

Chapter 3

Travelling Routes to Europe



I don't know where I'm going but I'm on my way.
(Carl Sagan)

Abstract About five routes have been identified as channels of illegal crossings: The Central Mediterranean route (CMR), the Western Mediterranean route (WMR), the Eastern Mediterranean route (EMR), the West African route and the Western Balkan route. The CMR is the most dangerous and at the same time commonly used route to transit into Europe with Italy and Malta as first countries of entry. It is estimated that 1 in 10 migrants who attempt crossing via the CMR is likely to die or missing on their way. Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Libya were departure countries for irregular migration to Europe via the CMR. The WMR connects Morocco to Spain and the two Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta. Nationals from Morocco, Guinea, Mali and Algeria were more detected on the WMR. The West African route is used by irregular West African migrants to transit to Canary Islands (an autonomous community of Spain). Cities of Gao (Mali) and Agadez (Niger) are used as main hub of irregular migration to link the WMR and the CMR respectively. The EMR is used by unauthorized migrants to travel into the EU through Turkey with Greece as the first country of entry. It was the “migration and refugee crisis” along this route in 2015 that put the whole of Europe under alert. However, irregular migration along the EMR has substantially declined.

Introduction

The upsurge in the number of irregular migrants crossing to Europe through sea and land borders reached an inundation point in 2015. With six times the number of irregular migrants recorded in 2014, the “migration crisis” became one of the most important phenomena in the social and political discourse in Europe (Frontex, 2016).

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/7446197-i-don-t-know-where-i-m-going-but-i-m-on-my>.
Accessed March 26, 2020.

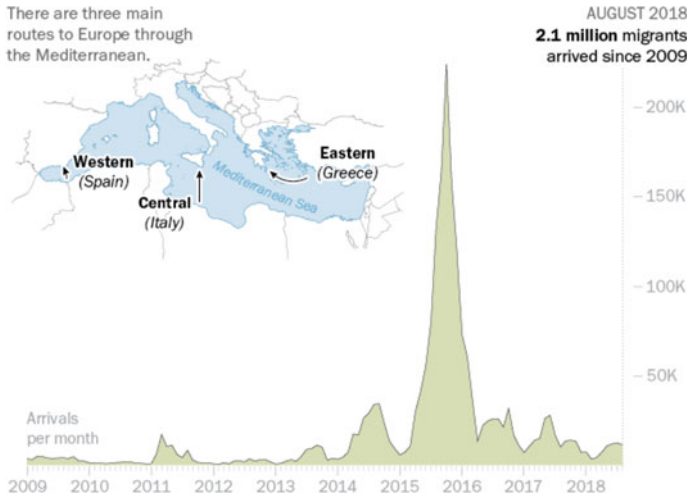


Fig. 3.1 Monthly “Detections” by sea (January 2009–August 2018). *Source* Frontex (cited in Connor, 2018)

The shift in trend was accompanied with severe casualties as significant number of migrants drowned in the sea. There was an unprecedented pressure on the asylum system of many European countries, and an intense increase in human trafficking and smuggling activities along land and sea routes. Consequently, considerable volume of research was directed towards understanding the dynamics of migration routes spanning from migrants’ countries of origin, through the sea, and to the land borders of European countries in order to predict migration patterns in the future (Fig. 3.1).

Recent statistics show that the incidence of irregular migration through sea borders has plummeted for the last three years, presumably due predominantly to an increase in border controls at both transit and destination countries and perhaps, relative calm in war-torn origin countries. Illegal sea crossings declined from more than one million in 2015 to about 365,000 in 2016, and 176,000 in 2017 (News European Parliament, 2017). These account for an almost 83% decrease from 2015 to 2017. More recent figure provided by Frontex (2019) revealed that irregular sea crossing had fallen to 150,114 by 2018, which is about 92% decrease from the 2015 figure. This downward flow shows a tremendous and unimaginable impact of the ‘bulwark Europe’ policies of the EU (Rosenthal, Bahl, & Worm, 2017) and its Third World partners in reducing irregular migration into Europe. However, stakeholders must not rest on their oars given that irregular migrants, through the help of smugglers, have constantly sought for alternative and more dangerous routes to reach European soil as new policies to combat unauthorized migration are implemented (Alexandridis & Dalkiran, 2017). Thus, from any normative perspective, more knowledge is needed for better understanding of the dynamics in the use of old routes, and new and emerging routes.

Migration Routes to the EU

Almost 90% of illegal border crossings to the EU is via the Mediterranean Sea (Giuliani, 2015). Geographically, the African continent and the Middle East are EU's closest neighbors and the common sources of irregular migration to the European continent. The proximity of Europe to these two regions gave rise to the emergence of six principal routes used by migrants to reach European soil. These routes are: (1) The Central Mediterranean route (CMR), (2) the Western Mediterranean route (WMR), (3) the Eastern Mediterranean route (EMR), (4) the Western African route, and (5) the Western Balkan route.

In the following sections, we shall discuss migration via each of these routes by emphasizing on paths taken from origin countries to transit countries to crossing the borders into Europe.

The Central Mediterranean Route

The Mediterranean Sea is almost enclosed by land with Southern Europe and Turkey on the North, North Africa on the South and the Levant (parts of Western Asia) on the East. The geographical position of the sea provides the historical connection between Europe, and Africa, and the Middle East. The three maritime pathways across the Mediterranean Sea are usually classified as Central, Western, and Eastern Mediterranean routes. In particular, the CMR occupies a special position among the other routes as it is the most dangerous and at the same time commonly used route to transit into Europe with Italy and Malta as first countries of entry. Other points of entry include the mainland regions of Puglia and Calabria and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia (Wittenberg, 2017). In addition, the Italian Pelagie Islands of Lampedusa, Linosa, and Lampione are the gateway for many African migrants heading to Europe given its nearness to Africa and political connection to Europe. Historically, crossings through the CMR to the Italian Pelagie Islands for seasonal jobs originated primarily in Libya and secondly, Tunisia, with distances of 350 km and 150 km, respectively (Frontline, 2011). These relatively short distances make the North African region the bridge between the whole of Africa and Europe (Fig. 3.2).

In the past, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco were departure countries for irregular migration to Europe via the CMR, but in recent times the trend has shifted to Libya as main point of departure given the heavy smuggling networks and relatively lower cost of sea passage compared to neighboring countries (IOM, 2017). Cost of sea travel can be as low as \$US420 in Libya but can be costlier in Tunisia and Morocco by \$US3500 and \$US3700, respectively (Malka, 2018). Before the ousting of Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi in 2011, the Libyan government maintained strict border control on the coastal borders to Europe but less restrictive in its immigration policies which made Libya a destination country rather than a transit country for illegal migration into Europe. The increase in human smuggling activities and weak border control reversed



Fig. 3.2 Main Mediterranean crossing to the EU. *Source* Wikipedia (cited in Katsiaficas, 2016)

the status of Libya as an immigration country to a transit and emigration nation at the fall of the Gaddafi regime (Global Initiative, 2014). However, recent data obtained between September and December 2018 suggested that migration through the Libya has fallen by 87% and Tunisia is fast replacing Libya as the key country of departure of irregular migrants detected along the CMR (Frontex, 2019).

The breakthroughs recorded in closure of the Libyan route leading to Europe were pushed ahead through EU cooperation programs such as the IOM program for Voluntary Humanitarian Return for repatriation of migrants stuck in Libya's detention centers. Moreover, the UN, the African Union, and the EU taskforce set up to tackle slave auctions of migrants in Libya through evacuation of trapped migrants and asylum seekers significantly contributed to reducing migration pressure along the CMR (Abderrahim, 2019). By the aid of these programs, for example, 195 stranded Nigerian migrants which included children, infants and adults (including pregnant women) were repatriated to Lagos on 23 May 2019 (Nseyen, 2019). This is the 69th batch of returnees from Libya to Nigeria since 2017 and the largest. Also, the reported dangers and insecurity orchestrated by the political instability in Libya has deterred potential migrants from dreaming of migrating to Europe illegally while propelling actual migrants to seek alternative routes or go back to home.

Between 2011 and 2016, 90% of irregular migration to Italy from Libya occurred along the CMR with an estimated total of 630,000 migrants (IOM, 2018; Malka, 2018). According to UNHCR (2018a) estimates, arrivals of migrants in Italy via the CMR was 153,842 in 2015, which was a reduction compared to the 170,100 migrants recorded in 2014. However, the number of migrants in 2016 (181,436) rose by 18% compared to 2015. By 2017, number of migrants had significantly declined compared

to the figures obtained in 2015 and 2016. Frontex (2019) statistics showed that the detections of illegal crossings on the route experienced a decrease by more than 80% from 118,962 in 2017 to 23,485 in 2018, whereas data on numbers of minors (19%) revealed a slight increase in 2018 (in which 84% of them were unaccompanied) in comparison to the figure of 2017. These figures show a big turning point against the so-called refugee crisis experienced by Europe between 2014 and 2016.

However, the number of deaths or missing migrants on the CMR continues to be alarmingly high. It is shown that more than 13,000 migrants lost their lives on this route between 2014 and 2018 (UNHCR, 2018a). Between January and May 19, 2019, this route was reported to claim 316 lives (IOM, 2019). It is recently estimated that 10% (i.e., 1 in 10) of migrants who attempt crossing into Europe via the CMR are likely to die or be missing on their way. This prevalence is considerably higher compared to those recorded in 2017 (2.6%) and 2018 (3.5%).

Given the frequent occurrence of deaths along the CMR, several rescue operations have been carried out by the Libyan Coast Guard, the Italian Coast Guard and Navy, Maltese authorities, and various NGOs. Based on UNHCR (2019a) data between January and June 2018, a total of 22,752 migrants were rescued on the CMR out of which 50% were disembarked in Italy, 3% in Spain and 1% in Malta. The remaining 46% were returned to Libya for disembarkation. The trend changed drastically in the latter half of 2018, when up to 85% of the migrants (4769) on the same route were returned for disembarkation in Libya and only 3%, 4% and 8% in Italy, Malta, and Spain, respectively. According to the European Commission (2018), more than 290,000 migrants have been rescued on the sea by EU operations since February 2016 with major support from the Italian Coastguard (Fig. 3.3).

But where do the migrants taking the CMR come from? The origin of migrants taking the route is mixed consisting of countries from North Africa, West and Central Africa, East Africa, and the Middle East. Wittenberg (2017) categorized migrants

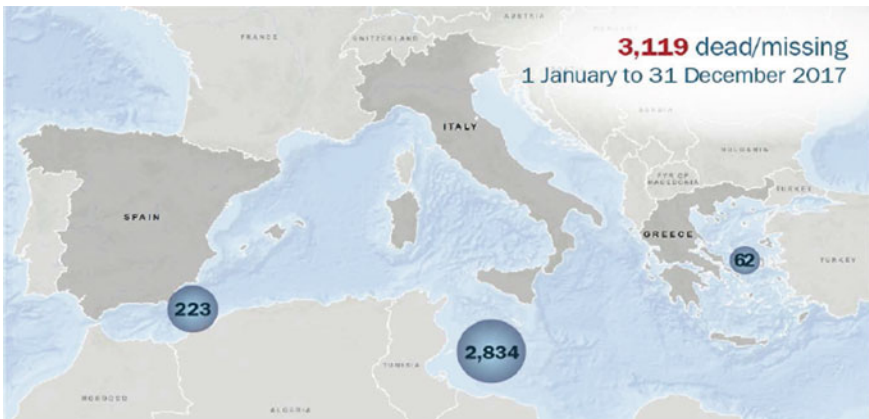


Fig. 3.3 Fatalities in the Mediterranean Sea, 2017. *Source* IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM, 2018)

taking the CMR into Europe into three groups. The first are those migrants with refugee and protection claims which include predominantly Syrians and Eritreans. The second include those migrants fleeing violence and instability in their countries (e.g., Somalia), and vulnerable to a risk of persecution or suffering but may not qualify for refugee status. The third are economic migrants leaving their countries for greener pastures in Europe to achieve their dreams and life ambitions. This category includes the majority of the West African migrants. Although, these categories may help differentiate forced/involuntary migrants from economic/voluntary migrants, it nonetheless provides imprecise details of motivations for migration given that those fleeing violence for safety may also migrate because of the dream of economic prosperity in Europe.

In 2015, Eritreans (25.5%), Nigerians (14.5%), Somalis (8%), Sudanese (5.8%), Gambians (5.5%), and Syrians (4.8%) constituted the larger portion of migrants on the CMR (IOM, cited in Pace, 2016). About 41% of migrants on this route were from sub-Saharan Africa, 11% from East and Horn of Africa, whereas 10% were from North Africa in 2017 (UNHCR, 2018b). The trend changed in 2018 as migrants from Tunisia began to take the CMR more than those from Nigeria. Tunisians and Eritreans are reported to constitute almost one third of all detected migrants on the CMR in 2018 (Frontex, 2019). The percentage of Syrian migrants taking the CMR has substantially declined as compared to the 23% figure recorded in 2014 (Frontex, 2014). These current trends indicate that the CMR is now mostly used by Africans to transit into Europe as against Syrian occupation during the “migration crisis.” The share of unaccompanied children who arrived in Malta and Italy via the CMR was put at 76% and 85%, respectively, of which the majority hailed from Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, and Tunisia. Unaccompanied children who arrived in Malta through the CMR were mostly minors (89%), males and aged between 14 and 17. The remaining 11% consisting of girls (also aged between 14 and 17) were found to largely originate from Somalia (Frontex, 2019).

According to Altai Consulting (2015), the main points of departure on the Libyan coast to Europe are to the west of the country’s capital, Tripoli. Specifically, these points are close to the cities of Zawiya and Zwarah, because of their relatively short distances to Lampedusa. It is important to note that departure points are not limited to these cities. The coastline of Libya, which is 1170 km long, enables numerous smugglers to set up potential departure points for sailing towards the CMR. It is also reported that boats continue to sail from Benghazi since 2014 (Altai Consulting, 2015). Some migrants and refugees may travel across 36 different countries and 68 different routes before reaching Italy and Malta through the CMR (Crawley, Duvell, Jones, McMahon, & Sigona, 2016) (Fig. 3.4).

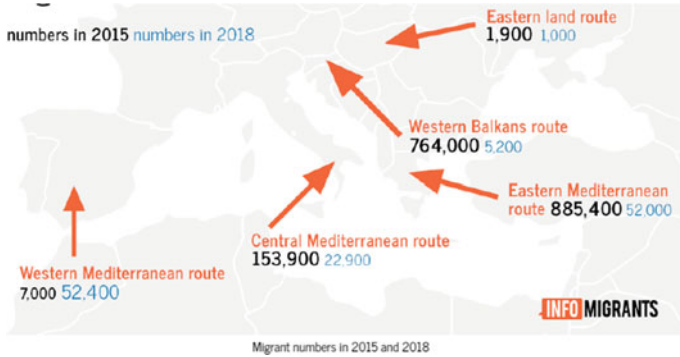


Fig. 3.4 Migrant numbers in 2015 and 2018 by routes. Source MacGregor (2019)

The Western Mediterranean Route

The Western Mediterranean route (WMR) principally connects the North African country of Morocco to Spain and the two Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta which both share land borders with Morocco. Located immediately after the Strait of Gibraltar is the enclave of Ceuta which has an 8 km border with Morocco. Melilla is only 10 km from the Moroccan city of Nador. The distance of the channel between Morocco and Spanish mainland is only 14 km at its narrowest point (MacGregor, 2019). The WMR was used by nationals from Morocco and Algeria to transit into the Spanish territories for intention of relocating or moving to other countries in Europe (Kuschminder, Bresser, & Siegel, 2015). However, towards the end of 1990s the route had witnessed a sharp increase in the number of sub-Saharan Africans migrating to Europe for greener pastures (Frontex, 2014; Schapendonk, 2012). In present times, the WMR is used by both Maghrebis (especially Moroccans and Algerians), and Western Africans to irregularly migrate to Europe through Spain (Alexandridis & Dalkiran, 2017).

In 2015, a total number of 7164 migrants were detected along the WMR consisting of mainly nationals from Guinea, Algeria, and Morocco (European Parliament, 2016). By 2016, detections had increased by 38% to 9990. A dramatic change in the number of detections was experienced in 2017 with over 23,000 migrants, which was more than a two-fold increase over the number in the preceding year (Frontex, 2018). Moroccans (4809), Algerians (4219) and Ivorians (3345) topped the list of migrants’ origins. In that year, two out of five migrants on the WMR were citizens of Morocco and Algeria.

By 2018, the WMR became the most commonly utilized route into Europe reaching a record high of 57,034 migrants with Morocco as the main departing point (Frontex, 2019). This figure was more than twice of the number of migrants recorded in 2016 on the same route and the number of migrants transiting via the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Seas which are traditionally known as the most frequently used routes into Europe. In the early part of 2018, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa

were the most detected on this route; however, the trend changed towards the end of the same year with Moroccans increasingly becoming detected on the route. When the total number of migrants using both land and sea routes are considered together, nationals from Morocco, Guinea, Mali and Algeria (in that order) were more detected on the WMR compared to migrants from other countries in Africa (Frontex, 2019). Some nine percent of the total number of migrants claimed that they were minors on this route.

The point of departure from Morocco is from the coastlines of the city of Tangier through the Strait of Gibraltar to Tarifa (Spain) which is the southernmost city of the European continent. Migrants also make use of the land route by crossing the border walls that separate Morocco from the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta (Altai Consulting, 2015). Considerable number of migrants in groups of several hundred usually cross the six-meter fence (capped with barbed wire) into Melilla after waiting for a long time in the forests surrounding Nador and Oujda. This strategy enables some to successfully cross over the fence without been stopped by authorities, although many are usually still prevented from gaining access to the city. In some instances, the fences are climbed with makeshift ladders and cardboard suits to avoid sustaining injuries from the barbed wires (Carling, 2007). As a result of the difficulties accompanying the crossing, other migrants use rented or forged Moroccan passports (which could cost as much as \$US2000) to gain entry given that nationals of Morocco are allowed to enter Melilla and Ceuta for a specific period of time without visa permit (Altai Consulting, 2015). In July 2018, about 700 hundred sub-Saharan Africans were reported to have stormed the fence separating Morocco from Ceuta as early as 6:35 a.m. and overpowered security officials enabling about 602 of them to gain entrance into the city (Dolz & Cañas, 2018). A total number of 6800 migrants arrived in Spain during 2018 using Ceuta (1979) and Melilla (4821) as point of entry (Aida & ECRE, 2019). This is about 17% increase over the figure recorded in the 2017. Also, in July 2018, about 1000 migrants were rescued along the WMR by Maritime Rescue services, thus constituting overburden to shelters' capacity in the Strait of Gibraltar.

The Western African Route

The West African route is used by irregular West African migrants to transit to Canary Islands. The Canary Islands—an autonomous community of Spain—is located in the Atlantic Ocean and about 100 km west of Morocco at the nearest point (Canary Island, n.d.). The Canary Islands have been opposing irregular immigration for the past 24 years since two Sahrawi youths sailed towards the Island of Fuerteventura in 1994 with the use of the first *pateras* (small wooden vessels) (Efe, 2017). Ever since, migration of the Maghrebis (specifically those from Northwest Africa) to the Canaries have increased each year from dozens to thousands.

Godenau (2014) detailed three phases of irregular migration and arrivals in the Canaries. The first occurred in the 1990s without attracting much media attention when *pateras* transited from nearby Moroccan coasts containing mostly small numbers of Moroccans in a journey of one to two days. The second phase was between 2000 and 2008 during which arrivals became more frequent with departure points changing towards the south (Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, and Sierra Leone), and vessels traveling up to two weeks containing up to 200 on board. Between 2004 and 2007, illegal arrivals to the Canaries were 54,297 with the year 2006 recording the highest number of arrivals. Between January and August 2006, it was recorded that 19,035 irregular migrants reach the Canary Islands shore, 11 boats were shipwrecked with more than 250 dead (European Greens, 2006). During these years, Gambian, Malian, and Senegalese migrants were predominant. The third phase spanning 2009–2012 saw a sharp decline in number of arrivals by receding to the first phase where Moroccans were the principal migrants to the Islands. This downward trend continues till present times as the Islands recorded 1305 irregular migrants in 2018 and about 234 between January and April 2019 (UNHCR, 2019b). The significant decline of irregular migration to the Canaries is attributed to stricter border controls, effective repatriation, crack down on smuggling and trafficking, and a cooperation between Spain and partners among North and West African countries (Peregil, 2015).

The Eastern Mediterranean Route

The Eastern Mediterranean route (EMR) is used by unauthorized migrants to enter the EU through Turkey. This route has been used for many years and enables direct entry into Greece, and then Bulgaria. In contemporary times, migrants on this route are dominated by Syrian nationals and to a lesser extent Iraqis and Afghans (Pace, 2016). The yearly figures of migrants on the EMR ranged from 25,000 to 60,000 between 2010 and 2014. However, there was an enormous shift in 2015 when the route witnessed a surge in number of migrants that orchestrated the “migration crisis” and put the whole of Europe under alert. Fatalities on this route created a spark when the body of Alan Kurdi, the three-year old Kurdish Syrian boy washed ashore in Turkey after the dinghy carrying the boy and other refugees capsized on the way to Greece. The circulation of the photo of little Alan’s body all over the world’s media changed the usual talk about “migration crisis” to “refugee crisis” (Sardelic, 2017). Number of migrants increased on this route from 50,834 in 2014 to 885,386 in 2015 which was almost 18 times increase. The upsurge of migrants during that period was attributed to the Syrian civil war coupled with fact that the route was safer by boat travel compared to the CMR (Alexandridis & Dalkıran, 2017).

After the 2015 period, irregular migration on the route has substantially diminished because of the EU-Turkey agreement in March 2016 which enabled return of migrants who do not apply for asylum or whose asylum claim is rejected. By 2016, number of arrivals in Europe via the EMR had decreased to 182,227 and continued to decline through 2018, returning the figure to the pre-2015 periods. However, there

was about 34% increase from 2017 (42,319) to 2018 (56,567) as a result of increase in land border crossing (Frontex, 2019). Syrians continue to be the commonest migrants on the CMR followed by Afghans, Iraqis and Turkish. About 8100 arrivals have been recorded in Greece via sea and land routes between January and March 2019 (UNHCR, 2019a). This is more than 52% rise compared to arrivals within the same period in the preceding year. Number of deaths on this route between January and May 2019 was estimated at 33 which was relatively low compared to the deaths on CMR (316) and WMR (159) within the same period (IOM, 2019). Transiting into Greece via the EMR from Turkey may cost between €1000 and €3000 depending on the nationality of migrants with those from West Africa likely to pay more than persons from other regions (Kuschminder et al., 2015).

The Western Balkan Route

The routes across the Western Balkan (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia) have also attracted attention in the “refugee crisis.” Although not of much focus to the migration issue, citizens of the Western Balkan had always migrated into Europe for better economic opportunities. Around 35% of those who had their birth in Albania, or Bosnia & Herzegovina were reported to be living abroad (Trauner & Neelsen, 2017). In contrast and of relevance to the “refugee crisis” are nationals of Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, who pass through Turkey to Greece using land and sea routes and gain passage to the Western Balkan in order to enter the Schengen area. Also included are Iranians who reach the Western Balkans by using the visa free access to Serbia which was, however, cancelled in October 2018 (Frontex, 2019).

Upon reaching Greece, migrants pass through Macedonia, Serbia to Hungary and continue up to countries like Austria, Germany and Sweden. Other less frequently used routes include those from Serbia to Bulgaria and then to other EU countries. The Western Balkan route was officially closed in 2016 following the Turkey-EU agreement. Irrespective of the closure, migration continues to flow, though in smaller numbers (Trauner & Neelsen, 2017). During the “refugee crisis” of 2015 about 764,000 passed through the Western Balkan but figures subsided drastically to 130,261 and 12,179 in 2016 and 2017, respectively. By 2018, the flow reduced by 52% to 5869 in comparison to 2017 figure with most migrants originating from Afghanistan (1669), Pakistan (1017) and Iran (980) (Frontex, 2019).

Routes of Trans-Saharan Migration Towards the Mediterranean and the West African Route

As noted earlier, migration flows via the CMR, WMR and the West African route consist of nationals from different African countries. This section shall present the various routes taken from Western, Central, and Eastern Africa through Northern Africa and then to the Mediterranean Sea and the Canary Islands.

Western and Central African Routes

Irregular migration from West Africa to Europe originates from almost all countries within the sub-region although with some variations in level of involvements in such migration. Migrants from Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, and Ivory Coast take two principal routes to transit to the Maghreb depending on whether departure to Europe is via WMR or CMR. For those aiming the WMR, the main route is via Gao (in Mali) to the city of Adrar or Tamanrasset (in Algeria), and then to Oujda (Morocco). However, if the aim is the CMR they will transit from Gao and pass through Agadez (Niger) in order to reach Tripoli (Libya). Migrants from Nigeria and Cameroon usually pass through the city of Kano and link up with Agadez to Tripoli. Alternatively, Nigerian migrants may transit through Tamanrasset in Algeria after leaving Agadez and then to Oujda in Morocco to depart to Europe from the WMR. However, the Algerian route is less frequently passed because of border control and security checks. Migration to the Canary Islands involves traveling through the West Africa coastal areas.

It important to note that Niger, which is the last ECOWAS country¹ before the Sahara, serves as the major transit region for West and Central African irregular migrants, because of the border she shares with Algeria and Libya, and the relative stability experienced in the region compared to her neighbors. Agadez, the main hub for irregular migration in Niger, is central to the whole migration flow in West Africa because of its well established and highly structured smuggling activities. It is estimated that more than 5000 West Africans migrated monthly through Agadez from March to August 2013 (Tinti & Reitano, 2016) (Fig. 3.5; Table 3.1).

However, the Niger route is never completely safe for migrants given that half of its landmass (to the north) is covered with desert which also extends through the south of Algeria and north-east of Libya. As a result of the fluidity of the desert, it is often difficult to intercept or control the movements of migrants through Agadez.

¹ECOWAS being the Economic Community of West African States, with member countries: The Economic Community of West African States Member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte D'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

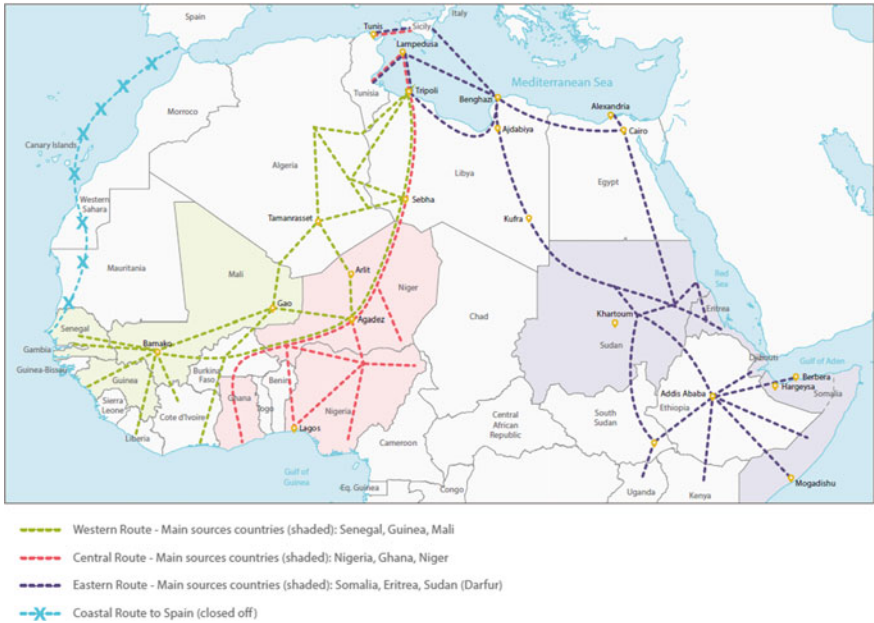


Fig. 3.5 African migration routes to European Shores (Spain and Italy). *Source* Global Initiatives (2014)

Most migrants from Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Togo, and Ivory Coast aiming for Spain through the WMR still prefer to pass through Niger even though Mali is a shorter distance to link Algeria and then Morocco. This preference is owing to the instability in the Northern part of Mali, thus deterring migrants from following that route. Migrants move freely and safely across the West African region because of the free movement policy of ECOWAS among member states. Movement is usually done by bus and may take several days. For example, Senegalese migrants setting out from Dakar may travel up to 3 days before reaching Agadez and may pay up to \$US140 for the journey (Altai Consulting, 2015).

Notably, migrants do not make this journey on their own but are aided by smugglers and traffickers from departure countries through transit countries to the Mediterranean Sea. The journey may take several months *or even years* before reaching Europe. This depends on the availability of funds, as many migrants get stranded on the way because of extortions from smugglers and bandits, and have to work for months or years in transit countries before continuing their journey to Europe.

Table 3.1 “Detections” by routes and top three origin countries (2015–2018)

Routes	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year
Western Mediterranean Route	7004	9990	23,063	57,034	38	147
<i>Sea</i>	<i>5740</i>	<i>8641</i>	<i>21,552</i>	<i>55,695</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>158</i>
Unknown	10	299	899	25,293	45	n.a.
Morocco	631	722	4704	11,723	21	149
Algeria	1059	1693	4287	4652	8.4	8.5
All other	4040	5927	11,662	14,027	25	20
<i>Land</i>	<i>1264</i>	<i>1349</i>	<i>1511</i>	<i>1339</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>-11</i>
Guinea	496	604	636	715	53	12
Burkina Faso	79	146	109	247	18	127
Mali	43	33	6	214	16	n.a.
All other	646	566	760	163	12	-79
Eastern Mediterranean Route	885,386	182,277	42,319	56,561	38	34
<i>Sea</i>	<i>873,179</i>	<i>174,605</i>	<i>34,732</i>	<i>34,014</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>-2.1</i>
Afghanistan	212,286	41,775	3713	9597	28	158
Syria	489,011	81,570	13,957	8173	24	-41
Iraq	90,130	26,573	6417	6029	18	-6
All other	81,752	24,687	10,645	10,215	30	-4
<i>Land</i>	<i>12,207</i>	<i>7672</i>	<i>7587</i>	<i>22,5547</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>197</i>
Turkey	69	190	2220	7468	33	236
Syria	7329	3015	2438	5733	25	135
Iraq	2591	1405	785	2941	13	275
All other	2218	3062	2144	6405	28	199
Central Mediterranean Route	153,946	181,376	118,962	23,485	16	-80
Tunisia	880	1207	6415	5182	22	-19
Eritrea	38,791	20,721	7055	3529	15	-50
Sudan	8916	9406	6221	2037	8.7	-67
All other	105,359	150,042	99,271	12,737	54	-87
Western Balkan Route	764,033	130,325	12,179	5869	3.9	-52
Afghanistan	53,237	10,620	3388	1669	28	-51
Pakistan	17,057	5583	4355	1017	17	-77

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

Routes	2015	2016	2017	2018	Share of total	% change on prev. year
Iran	1477	824	230	980	17	326
All other	692,262	113,298	4206	2203	38	-48
Circular Route from Albania to Greece	8932	5121	6396	4550	3	-29
Albania	8874	4996	6220	4319	95	-31
Iran		1	16	41	0.9	156
China				39	0.9	n.a.
All other	58	124	160	151	3.3	-5.6
Western African Route	874	671	421	1531	1	264
Morocco	42	94	106	831	54	684
Unknown		67	11	699	46	n.a.
Algeria	1	1	8	1	0.1	-88
Eastern Borders Route	1927	1384	872	1084	0.7	24
Vietnam	461	399	261	370	34	42
Iraq	120	24	19	90	8.3	374
Russia	100	119	69	84	7.7	22
All other	1246	842	523	540	50	3
Black Sea Route	68	1	537		n.a.	n.a.
Other	7	1	1		n.a.	n.a.
Total	1,822,177	511,146	204,750	150,114	100	-27

Source Frontex (2019)

Eastern African Routes

Routes emanating from Eastern Africa have their origins in the Horn of Africa and lead to the CMR. Migrants depart from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia, and transit through Sudan, Egypt, and then arrive from Libya to set out to Europe. Just as Agadez (Niger) is the main transit hub in the West and Central African routes, Khartoum (Sudan) is the major transit point in the Eastern African routes. The trip to Khartoum can be made in three ways (Marchand, Reinold, & Silva, 2017). The first is flying directly from Addis Ababa to Khartoum. Alternatively, migrants can travel through Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) to Metema (Ethiopia), which is on the border with Sudan, and then reach Khartoum. The third is to move from Addis Ababa to Humera, which is also a town in Ethiopia sharing a border with Eritrea and Sudan. In Eritrea, the trip then continues through Asmara and Massawa (which is on the bank of the Red Sea) to reach Khartoum.

In recent times, Egypt is becoming a direct transit point to Europe for migrants from East Africa (especially Eritreans) given that they cross through CMR to Italy without navigating via Libya (Marchland, Reinold, & Silva, 2017). This shift is probably attributed to the worsening situation in Libya where migrants are ill-treated and sold out as slaves. According to the Egyptian Government, more than 12,000 people mainly from Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan were apprehended for illegally entering or exiting the country (RMMS, 2016).

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