

**Migration in Focus**  
**The drivers, manifestations and consequences for security and development**  
**4 December 2017**  
**Geneva, Switzerland**

On December 4, 2017, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in partnership with the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime (GI) held a seminar in Geneva, Switzerland. The purposes of the seminar were to highlight 2017 African migration trends and issues and engage with members of the development, counter-terrorism and migration communities on related topics. Applied research conducted in 2017 by ISS and GI on African migration dynamics provides critical insights into mixed migration flows, smuggling and security dimensions at regional, continental and international levels. Findings from this research were presented and discussed to help shape perspectives and inform better policies in Africa, Europe and elsewhere. A summary of the presentations is provided below.

**1. Refugees and violent extremism**

Currently, concerning international trends of shrinking refugee protections are defended using false notions that refugees pose elevated security risks. Examinations of African case studies related to refugees and violent extremism revealed some dangerous findings:

- a) Cameroon force repatriating Nigerian refugees – In response to a growing Boko Haram presence, Cameroon has labelled Nigerian refugees as security and economic threats and has been forcefully repatriating them. This behaviour pushes refugees back into dangerous conditions, contravenes national and international law and sets a dangerous precedent. It further lends to Boko Haram narratives that countries are unable or unwilling to protect vulnerable people and might thereby increase their recruiting ability.
- b) Boko Haram targeting refugees – Evidence shows Boko Haram has been targeting refugees and IDPs. Boko Haram's increasing focus on displaced people could fit into international trends where powers are using refugees as 'bargaining chips'. Some countries have threatened to release mass numbers of migrants as a method of gaining demands. Boko Haram is showing warnings that they are using displaced people to gain leverage against target states.
- c) Refugee perceptions on violent extremism – South Sudan and Somalia compose the third and fourth largest refugee populations in the world and are the first and second most under-funded refugee appeals. Ethiopia hosts the 6<sup>th</sup> largest refugee populations in the world. A field study of South Sudanese and Somalian refugee perceptions in Ethiopia reveals some concerning impacts of subjecting large flows of refugees to poor conditions over long periods of time.

**2. Changing roles of Algeria and Morocco in managing intra-Africa migration**

Morocco and Algeria are becoming important transit countries for Sub-Saharan African migrants. Their relative political and economic stability and geographic proximity to Europe make them attractive to migrants. Both countries have made recent efforts to regularise African migrants amid waves of anti-African xenophobic sentiments. The regularisation is expected to bring economic and political benefits such as improving relations with

Sub-Saharan African countries, enhancing their negotiation powers with Europe and helping economic growth. Migration to both countries is likely to increase due to continued harsh socio-economic conditions in countries of origin, the inviting nature of regularisation and their relative safety compared to Libya. As a result, more Sub-Saharan Africans are likely to spend increasing amounts of time in both Algeria and Morocco. Concerns about radicalisation exist among these populations subjected to discrimination and economic hardship in a region with a history of terrorism. Therefore, migrant-tailored Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) strategies should be considered to enhance on-going local efforts.

### **3. Migration policy frameworks in Africa**

Migration is an important policy aspect of the African Union (AU) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Various frameworks have been adopted by these institutions that cover a wide range of issues including better migration management, free movement of persons and capital, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and refugees, human trafficking and smuggling. Migration policies have also been one of the major focus areas of collaboration between the African Union and European Union. Yet, research shows stakeholders lack a comprehensive understanding of these frameworks. A 2017 ISS publication responded to this gap by compiling and analysing the frameworks.

### **4. North African migration**

North African migrants are often ignored in discourse about African migration. Meanwhile, the number of Maghrebi (Algerian, Tunisian, Moroccan and Libyan) migrants is unmistakably on the rise – comprising 17% of total European apprehensions, up from 2% in 2015. Additionally, the prominence of the Western Mediterranean route (Morocco/Tunisia – Spain) is rising as the Eastern Mediterranean route (Turkey – Greece/Balkans) is restricted. In particular, Tunisia and Algeria have seen substantial and sudden spikes in specific periods in 2017. In both countries, worsening economic conditions, weakening currencies, and political unrest are contributing to a general pessimism. In Tunisia, the arrival of smugglers from Libya, declining cost of travel and declining fishing incomes coincided with a ministry reshuffle and resulted in a more than five-fold increase in Tunisian migrant apprehensions in the final quarter of 2017. In Algeria, a similar sudden spike occurred following the Prime Minister's economic speech in September 2017. Notably, irregular migration is on the rise across the region and is likely to increase in the next 36 months and include local surges that occur with very little warning. The region should be monitored closely.

### **5. The anti human smuggling business and Libya's political end game**

The significant drop in migrant numbers seen in the Central Mediterranean over the second half of 2017 is the result of the co-option of militias deeply involved with human smuggling. Whether this happened through direct engagement by Italian security services, as speculated in the media, could not be ascertained. However, the shift is encouraged by the Italian cash-for-migration-control strategy for Libya. This hyper focus on the stemming of migrants by Italy, but also the EU at large, is encouraging an anti-smuggling business to emerge. Militia leaders, sensing that the present political status quo may be entering an end-game phase, are attempting to launder their reputations by presenting themselves as law enforcement partners of international donors. This type of militia co-option creates instability, sabotages the state-building process and further drives the exploitation and abuse of migrants in the country. The international community should instead adopt a stability-first



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approach and leverage this trend to encourage true de-mobilisation of militias. Moreover, the UN should be allowed to lead the political process without being undermined by bilateral actions of governments with their own agenda in Libya.