victims of sexual violence during their migration journey, with some having become pregnant as a result of this violence.

Detention conditions at the center are particularly concerning. Detained women and children do not receive adequate food, lack a change of clothes, and the center is unsanitary and overcrowded. The detainees’ health is a cause for concern: some have scabies, while several children show signs of illness, including vomiting. The number of detainees at El Ouardia also increased by the end of 2025, rising from 18 women and 24 children in mid-November to 39 women and children, as well as 7 men, by mid-December.

Authorities reportedly asked the women to sign a document written in Arabic, without providing them with any explanation or translation. After signing, they were reportedly informed that it was a document authorizing their return. One of the women reportedly threatened to commit suicide if she were sent back to her country of origin.

On December 10, part of the group was sent back to their respective countries of origin—notably Nigeria and Sierra Leone—via commercial flights with a stopover in Turkey.²³⁹ Some women were reportedly deported while other family members were still in Tunisia. According to the information gathered, the individuals concerned reportedly received neither food nor decent clothing during their return, until a humanitarian organization intervened during their stopover in Turkey. These returns also reportedly involved at least two children aged around 12, who were reportedly sent back alone and without their parents to their countries of origin. By the end of January 2026, the majority of women and children detained at the El Ouardia center had reportedly been forcibly returned to their countries of origin by Tunisian authorities.²⁴⁰

235. See also [David Yambio on X](#) and [L’actualité on Facebook](#)

236. “[The situation is alarming: in Tunisia, migrant women and children arbitrarily arrested and detained for begging face deportation](#),” 11/19/25, [InfoMigrants](#).

237. The El Ouardia center falls under the jurisdiction of the Directorate of Borders and Foreigners within the Tunisian Ministry of the Interior. The facility is unofficially used as a detention center for migrants, even though it is not registered or administered as a place of detention.

238. This situation raises significant protection concerns, particularly due to the increased risk of family separation, as well as potential situations of exploitation or trafficking

239. [L’actualité on Facebook](#)

240. Humanitarian source.

CONCLUSION

This report covers the violations suffered by people on the move between May and December 2025. However, at the time of writing (January to April 2026), a number of significant events have marked a further deterioration in the human rights situation of people on the move in Tunisia. This epilogue provides an overview of these events.

First, as detailed in this report, Storm Harry, which swept across the Mediterranean from January 19 to 21, caused the deaths of hundreds of people who had set out from the Tunisian coast aboard several boats. According to several NGOs, more than 1,000 people across some thirty boats are believed to have gone missing at sea, an event some organizations describe as “the greatest tragedy in recent years along the central Mediterranean routes”.²⁴¹ For its part, the UN reports that at least 380 people who left Tunisia during the storm are missing.²⁴² Between January and March 2026, at least 831 people were reported dead or missing on the Mediterranean route according to the IOM, the highest figure recorded at the start of the year since 2014.²⁴³

Additionally, in Tunisia, pressure exerted by Tunisian authorities on communities on the move continued during the first half of 2026. The National Guard continued to carry out operations to dismantle informal camps in the governorate of Sfax,²⁴⁴ as well as deportations and arbitrary internal and forced displacements to border areas. Between January and March 2026, four cases of forced displacement to border areas followed by abandonment in desert areas or deportations to Libya were brought to the attention of the OMCT—involving a total of 205 people. However, these figures are significantly underestimated and do not reflect the number of people subjected to such practices in early 2026.

241. “Up to 1000 could be missing in Mediterranean after cyclone Harry, NGO says”, 04/02/2026, InfoMigrants.

242. IOM, “Hundreds feared missing or dead amid reports of shipwrecks in the Central Mediterranean,” 02/24/2026.

243. “January–February 2026 is the deadliest period in the Mediterranean since 2014,” 02/18/2026, InfoMigrants.

IOM, “30 migrants dead or missing off Greece in latest tragedy in the Mediterranean,” 02/23/2026.

L’humanité, “Deaths in the Mediterranean: at least 655 people dead or missing in two months, a grim record linked to the crackdown on immigration,” March 19, 2026.

244. Refugees in Libya on X and L’actualité on Facebook

Furthermore, as pressure on civil society intensifies—as illustrated by the eight-year prison sentence handed down to Saadia Mosbah,²⁴⁵ president of the anti-racist association Mnemty, in March 2026 or the suspension of the Ligue Tunisienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (LTDH) in April 2026, the polarization of Tunisian society around the migration issue is intensifying. On March 28, 2026, for example, a demonstration brought together several dozen people in front of the Tunis governorate headquarters under the slogan “Tunisia for Tunisians.”²⁴⁶ During this demonstration, protesters demanded the “deportation - الترحيل” of people on the move present on Tunisian territory and denounced the organizations that assist them and defend their rights. Following this demonstration, the OMCT and its partners documented an increase in arrests of people on the move in urban centers, deportations, and the increased use of the return program organized directly by Tunisian authorities.²⁴⁷

Through this meticulous documentation effort carried out in cooperation with numerous Tunisian and international civil society actors, the OMCT hopes to contribute to supporting the Tunisian government in revising its migration and asylum management policy, and calls for various forms of partnerships with European and African countries to be conditional on respect for human dignity and the promotion and protection of human rights for all, including people on the move.

245. “Saadia Mosbah sentenced to eight years in prison and a heavy fine,” March 19, 2026, Business News.

246. “Tunisia for Tunisians”: a rally calls for the expulsion of sub-Saharan migrants and targets aid organizations,” March 28, 2026, Business News.

See also [L'actualité on Facebook](#)

247. Humanitarian Source.

TEMPORAL ANALYSIS

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

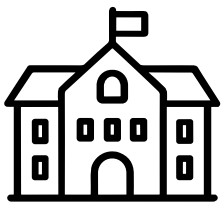
AN INFORMAL CAMP HOUSING OVER 3,500 PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IS DISMANTLED BY THE TUNISIAN NATIONAL GUARD AT EL AMRA, KM 21, IN THE GOVERNORATE OF SFAX.¹⁰

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

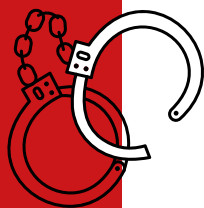
14/07

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

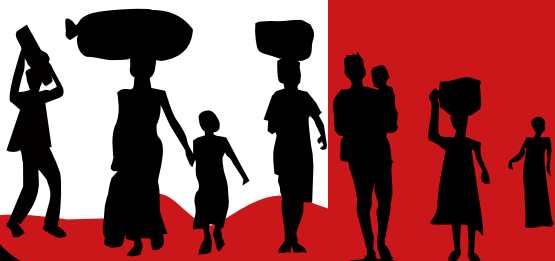
A group of people on the move, comprising 18 women and 24 children, is arrested in Tunis for begging and detained at the El Ouardia administrative detention center in the southern suburbs of Tunis⁴¹. On November 15, security forces reportedly tried to put them on buses to forcibly move them to desert 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



15/12

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

23/12

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. **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.
4. «One year of detention for Saadia Mosbah: Mnementy denounces targeted repression», 06/05/2025, Business News.
5. «Saadia Mosbah: the imprisoned icon of Tunisian anti-racism», 06/16/2025, Nawaat.
6. «Tunisia: press freedom in free fall», 09/05/2025, Reporters Without Borders.
7. «Tunisie : recul alarmant dans le classement RSF 2025 sur la liberté de la presse», 10/05/2025, Inkyfada.
8. Refugees in Tunisia on X, Marino Dubois on Facebook
This episode was confirmed through Key Informant Interviews with humanitarian sources.
9. Refugees in Libya on X.
10. «Nobody hears you when you scream»: the dangerous turn of Tunisia's migration policy», 06/11/2025, Amnesty International, p. 7.
11. 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.
12. «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.
13. Refugees in Libya on X and Refugees in Tunisia on X
14. «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.
15. «La scolarisation des enfants de migrants est une menace pour l'Etat, selon Fatma Mseddi», 11/06/2025, Business News.
16. «El Amra: Démantèlement d'un cinquième camp de migrants», 20/06/2025, Mosaïque FM.
17. «Tunisian government offers return tickets to migrants in Sfax, without going through IOM», 06/24/2025, InfoMigrants.
18. «Condamnation de Sonia Dahmani: vague d'indignation et dénonciation d'un «déli de justice», 30/06/2025, Business News.
19. Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur HRDs on X
20. Marino Dubois on Facebook
This episode was confirmed through Key Informant Interviews with humanitarian sources.
21. Marino Dubois on Facebook
This episode was confirmed through Key Informant Interviews with humanitarian sources.
22. «Khaled Nouri: la Tunisie refuse d'être une terre de transit pour la migration irrégulière», 15/07/2025, Nessma.
23. «Filippo Grandi: "Migranti, la situazione è critica. Il piano Mattei diventi europeo", 14/07/2025, Corriere della Sera.
24. Tunisia an «open-air» prison, sau protesters at anti-President Saied march», 25/07/2025, Al Jazeera.
25. «Refused in a cab because black: an academic denounces ordinary and repeated racism», 02/08/2025, BusinessNews.
26. «La justice relance les poursuites contre l'association Mnementy et Saadia Mosbah», 06/08/2025, BusinessNews.
27. Marino Dubois on Facebook
28. «Sousse: une enquête ouverte après le meurtre d'un migrant subsaharien», 24/08/2025, Mosaïque FM.
29. 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.
30. «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.
31. Marino Dubois on Facebook
32. L'actualité on Facebook
This episode was also confirmed by OMCT through an interview with a key informant
33. 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
34. 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.
35. This episode was also reported by Refugees in Libya on X
36. This information was gathered by OMCT through an interview with a humanitarian source.
37. «Tunisia: firm rejection of «disguised settlement» of irregular migrants», 08/10/2025, Webdo.
38. Cassation appeal rejected in activists' case, Business News, 08/10/2025.
39. 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.
40. 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.
41. «Tunisia. Widespread violations of the rights of refugees and migrants reveal a risk of EU complicity», 06/11/2025, Amnesty International.
42. Marino Dubois on Facebook and L'actualité on Facebook
43. «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
44. 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.
45. 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
46. «A Tunis, une foule vêtue de noire fait front contre l'injustice», 22/11/2025, Business News.
47. L'actualité on Facebook
48. 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.
49. «Tunisie: ouverture du procès de six membres de la branche tunisienne de France terre d'asile», 15/12/2025, InfoMigrants.
50. «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 SFAX 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

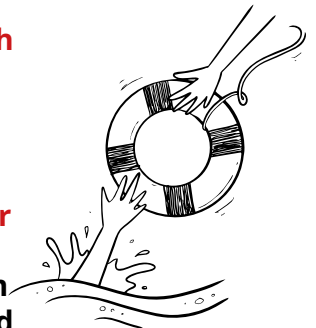
A boat leaving the coast of Sfax with 56 people on board, including two women and two babies, breaks down. The distress call to the Tunisian coastguard was reportedly



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.

CHRONOLOGY OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

relating to migration and asylum in
the Mediterranean region

The chronology below presents the main meetings, agreements and political declarations in terms of cooperation and political dialogue on border management and migratory flows between Tunisia, the states with which it shares land and sea borders, and its partners between May and December 2025, as well as court rulings and political developments affecting people on the move in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

20
25

06/05

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA RECEIVES THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM), AND REAFFIRMS TUNISIA'S REFUSAL TO BE «A TRANSIT POINT OR A PLACE OF SETTLEMENT FOR IRREGULAR MIGRANTS».⁷³

12/05 - 13/05

The leader of the SSA (Support and Stability Apparatus) armed group in Libya is killed in clashes. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya urges all parties to stop fighting.⁷⁴ The Government of National Unity in Libya proclaims **the dissolution of the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM)**, and the appointment of a new head for the Internal Security Agency (ISA).⁷⁵

20/05

The European Commission proposes **rules to facilitate the⁷⁶ application of the safe third country concept by member states**. This measure is intended to ease the pressure on national asylum systems.⁷⁷ Human rights NGOs warn that the changes could weaken asylum protections and transfer responsibility for handling refugees to countries outside the EU.⁷⁸

28/05

500 Sudanese are repatriated from Kufra, Libya, to Sudan, in the first truck convoy organized by local authorities.⁷⁹



01/07

Denmark announces that it intends to use its presidency of the EU Council **to step up the outsourcing of asylum applications** and the restriction of the scope of European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) judgments.⁸¹

08/07

On their arrival in Benghazi, eastern Libya, the European Commissioner for Migration, the Italian Minister for Home Affairs and a delegation of Greek and Maltese officials **were declared «persona non grata» and expelled by the Government of National Stability (GNS)**. They had all visited the country to discuss the recent increase in people on the move from Libya to Europe.⁸⁴



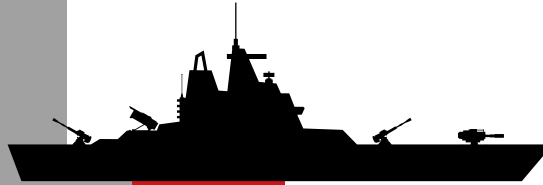
16/07

The Tunisian Foreign Minister receives the British Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East. Both parties express their willingness to strengthen their partnership, **including on migration and security issues**.⁸⁷



23/06

GREECE DEPLOYS WARSHIPS OFF THE COAST OF LIBYA TO STEM THE INFLUX OF PEOPLE ON THE MOVE, ARRIVING IN PARTICULAR ON THE ISLANDS OF CRETE AND GAVDOS.⁸⁰



08/07

The European Commissioner for Migration visits Libya with ministers from Italy, Greece and Malta to urge the Libyan authorities **to step up their efforts to prevent departures to Europe**, following a sharp increase in crossings from Libya.⁸² On this occasion, Libya **unveils a national plan to combat irregular immigration**: the main lines of the plan are the strengthening of controls in cities, at borders and at sea, targeted expulsions and the regularization of people on the move to meet the needs of the local job market.⁸³

09/07

In response to the sharp increase in arrivals from Libya, Greece announces that it is temporarily **suspending the examination of asylum applications from people on the move** arriving from North Africa.⁸⁵

16/07

The European Commission presents its budget proposal for the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework. The European Union plans to allocate **almost 34 billion euros to managing migratory flows and securing its borders**, an amount three times higher than the previous multiannual budget.⁸⁶

17/07

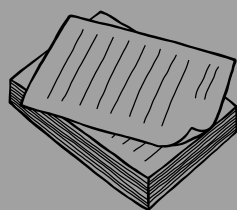
Some thirty associations call on the Italian government to **cease systemic efforts to prevent the work of search and rescue NGOs**.⁸⁸ The signatories call for the immediate cancellation of the Piantedosi decree.⁸⁹

31/07

The President of the Republic of Tunisia receives the Italian Prime Minister. The meeting focused on the shared desire to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in a number of areas, including migration.⁹¹

21/08

IOM and the African Union renew their strategic cooperation to advance migration governance in Africa through a new three-year agreement. The agreement «reaffirms the commitment of both organizations to ensure that migration contributes to development, stability and prosperity across the continent».⁹³



23/09

Tunisian Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Nafti meets European Commissioner for Home Affairs and Migration Magnus Brunner. The Tunisian Foreign Minister points out that Tunisia favors the development of voluntary return programs for «illegal migrants»; the European Commissioner for Home Affairs and Migration expresses the willingness of European institutions to strengthen cooperation with Tunisia, in particular via the IOM.⁹⁵

29/07

The President of the Republic of Tunisia decides to extend the application of decree no. 2025-481 of September 13, 2024, extending the proclamation of a border buffer zone. This buffer border zone includes the southern part of Tunisia's Saharan zone, the south-western part of the north-ern part of Tunisia's Saharan zone covering the strip adjacent to the Algerian border, and the south-eastern part of Tunisia adjacent to the Libyan border.⁹⁰

04/08

The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights publishes his report on the outsourcing of migration, noting that such measures entail a risk of human rights violations. The report highlights the lack of transparency, the importance of independent monitoring and addresses the issue of accountability for such violations.⁹²

04/09

Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi meets Libyan Undersecretary of Defense Abdul Salam Al Zoubi to «strengthen military and security cooperation between the two countries»: «Libya is a strategic partner in the Mediterranean, and constant dialogue between our countries is essential to meet common security challenges. Our cooperation in managing migration and security challenges continues (...)».⁹⁴

24/09

The European Union hands over two boats to the Tunisian navy as part of the «Support for search and rescue operations at sea in Tunisia» project, financed by the EU and implemented by CIVIPOL with technical support from several European partners.⁹⁶

26/09

42 humanitarian and rights organizations call on the EU to end its partnership with Libya, in a letter addressed to the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs and Migration and the Commissioner for the Mediterranean.⁹⁷

07/10

Tunisian Defense Minister meets Algerian President in Algiers. The meeting focused on prospects for enhanced military cooperation and the fight against cross-border threats and concluded with the signing of a defense cooperation agreement.⁹⁹

15/10

The Italian Parliament approves the three-year renewal of the 2017 Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation on migration. Opposition parties opposed it, calling for an end to all cooperation with Libya. Several human rights NGOs also voiced their concerns.¹⁰¹



02/10

EU leaders issue a joint declaration underlining the need for a comprehensive approach to migration routes and innovative solutions to illegal migration. They pledge to strengthen border security, combat trafficking and ensure effective returns to countries of origin.⁹⁸

14/10

The European Court of Human Rights holds the Greek coastguard responsible for the death of 16 people on the move who lost their lives in a shipwreck in March 2018: *«The Greek authorities failed to take the necessary measures to rescue the persons concerned, whereas they should have been aware of the immediate danger from the moment they were informed of the incident.»*¹⁰⁰

16/10

Lawyers filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court against around 120 European leaders, including Macron and Merkel, accusing them of crimes against humanity linked to EU migration policies in Libya. According to them, these policies have caused the death of 25,000 migrants and the abuse of 150,000 others, victims of detention, torture, rape and slavery in Libya.¹⁰²

29/10

Médecins Sans Frontières is ordered by the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to leave Libya by November 9, 2025. It was the last international association providing care to people on the move in the west of the country.¹⁰⁴



22/10

The European Union and Egypt held their first summit in Brussels. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi highlights cooperation with the EU on the fight against irregular migration. Ursula von der Leyen announces €5 billion in European aid and enhanced cooperation.¹⁰³

05/11

Thirteen search and rescue organizations¹⁰⁵ announce the formation of the Justice Fleet and decide to suspend all operational communication with the Joint Rescue Coordination Center in Tripoli, which refuses to communicate with the Libyan Coast Guard.¹⁰⁶

27/11

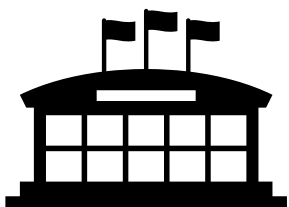
The European Parliament adopts a resolution on the rule of law and the human rights situation in Tunisia, with particular reference to the case of Sonia Dahmani. The Parliament condemns the situation and **«demands her immediate and unconditional release»** and calls for the release of **«all those detained for exercising their right to freedom of expression»**.¹⁰⁸

02/12

Libya's Minister of the Interior announces **plans to speed up the return of people on the move in an irregular situation to their countries of origin: «In December, «thousands of migrants» will be repatriated to Chad, Somalia, Mali and Syria, on the basis of «two weekly flights»»**.¹¹¹

08/12

The Council of the European Union approves **the creation of return centers outside the EU's borders**, where rejected asylum seekers can be sent. The European Parliament is expected to vote on the matter in March 2026.¹¹³



24-25/11

At the seventh Africa-Europe Summit, the Tunisian Foreign Minister reaffirms the need for a global approach to migration based on shared responsibility between North and South. He also warned against irregular migration fueled by trafficking networks, praising cooperation with IOM. The meeting concluded with a **joint Africa-Europe declaration setting out priorities for future cooperation**.¹⁰⁷

28/11

Adoption and official launch of a new Pact for the Mediterranean¹⁰⁹, which aims to **create a com-mon Mediterranean area** strengthening ties between the EU and southern Mediterranean countries, including Tunisia.¹¹⁰

07/12

The EU ambassador to Libya and the Italian Admiral of the Iriini fleet meet General Khalifa Haftar in Benghazi, eastern Libya. The topic discussed was strengthening cooperation, particularly **in terms of land and sea border security, and the fight against transnational migrant smuggling and trafficking networks**.¹¹²

08/12

The Council of the European Union agrees on **a new system for distributing asylum seekers in Europe**.¹¹⁴ The scheme is designed to reduce pressure on states along the main migration routes, including Italy, Spain, Greece and Cyprus. The other member countries will either have to take in some of the asylum seekers or pay a financial contribution of €20,000 per person they choose not to relocate to the countries under pressure.¹¹⁵

09/12

Italy supplies four new boats to the **«General Administration for Coastal Security»**, a Libyan authority under the Ministry of the Interior responsible for maritime security and combating immigration, working with the Libyan coastguard.¹¹⁶

10/12

27 member states of the Council of Europe call for a revision of the European Convention on Human Rights,¹¹⁹ in particular articles 3 and 8, which guarantee the right of everyone not to be subjected to torture, enshrine the principle of non-refoulement and protect respect for private and family life.¹²⁰



18/12

Adoption of the European Union's plan for resettlement and humanitarian admission, placing refugee resettlement at the heart of the EU's new approach to asylum and migration. However, the newly adopted plan drastically reduces the number of people who will be resettled over the next two years.¹²³

10/12

Second International Conference of the Global Alliance to Fight Migrant Smuggling, held in Brussels. Fifty delegations adopt a declaration to strengthen cooperation against migrant smuggling¹¹⁷. The President of the European Commission highlights a clear drop in arrivals of people on the move in the EU, with a 26% decrease since the beginning of the year on the main migration routes.¹¹⁸

11/12 - 12/12

The President of the Republic of Tunisia receives the Prime Minister of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, further underlining the shared desire to consolidate cooperation between the two countries.¹²¹ A series of cooperation agreements are signed in various fields.¹²²

18/12

The Grand Chamber of the Court of Justice of the European Union delivers two judgments explicitly recognizing the vulnerability of asylum seekers and reinforcing Frontex's legal responsibility in refoulement operations.¹²⁴

26/12

Meeting in Algiers of the Quadripartite Steering Committee, comprising Algeria, Italy, Libya and Tunisia, on the implementation of a joint program for the return of people on the move in an irregular situation to their countries of origin. The meeting defines a joint project for the year 2026 to strengthen cooperation in this field.¹²⁵



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) works with 200 member organizations that strive to end torture and ill-treatment, assist victims, and protect human rights defenders at risk, wherever they may be. Together, we constitute the largest international group active in the fight against torture in more than 90 countries. We strive to protect members of marginalized groups who are at risk of being the most vulnerable, including women, children, indigenous peoples, people on the move, and other marginalized groups.

In Tunisia, OMCT's direct assistance program, SANAD, provides holistic and tailored direct assistance to victims of torture and ill-treatment. We combine on-the-ground expertise with our advocacy work to inspire reforms, undertake strategic legal actions, and support institutional strengthening in partnership with civil society and the Tunisian government.

The OMCT aims to promote information, documentation, and research on the human rights situation of all people, including migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons. The organization is committed to combating discrimination, racism, and xenophobia, and seeks to promote and protect the affirmation of the principles of equal rights, equal opportunities, and respect for dignity in society, without distinction based on origin, nationality, language, religion, gender, or political opinion.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the partner organizations, researchers, experts, human rights defenders, journalists, and associations assisting people on the move who shared their views on the human rights situation of people on the move in Tunisia. This report has been greatly enriched by their insights and perspectives. Civil society organizations in Tunisia currently play a crucial role in promoting the rights of people on the move.

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All quotes have been anonymized to protect the identity of those interviewed. The content of this report is the sole responsibility of the OMCT. This report aims to inform OMCT's future work and advocacy on the subject and will be shared with partners and interested stakeholders.

