Southbound Mixed Movement to Niger

An analysis of changing dynamics and policy responses

Mixed
Migration
Centre

CRU Report

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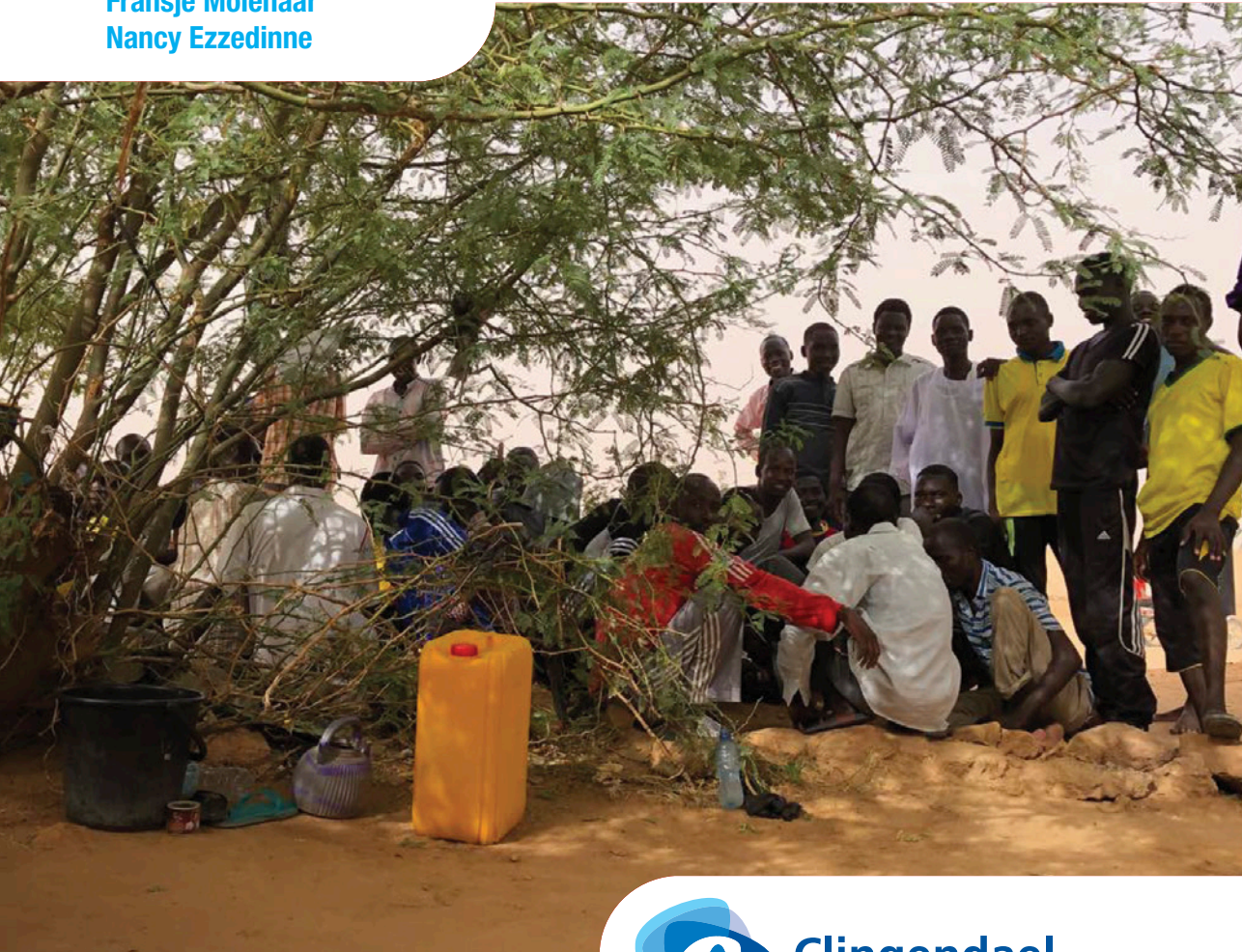# Southbound Mixed Movement to Niger

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Contents

List of figures

List of tables

Executive summary

In the first half of 2018, Niger was subject to the unexpected arrival of a group of 2,000 asylum seekers. The absence of appropriate reception structures resulted in tensions with the host community in Agadez. To be able to prepare for future movements, this report conducts a monitoring of current events in Libya, northern Chad, and north Niger that could potentially produce new, or increase current, southbound mixed migration movements. It evaluates the current population of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Libya and analyses how some of the main dynamics of mixed movement have changed over the course of the last year. These dynamics are disaggregated by nationality of persons with refugee status in the region, in order to identify their vulnerability and reasons for onward movement across countries, as well as their capacity to do so.

To identify the most important current events that could potentially produce new, or increase current, southbound mixed movements to Niger, a scenario workshop was organized in Brussels to determine the major forces driving the future of protection needs in the region. This resulted in the identification of the following list of events that might influence the push on refugees and asylum seekers to move to Niger:
• Changes in departures from Libya to Europe
• Increased hardship in Libya
• Unrest in southern Libya and northern Chad
• Changes in the refugee camps in eastern Chad and Sudan

The report assesses to what extent these events and dynamics are currently underway. Its purpose is not to test any hypotheses, but to study to what extent events are present that might influence the push on refugees and asylum seekers to move to Niger and/or their ability to do so. To this end, the report uses UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) data, Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) data collected in Libya by the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), and information obtained through interviews with more than 100 respondents during field research in Niger (July and September 2018) and Chad (January and March 2018).

The report finds that obtaining a clear picture on the number of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers currently based in Libya is a complex undertaking. Based on the available data sources and experts' estimations, the number of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Libya is expected to remain stable in the near future – meaning that protection needs are expected to remain high. Libya continues to host a large mixed migrant population consisting of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who predominantly do not get on boats to Europe. Future southbound mixed migration

movement of these populations may occur if the journey through Libya, or the position of foreigners living and working in Libya, becomes too difficult or dangerous.

Potential push factors that might contribute to southbound mixed migration movement increased over the course of 2018. First, there has been a decrease in departures from Libya to Europe, due to increased controls at sea. Second, many militias in Libya adopted an anti-smuggling agenda, resulting in an increase in the number of foreigners being held in detention, as well as the duration of time spent in detention centres. Third, human rights abuses appear to be on the rise and are affecting now nationalities which were previously relatively spared from such abuses, such as Sudanese and Chadian migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Fourth, military campaigns targeting foreign militias in southern Libya may result in the displacement of Nigerien, Sudanese, and Chadian nationals living and working in these areas. These movements may be further compounded by military campaigns in northern Chad and the closing of protection spaces for refugees in Chad and Sudan.

Although push factors are one determinant of mixed migration, they do not tell the whole story. The extent to which these events might influence southbound movement of refugees and asylum seekers to Niger also depends on the availability of means that would allow refugees and asylum seekers to move from one region to another. The ways in which refugees and asylum seekers access (faulty) information on protection options, for example, likely explains why some nationalities are more prone to reach Niger than others. The presence of Sudanese and Chadian diasporas in Niger, combined with the propensity of Sudanese and Chadians to use diaspora communication networks to facilitate their journeys, suggest a potential for new arrivals of refugees and asylum seekers with these nationalities if push factors in Libya, Chad, or Sudan continue to increase.

Further continuous monitoring of the trends identified in the report would allow UNHCR to prepare for future southbound mixed movement. In addition, this report has shown that migration, or refugee-related, interventions in one country or region may have direct implications for the (need for) interventions in other countries. As a consequence, all migration- and refugee-related interventions – including those that aim to prevent further onward movement – should be designed to take into account regional spill-over effects and should plan and budget to address these. The potential for such spill-over effects could be monitored by setting up regional programming coordination efforts that keep track of information flows across migrant and smuggling networks.

In light of the tensions that Agadez experienced due to the arrival of a comparatively small group of 2,000 asylum seekers in the first half of 2018, preparations for future potential southbound mixed movements should also take into account the fragile equilibrium that has been reached in Agadez. Conflict-sensitive programming could address these security concerns and livelihood concerns – and could improve the

relations between the host and refugee populations. To address these concerns, the following recommendations apply.

In response to security concerns:
- support faster screening procedures and resettlements (show Niger that it runs no risk) – particularly for refugees and asylum seekers coming from Libya and Chad;
- expand Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) from Libya to keep vulnerable populations from mixing with armed groups and having to rely on smuggling networks to reach safety (focusing on detention centres and contentious areas in the Fezzan in particular);
- invest in joint community-based protection programmes with the local population.

In response to food security or livelihood concerns:
- when investing in livelihood interventions, ensure that vulnerable local populations are included as well (for instance, if there are cash-based interventions, UNHCR could screen also the host community for cases of extreme vulnerability);
- when investing in service delivery, ensure that vulnerable local populations are included as well (for instance, if there are health programmes, water distribution, or shelter improvement interventions, UNHCR could screen also the host community for cases of extreme vulnerability).

In response to host population concerns about refugees:
- if realistic/culturally sensitive, invest in the creation of spaces where the refugee population and the local community could meet – soccer matches, markets, child-safe spaces, shared vocational training, etc.;
- invest in skills-exchange workshops, such as French/Hausa classes in exchange for carpentry, agricultural skills, masonry, Arabic classes, etc.;
- continue to invest in awareness campaigns at the local level (including traditional and religious leaders).

Glossary

Asylum The granting of protection by a State on its territory to individuals from another State who are fleeing persecution or serious danger. Asylum encompasses a variety of elements, including non-refoulement, permission to remain on the territory of the asylum country, and humane standards of treatment.

Asylum seeker Any person who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee was initially an asylum seeker.

Circular migration The fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or long-term movement which may be beneficial to all involved, if occurring voluntarily and linked to the labour needs of countries of origin and destination.

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) This treaty establishes the most widely applicable framework for the protection of refugees. The Convention was adopted in July 1951 and entered into force in April 1954. Article 1 of the Convention limits its scope to 'events occurring before 1st January 1951' but this restriction was removed by the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Exclusion clauses Legal provisions that deny the benefits of international protection to people who would otherwise satisfy the criteria for refugee status. In the 1951 Convention, the exclusion clauses are found in Articles 1D, 1E, and 1F. These clauses apply to the following categories:
- Individuals who are receiving protection or assistance from United Nations agencies other than UNHCR.
- Individuals who possess the rights and obligations attached to the possession of nationality of their country of residence.
- Individuals in respect of whom there are serious reasons for considering that they have committed a crime against peace, a war crime, a crime against humanity, a serious non-political crime, or acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

International protection All actions aimed at ensuring the equal access to and enjoyment of the rights of women, men, girls, and boys of concern to UNHCR, in accordance with the relevant bodies of law (including international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law).

Labour migration Movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment. Labour migration is addressed by most States in their migration laws. In addition, some States take an active role in regulating outward labour migration and seeking opportunities for their nationals abroad.

Migrant At the international level, no universally accepted definition for 'migrant' exists. The term migrant was usually understood to cover all cases in which the decision to migrate was taken freely by the individual concerned for reasons of 'personal convenience' and without intervention of an external compelling factor; it therefore applied to persons, and family members, moving to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospect for themselves or their families. The United Nations defines a migrant as an individual who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate. Under such a definition, those travelling for shorter periods as tourists and businesspersons would not be considered migrants. However, common usage includes certain kinds of shorter-term migrants, such as seasonal farm-workers who travel for short periods to work planting or harvesting farm products.

Mixed movements Cross-border movements of people with varying protection profiles, reasons for moving, and needs, who are moving along the same routes and using the same means of transportation or travel.

Refugee Any person who, 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him- [or her-] self of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it'. Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention.

Refugee status determination Legal and administrative procedures undertaken by States and/or UNHCR to determine whether an individual should be recognized as a refugee in accordance with national and international law.

Resettlement The transfer of refugees from the country in which they have sought asylum to another State that has agreed to admit them. The refugees will usually be granted asylum or some other form of long-term resident rights and, in many cases, will have the opportunity to become naturalized citizens. For this reason, resettlement is a durable solution as well as a tool for the protection of refugees. It is also a practical example of international burden- and responsibility-sharing.

Introduction

In the first half of 2018, Agadez was subject to the sudden arrival of more than 2,000 asylum seekers. This unexpected development put pressure on the willingness of the local population and the Agadez authorities to welcome these – predominantly Sudanese – asylum seekers and refugees, as well as on the ability of the international community to offer them adequate protection. In the case of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the organisation had to establish a quick, humanitarian response for the new arrivals amidst a general climate of tensions between the host population and asylum seekers. From a pre-emptive perspective, this raises the question how the fragile equilibrium that has been reached in Agadez can be sustained in the future, while ensuring that a protection space remains available and accessible for new asylum seekers. This report will answer this question through a monitoring effort that tracks current events in Libya, northern Chad, and north Niger that could potentially produce new, or increase current, southbound mixed movements – to prepare for these.

There is not one clearly identifiable trajectory that leads asylum seekers to Niger. UNHCR data (Table 1) show, for example, that Cameroonian asylum seekers mainly arrived in Agadez from Algeria,[1] while most Nigerian asylum seekers travelled to Agadez from Nigeria directly. The movement of Sudanese asylum seekers was even more diverse, with Sudanese asylum seekers travelling to Agadez from Libya, Sudan, and Chad. Among them were a number of Darfurian refugees who had previously been granted refugee status in Chad and lived in UNHCR camps in eastern Chad. Some of these refugees left the camps due to perceived security concerns and a lack of prospects and had tried to get to Europe through Libya. In Libya, they faced gruesome forced labour situations and human rights abuses in detention centres before turning to Agadez.[2]

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1   'Over 25,000 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were expelled by Algeria to Niger in the course of 2018. This includes 14,000 Nigerien nationals returned to Niger, up from 6,800 in 2017, and another 11,000 nationals of other Sub-Saharan countries who have been left on the Nigerien border in the desert without any support'. European Council on Refugees and Exiles. 2019. *Algeria Deports 25000 Migrants to Niger*. 18 January. https://www.ecre.org/algeria-deports-25000-migrants-to-niger/ (accessed 6 February 2019).

2   Interviews with 10 asylum seekers (8 men and 2 women with children), 2018. Agadez, Niger, July and September. In addition, the researchers conducted two afternoons of participatory observation with a group of 5 asylum seekers in Agadez. 2018. Agadez, Niger, September.

Table 1   Asylum seekers' last country of (informal) residence before arrival in Agadez, Niger[3]

	Sudanese	Nigerians	Chadians	Cameroonians	Malians
Libya	1,275	5	3		4
Sudan	521				
Chad	39		14		
Nigeria		169			
Algeria			1	9	2
Other	26	1		8	7
Total	1,861	175	18	17	13

The diversity of mixed movements has important consequences for the international response. First, it shows that more classical approaches to assistance and protection no longer suffice in the face of an increasingly mobile population that quite capably traverses multiple countries to find protection. Second, and relatedly, the presence of protection spaces may thereby attract quite substantial population movements. This is the case in particular in light of some of the hardships that asylum seekers and refugees currently face on clandestine routes to safety (such as in Libya) or in countries such as Sudan and Chad, which actively promote the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to Darfur. For UNHCR Niger, this begs the question: *Which new mixed movements might arrive in Niger in the near future and what can be done to prepare for an adequate response?*

This report attempts to provide answers to this question by highlighting how some of the main potential push factors of mixed movement to Niger changed over the course of last year. It will focus in particular on changes in departures from Libya to Europe, as well as on changes in the human smuggling model and the situation in detention centres in Libya, changes in the acceptance of the presence of foreign nationals in southern Libya, potential conflict dynamics in Chad that might result in displacement, changes in the refugee camps in eastern Chad and Sudan that might similarly result in displacement, and changes in the human smuggling networks in northern Niger. These dynamics will be disaggregated by nationalities of persons (from Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad) with refugee status in the region in order to identify their degree of vulnerability and reasons for onward movement across countries, as well as their capacity to do so.[4] This will allow for the formulation of calculated predictions on future mixed movements and for a discussion of the current protection space's ability to address these future challenges.

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3   UNHCR data file 'Agadez Localite d'origine par nationalite'. Version received on 3 October 2018. Locality of origin in the title of this file refers to the last city/country in which asylum seekers stayed prior to their arrival in Agadez, Niger (rather than the country of embarkation).

4   To the extent that the available data allow for this.

Methodology

To identify the most important current events that could potentially produce new, or increase current, southbound mixed movements to Niger, a scenario workshop was organized in Brussels on 7 June 2018 to look into what is probable and what is uncertain for future protection needs in Niger.[5] Participants in the scenario workshops included policy makers, academic experts on the Sahel, and representatives of civil society organisations. The key purpose of the workshop was to determine the major forces driving the future of protection needs in the region. The participants agreed on two main assumptions:

1. the shrinking of the protection space in one region (push factor) may lead to an increase in pressure on the existing protection spaces in other regions (pull factor); yet
2. this is not a one-to-one relationship. Refugees' and asylum seekers' own ability to travel from one region to the next functions as an intervening variable. Put differently, refugees and asylum seekers require the means (finances, information, logistics) to be able to respond to push and pull factors

Throughout the workshop, the following list of current events was identified that might influence the push on refugees and asylum seekers to move to Niger:

Libya:
- Changes in departures from Libya to Europe → Due to the increased activity of the Libyan Coast Guard and changes in EU member states' willingness to receive sea arrivals on their territories, refugees and asylum seekers may try to reach alternative protection spaces, such as Niger.
- Increased hardship in Libya → Due to increases in practices of forced labour, human rights abuses in (unofficial) detention centres, and the duration of migrant detention, foreign nationals may try to reach a protection space, such as Niger.
- Unrest in southern Libya → Due to conflict in southern Libya, (foreign) nationals may try to reach a protection space, such as Niger.

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5   This scenario planning workshop followed the Shell methodology. Shell International BV. 2008. *Scenarios an explorer's guide*, The Hague.

The wider region:
- Unrest in northern Chad → Due to conflict in northern Chad, (foreign) nationals may try to reach a protection space, such as Niger.
- Changes in refugee camps in eastern Chad and Sudan → Due to the start of voluntary returns campaigns, refugees may prefer to look for an alternative protection space, such as Niger, rather than returning home.

The extent to which these events might influence southbound movement of refugees and asylum seekers to Niger also depends, however, on the availability of means that would allow refugees and asylum seekers to move from one region to another. Throughout the workshop, the following list of dynamics was identified that might influence the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to reach Niger:

Means to reach Niger:
- Changes in the human smuggling networks in northern Niger → Increased human smuggling activity in northern Niger may provide refugees and asylum seekers with the logistical means to reach Niger.
- Access to information on protection space in Niger → Increased access to information and means of communication may inform refugees and asylum seekers on the availability of a protection space and on how to reach Niger.

The report assesses to what extent these events and dynamics are currently underway. Its purpose is not to test these hypotheses, but to study to what extent events are present that might influence the push on refugees and asylum seekers to move to Niger and/or their ability to do so. This would allow UNHCR to prepare for future southbound mixed movement. To this end, the report uses the following data sources:
- Official UNCHR data on arrivals in Europe (January–December 2018), on the composition of the asylum seeker population in Niger (December 2017–September 2018), and on the situation in Chadian and Sudanese refugee camps (January–December 2018).
- Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative (4Mi) data collected in Libya by the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC). This dataset contains survey data from 3,500 migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Libya collected between May 2017 and September 2018 in various locations in Libya. 4Mi data offer a snapshot of surveyed migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and their experiences at the time of data collection in specific locations. The data are not representative: all findings derive from the surveyed sample and therefore should not be used to make any inferences about the total population of any mixed movement.
- Information obtained through interviews with more than 100 traditional, local, regional, national, and international policy makers and representatives, members of international NGOs and development partners, local NGOs and implementing partners of EU projects, experts, journalists, and refugees during field research in Niger (July and September 2018) and Chad (January and March 2018).

A quantitative overview of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Libya

Obtaining a clear picture on the number of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers currently based in Libya is a complex undertaking. Libya's security situation has limited the presence of the international community in the country, making it difficult to collect reliable data. In addition, Libya has historically been a migrant-receiving country. Any attempts to analyse the potential for future mixed movements therefore has to take into account that different groups of foreigners reside in Libya. There are migrants who travel through Libya on their way to Europe, long-term residents and labour migrants who engage in circular migration between Libya and their home countries, and refugees and asylum seekers fleeing their countries of origin for reasons of persecution and conflict.[6] These groups are not neatly distinguishable from one another and individuals may shift from one group to another throughout their journeys.[7]

A combination of the available data from the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and UNHCR illustrates the following: as of October 2018, the IOM Displacement Trafficking Matrix (DTM) had identified 670,920 persons present in Libya who did not possess Libyan nationality.[8] As of December 2018, there were 57,276 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Libya.[9] One important incoming movement in 2018 consisted of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who travelled from Niger to Libya. According to official IOM DTM data, 43,217 individuals had made this journey by the end of November 2018. Actual figures may be twice or thrice as high, however, as not all clandestine

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6   Guilmoto, C.Z. and Sandron F. 2003. *Migration et développement*, Paris, La Documentation Française.

7   For example, circular migrants in Libya may decide to migrate to Europe due to the availability of smuggling routes or may become refugees when faced with increases in abuse and hardship.

8   IOM DTM 2018. *Libya's Migrant Report, Round 22*, September-October 2018. http://www.globaldtm.info/libya/ https://www.globaldtm.info/libya-migrant-report-22-sep-oct-2018/ (accessed December 2018).

9   UNHCR 2018. Resettlement Update #42, Libya-Niger Situation, https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/unhcr-resettlement-update-42-libya-niger-situation (accessed January 2019).

migrant journeys are captured by this data.[10] According to sources within Libya, another important incoming movement, from Sudan, remained stable throughout 2018 (yet no exact figures on the number of individuals travelling on this route are available).[11]

Known outgoing movements in 2018 consisted of 23,370 migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who travelled from Libya to Italy,[12] 1,311 dead and missing at sea along the Central Mediterranean route, 25,142 migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who travelled from Libya to Niger,[13] 16,120 migrants who returned home through IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return Programme,[14] and 2,897 refugees and asylum seekers who were evacuated out of Libya through UNCHR's Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM).[15] The Libyan Coast Guard prevented further outgoing movement through its interception of an estimated 15,000 (figure provided by the Coast Guard spokesman) to 29,000 (U.N. Libya mission estimate for the first nine months of 2018) individuals.[16] No data are available on the number of individuals who moved onwards to Algeria or Egypt using regular public roads and transportation and/or the number of people who died during desert crossings from Libya to Niger/Chad/Sudan/Algeria/Egypt.

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10   As of 30 November 2018. http://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/IOM%20Niger%20-%20 Migration%20Response%20-%20Flow%20Monitoring%20Report%20-%20EN%20-%20October%20 2018.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=4803 (accessed February 2019). (This number is calculated by adding the monthly-observed outgoing movements to Libya from the Séguédine Observation point, mainly monitoring movements between Niger and Libya.) DTM does not capture all movement from Niger to Libya, as smugglers have taken to more clandestine routes. Informed sources argue that in 2017, following the crackdown on migration in mid-2016, northbound migration movement was reduced 75% compared to the situation in 2016 (which would be equivalent to 85,000 individuals, including movement via Arlit to Algeria). Molenaar et al. 2018. *Caught in the Middle. A human rights and peace-building approach to migration governance in the Sahel.* The Clingendael Institute, https://www.clingendael.org/publication/human-rights-approach-migration-governance-sahel

11   Telephone interview migration expert. 2018. 20 December. The expert bases his/her opinion on interviews and fieldwork conducted in Libya in the second half of 2018. New migration routes to Libya also opened up through Chad over the course of 2017, in response to the implementation of anti-smuggling policies in Niger and Sudan. Nevertheless, in the second half of 2018, migration was largely interrupted due to increased insecurity in the north of the country. Molenaar et al. 2018. *Caught in the Middle*, *op. cit.*

12   UNHCR 2018. ITALY Sea arrivals dashboard – December 2018, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67555 (accessed January 2019).

13   IOM DTM 2018. *Population Flow Monitoring Niger*, *op. cit.* (This number is calculated by adding the monthly-observed incoming movements from Libya to Niger through the Séguédine Observation point, mainly monitoring movements between Niger and Libya.)

14   As of 15 December 2018. IOM Libya. 2018. *Voluntary Humanitarian Return*, 1–15 December, http://migration.iom.int/reports/libya-%E2%80%94-voluntary-humanitarian-return-update-1-15-december-2018-arabic (accessed December 2018).

15   Between late 2017 and 31 December 2018. See: UNHCR 2018. *Libya-Niger Situation, Resettlement Update #342*, 31 December, https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/unhcr-resettlement-update-42-libya-niger-situation (accessed January 2019).

16   Laessing, U. and Elumami, A. 2018. 'Libyan coast guard says it has intercepted 15,000 migrants in 2018'. *Reuters.* 20 December.

Box 1   UNHCR's Emergency Transit Mechanism

In November 2017, UNHCR set up an Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) to evacuate vulnerable refugees trapped in detention in Libya to Niamey, the capital of Niger. The aim of the ETM was 'to deliver protection and identify durable solutions, including resettlement for these refugees'.[17] Up to 10 December 2018, 2,202 vulnerable refugees had been evacuated from Libya to Niger and 996 evacuees had departed for resettlement from Niger to Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[18] On 14 November 2018, 19 evacuees also departed from Niger to Italy on a humanitarian flight.[19]

With the important caveat that there are many unknowns, the available information, as depicted in Table 2, suggests that incoming and outgoing mixed movements in 2018 largely matched each other.[20] There are no signs that the population of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Libya will decrease substantively in the near future. Given the 'unimaginable horrors' that migrants and refugees are subject to in Libya, as evidenced by a recent report released by the United Nations political mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the UN human rights office (OHCHR),[21] this means that the size of the population of concern largely remains unaltered to date.

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17   UNHCR 2018. *Country Operation Update Niger*, August. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/65686 (accessed 24 October 2018).

18   UNHCR 2018. *Libya-Niger situation, Resettlement update #43*. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67211.pdf (accessed February 2018).

19   UNHCR 2018. Country Operation Update Niger, November.

20   Noting, however, that most data sources do not provide a complete overview due to the limitations of data collection on movements that are often hidden and/or take place in fragile contexts.

21   UNSMIL and OHCHR 2018. *Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya*, 20 December. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/LibyaMigrationReport.pdf (accessed 28 January 2019).

Table 2   Incoming and outgoing movements in 2018

Route	Libya incoming movement	Libya outgoing movement
Arrivals Italy		23,370[22]
Route Niger-Libya	38,756 – 85,000	25,142[23] + unknown number of deaths in the desert
Dead/Missing at Sea		1,311[24]
Route Sudan-Libya	Steady incoming movement	No data available
Route Egypt/Algeria-Libya	No data available	No data available
IOM Voluntary Humanitarian Return		16,120[25]
UNHCR Emergency Transit Mechanism		2,879[26]

These macro figures do not reveal much about the different groups of foreigners that reside in Libya. To explore how these groups' potential receptivity to push factors to move to Niger could be affected by ongoing events, such as the increased difficulty involved in making the Mediterranean crossing, it is key to understand more about the nationalities that cross Libya to travel to Europe and the nationalities that are more prone to stay within Libya itself. A comparison of the nationalities identified by the IOM DTM in Libya to the nationalities arriving in Italy is a first step to reaching such a better understanding.

Of the top five foreign nationalities present in Libya, as identified by the IOM DTM, two nationalities (Sudan and Nigeria) stand out as nationalities that travel on to Europe (Table 3). Yet even the proclivity of these nationalities to cross the Mediterranean should not be exaggerated. The number of Sudanese and Nigerian arrivals in Italy in 2018 constitutes only 2% of the total number of Sudanese and Nigerians present in Libya.

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22   UNHCR 2018. ITALY Sea arrivals dashboard – December 2018, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67555 (accessed January 2019).

23   IOM DTM 2018. *Population Flow Monitoring Niger*, *op. cit.* (This number is calculated by adding the monthly-observed incoming movements from Libya to Niger through the Séguédine Observation point, mainly monitoring movements between Niger and Libya.)

24   UNHCR 2018. ITALY Sea arrivals dashboard – December 2018, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67555 (accessed January 2019).

25   As of 15 December 2018. IOM Libya 2018. *Voluntary Humanitarian Return*, 1–15 December, http://migration.iom.int/reports/libya-%E2%80%94-voluntary-humanitarian-return-update-1-15-december-2018-arabic (accessed December 2018).

26   Between late 2017 and 31 December 2018. See: UNHCR 2018. *Libya-Niger Situation, Resettlement Update #342*, 31 December, https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/unhcr-resettlement-update-42-libya-niger-situation (accessed January 2019).

The overarching majority of Sudanese and Nigerian foreign nationals in Libya, therefore, do not make it onto boats to Europe.

Table 3   Comparison of number of foreign nationals in Libya to sea arrivals in Italy[27]

Nationality	Presence in Libya in 2018 (percentage of total foreign population in Libya)	Sea arrivals in Italy in 2018 (percentage of total sea arrivals in Italy)	Arrivals in Italy as percentage of total presence Libya
Top 5			
Niger	135,781 (20,2%)	N/A[28]	0%
Egypt	95,293 (14,3%)	255 (1,1%)	0,2%
Chad	89,488 (13,3%)	N/A[29]	0%
Sudan	78,183 (11,7%)	1,619 (6,9%)	2,1%
Nigeria	62,447 (9,3%)	1,250 (5,4%)	2,0%
Other nationalities of interest			
Somalia	17,071 (2,5%)	346 (1,5%)	2,0%
Ethiopia	11,421 (1,7%)	77 (0,3%)	0,7%
Eritrea	7,991 (1,2%)	3,320 (14,2%)	41,5%
Cameroon	2,930 (0,4%)	325 (1,4%)	11,1%
Various nationalities	170,315 (25,4%)	16,178 (69,2%)	
Total	670,920 (100%)	23,370 (100%)	

27 As of October 2018, the IOM Displacement Trafficking Matrix (DTM) had identified 670,920 persons present in Libya who did not possess Libyan nationality. IOM DTM 2018. *Libya's Migrant Report, Round 22*, September-October 2018. https://www.globaldtm.info/libya-migrant-report-22-sep-oct-2018/ (accessed December 2018). UNHCR identified 23,370 sea arrivals in Italy between January-December 2018. UNHCR 2018. *Mediterranean Situation – Italy*, January-December 2018. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67555 (accessed February 2019).

28 Niger does not rank in the top 22 nationalities arriving in Italy, meaning that fewer than 77 Nigeriens arrived in Italy in 2018.

29 Chad does not rank in the top 22 nationalities arriving in Italy, meaning that fewer than 77 Chadians arrived in Italy in 2018.

For the other four nationalities of interest for this brief, only Eritreans and Cameroonians stand out as nationalities that cross Libya to travel on to Europe. Eritreans are the nationality most prone to travel on to Europe, with arrival figures that constitute 41,5% of the total number of Eritreans present in Libya. This is likely indicative of the fact that most Eritreans successfully apply for asylum in Europe after having crossed through Libya and the Mediterranean.

It follows that sea arrival in Europe continues to be a sign of a much more complex issue and that Libya remains host to a large migrant, refugee, and asylum seeker population consisting of nationalities that tend to remain in Libya (such as Nigeriens, Chadians, Somalians, and Ethiopians), nationalities that predominantly remain in Libya but also travel to Italy in limited numbers (Sudanese, Nigerians, and Cameroonians), and nationalities that produce a large number of transit migrants (Eritreans). These different groups are likely to respond differently to different push factors. Chadians and Somalians, for example, are less likely to respond to events such as the increased difficulty involved in crossing the Mediterranean by searching for alternative protection spaces than Eritreans may be. The following sections therefore seek to untangle how ongoing events may have a particularly strong effect on certain nationalities.

Changes in push factors

Changes in departures from Libya to Europe

One factor that might lead refugees and asylum seekers to try to reach alternative protection spaces, such as Niger, is the fact that it has become more difficult for them to cross the Mediterranean. In recent years, departures from Libya to Europe decreased due to increased efforts by the EU-sponsored Libyan Coast Guard (and anti-smuggling militias) to prevent migration across the Mediterranean Sea. The election of a new right-wing government in Italy in 2018 further exacerbated this process. Sworn into office on 1st June, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Matteo Salvini announced the reduction of irregular migration as the main policy of the government, later followed by a stated aim to pursue the restrictive Australian migration model.[30] This policy goal was implemented through a twofold approach: the closure of Italian ports for non-governmental sea-rescue operations, and the increase in support for the Libyan Coast Guard to prevent departure of migrants towards Europe.

Since coming into office, Salvini has led a campaign against rescue operations by refusing ships to disembark rescued people at Italian ports.[31] Italy has also effectively pressured third states, such as Panama, to cancel registration for non-governmental sea-rescue ships.[32] As a result, operating sea-rescue missions have repeatedly been stuck in limbo with Mediterranean countries unwilling to authorize disembarkment on their soil.[33] In addition, Italy has been leading European attempts to increase capacity of the Libyan Coast Guard, through both training and the delivery of equipment such as patrol- and speedboats.[34] Since June 2018, this has allowed the Libyan authorities

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30   ANSA 2018. 'Salvini proposes "No Way" migration model from Australia', 27 August, http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/11556/salvini-proposes-no-way-migrant-model-from-australia

31   The Guardian 2018. 'Standoff in Italian port as Salvini refuses to let refugees disembark', 21 August, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/21/italy-refugees-salvini-refuses-coastguard-ship-docks-diciotti

32   Independent 2018. 'Panama revokes registration of refugee rescue ship after Italian pressure, humanitarian groups claim.', 24 September https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/panama-refugee-rescue-ship-registration-msf-italy-libya-mediterranean-doctors-without-borders-a8551906.html

33   EURACTIV 2018. 'French rescue vessel Aquarius stranded again, seeks port'. 14 August, https://www.euractiv.com/section/all/news/french-rescue-vessel-aquarius-stranded-again-seeks-port/, and UNHCR 2018. *Desperate Journeys*, https://www.unhcr.org/desperatejourneys/

34   Facilitated through a February 2017 'Memorandum of Understanding' on Migration Control with the Government of National Accord. In August 2018, the Italian Parliament approved the donation of 12 coastguard boats to Libya. Defence Web 2018. 'Italy confirms patrol boat donation to Libya', 15 August 2018. http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52774:italy-confirms-patrol-boat-donation-to-libya

to set up their own national search and rescue zone.[35] Ongoing support takes place through the Italian-Libyan 'Joint Rescue Coordination Centre' in Tripoli, where Italy supplies surveillance capacity and provides maintenance of patrol boats to support the identification and location of migrant boats.[36]

The combination of both increased support for the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept departing migrants and the criminalisation and effective rupture of non-governmental sea-rescue operations has resulted in an increase in death rates on the Mediterranean and interceptions by the Libyan Coast Guard. By 30 November 2018, the Libyan Coast Guard had intercepted a total of 14,795 people.[37] In June 2018, which saw the closure of Italian ports, the consequent disruption of non-governmental sea-rescue operations, and the Libyan Coast Guard undertaking surveillance and search and rescue missions, the death rate increased to one in seven, compared to one in 17 in the first half of 2018.[38]

At the same time, arrivals on Italian shores dropped by 80% in comparison to arrivals at the same time the previous year.[39] With 23,370 arrivals in 2018, Italy now ranks as the third European country of arrival, following Spain with 65,383 arrivals, and Greece with 50,511 arrivals.[40] In absolute figures, Eritrean arrivals dropped 52,9%, from 7,052 in 2017 to 3,320 in 2018. Sudanese arrivals dropped 73,9%, from 6,211 to 1,619 arrivals. Nigerien arrivals, lastly, dropped a staggering 93,1%, from 18,158 arrivals in 2017 to 1,250 arrivals in 2018 (Table 4). Next to this drop in absolute figures, a comparison of the proportional share of arrivals shows that the profile of migrants arriving has changed in terms of nationalities. While the Sudanese arrival share increased from 5,2% to 6,9%, and the Eritrean arrival share from 5,9% to 14,2%, the Nigerian arrival share dropped from 15% in 2017 to 5,3% in 2018.

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35   Italy continues to support Libya in establishing a 'Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre' (MRCC).

36   Defence Web, 15 August 2018. http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=artic le&id=52774:italy-confirms-patrol-boat-donation-to-libya, *op. cit.*

37   UNHCR 2018, *Libya Flash Update (24-30 November)*, 30 November, UNHCR. Flash Update Libya. 30 November 2018..https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/67052 (accessed November 2018).

38   It should be noted that the drop in departures has resulted in a drop in the absolute number of deaths at sea. UNHCR. 6 July 2018. UNHCR 2018, *As Mediterranean Sea arrivals decline and death rate rises, UNHCR calls for strengthening of search and rescue*, 6 July. Also see UNHCR. 2018. *Desperate Journeys*. https:// www.unhcr.org/desperatejourneys/ (accessed February 2019).

39   UNHCR 2018. Mediterranean Situation – Italy, January-December 2018. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/ documents/download/67555 (accessed February 2019).

40   For Spain, see https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5226 (accessed February 2019). For Greece, see https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179 (accessed February 2019).

Table 4   Italy arrivals – nationality as a percentage of total arrivals

Nationality	Arrival share 2017[41]	Arrival share 2018[42]
Eritrea	7,052 (5,9%)	3,320 (14,2%)
Sudan	6,211 (5,2%)	1,169 (6,9%)
Nigeria	18,158 (15%)	1,250 (5,3 %)
Somalia	N/A	1,6%
Cameroon	N/A	1,5%
Ethiopia	N/A	0,3%
Chad	N/A	N/A
Total	119,369	23,370

Figure 1   Weighted percentage of surveyed respondents (per nationality) who changed their country of final destination after the beginning of their journey (4Mi Libya data)[43]

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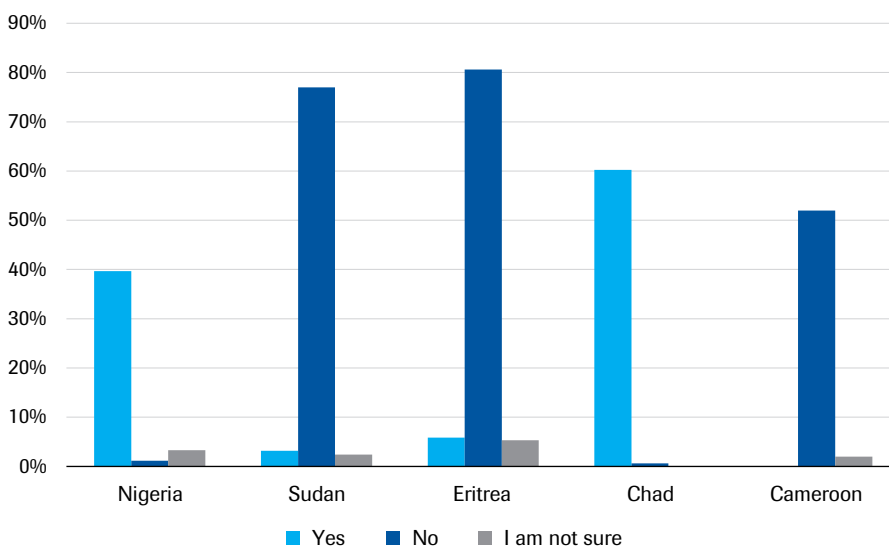
41 UNHCR 2017. Italy Sea arrivals dashboard, January – December 2017, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/61547 (accessed January 2019).

42 UNHCR 2018. Italy Sea arrivals dashboard – December 2018. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67555 (accessed January 2019) and UNHCR 2018. Mediterranean Situation – Italy. 31 December, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205 (accessed January 2019).

43 Response rate: Nigeria (44%), Sudan (82%), Eritrea (92%), Chad (61%), Cameroon (54%).

In response to the increased difficulty of leaving Libya to Europe, we might also expect more migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to change their country of final destination. 4Mi data indicate that 40% of the 1,496 surveyed Nigerian respondents stated that they changed their country of destination after commencing their journey (although admittedly this does not reveal how they changed their minds, exactly).[44] This is congruent with the fact that the number of Nigerian arrivals in Italy has dropped so much. Eritreans and Sudanese respondents, on the other hand, predominantly indicated that they had not changed their country of final destination after commencing their journey.

This drop in Nigerian arrivals in Italy may be due to Nigerian smuggling networks having lost access to Mediterranean sea routes or to Nigerians being increasingly trapped in illicit detention centres and forced labour situations.[45] An important follow-up step for protection purposes would be to check if this drop in arrival figures has a gendered dimension. A disproportional drop in female Nigerian arrivals in Italy could indicate that more Nigerian trafficking victims have gotten trapped in forced prostitution in Libya.[46]

Increased hardship in Libya

The increase in hardships that foreign nationals face in Libya forms a second push factor that may lead them to reach a protection space in Niger. The increase in hardships is partly the result of the fact that many Libyan smugglers have started to change their modus operandi. With their eyes on Libya's political end game, militias increasingly aim to legitimise themselves in the eyes of the international community – as well as protect themselves against potential future International Criminal Court indictments – by positioning themselves as anti-smuggling security actors.[47] In the Tripoli area and along the west coast, a network of law-enforcement actors has appeared, such as the Tarhouna-based Kani Battalion, which actively fights against smuggling networks. This

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44 Sixty percent of the 166 surveyed Chadian respondents also indicated that they had changed their country of final destination. Given that Chadians generally do not travel to Europe, this finding is likely the result of other dynamics (as discussed in more detail below).

45 As indicated by Table 3, IOM currently estimates that there are 62,447 Nigerians in Libya, which suggests that this drop in arrivals is not the result of a lower 'supply'. As will be discussed in more detail below, IOM encountered a very limited number of Nigerians in official detention centres. Hypothetically speaking, an increase in the number of Nigerians in clandestine detention facilities and forced labour situations (including forced prostitution) could also explain the drop in Nigerian arrivals in Italy.

46 According to a 2018 UN report, Nigerian woman and girls in particular are at risk of ending up in brothels in Libya. See UNSMIL and OHCHR 2018, *op. cit.* 33.

47 Micallef, M. and Reitano, T. 2018. 'Human smuggling and Libya's political end game', 8 January, ISS Africa, https://issafrica.org/iss-today/human-smuggling-and-libyas-political-end-game

development currently reshapes militia alliances and undermines established smuggling routes.[48]

The combined dynamics of increased interceptions by the Libyan Coast Guard and militias becoming anti-smuggling law enforcers has resulted in an increase in the detention of migrants and refugees.[49] While official Libyan detention centres held 5,200 people in May 2018, this number had increased to 9,300 by November 2018.[50] Next to the official detention centres, many foreigners are also being held in clandestine prisons run by smugglers.[51] The conditions of detention centres have deteriorated due to foreigners spending longer periods of time in detention and also because of overcrowding. This occasionally results in escapes, such as those that took place in Bani Walid on 23 May 2018[52] and from the Sebha detention centre on 9 October 2018.[53]

It should be noted that some nationalities are more likely to experience certain types of abuse than others (Figure 2). It is commonly acknowledged, for example, that Eritreans are particularly vulnerable to abuse, which often involves the complicity of Eritrean smuggling networks and ransoming schemes.[54] A breakdown per nationality of the 2,083 foreigners whom IOM encountered in 12 detention centres from October to November 2018 across nationalities indeed shows that Eritreans were the predominant nationality (38%) encountered here (Table 5). Sudanese (and Chadians to some extent as well), on the other hand, are generally somewhat shielded from abuse in Libya, because – as will be discussed in more detail below – they travel using well-established diaspora networks.[55] Nevertheless, Sudanese were the second nationality (13%) IOM encountered in the 12 detention centres and the Sudanese asylum seekers interviewed

48   https://sahafahnet.net/show5971262.html, https://alarab.co.uk/اللواء-السابع-لغز-ليبي-لا-يزال-يثير-حيرة-المؤيدين-والرافضين , and
     https://www.afrigatenews.net/article/القره-بولي-أحداث-ومعاناة/

49   This includes the detention of refugees and asylum seekers.

50   UN 2018. 'UN agencies call for more resettlement and end to detention of asylum seekers in Libya',
     23. November, https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/11/1026441. This figure does not capture the number of
     migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers trapped in unofficial detention facilities operated by armed groups
     and criminal gangs.

51   No data are available on the number of foreigners held here as international organisations do not have
     access to these prisons.

52   MSF 2018. *Libya: Dozens of migrants and refugees wounded after trying to escape horrific captivity
     conditions*, 25 May. https://msf-rio-nairobi.prezly.com/libya-dozens-of-refugees-and-migrants-wounded-
     after-trying-to-escape-horrific-captivity-conditions

53   Telephone interview with migration expert working in Libya, 2018. 12 December.

54   Telephone interview with migration expert working in Libya, 2018. 12 December. Also see Hayden, S. 2019.
     'The Families of Migrants Held Hostage Are Using Facebook to Raise Money for Smugglers' Ransoms',
     Time, 5 February.

55   Telephone interview with migration expert working in Libya, 2018. 12 December. Also see Molenaar et al.
     2018. *Caught in the Middle*, *op. cit.*

in Agadez all reported having been subject to detention, torture, and forced labour.[56] This could indicate that the increase in the law enforcement model and detention is now also felt by migrants and refugees who were previously more shielded from abuse in Libya, potentially leading them to change their movement southwards.

Figure 2 Weighted percentage of respondents (by nationality) who witnessed protection incidents in Libya (4Mi Libya data)[57]

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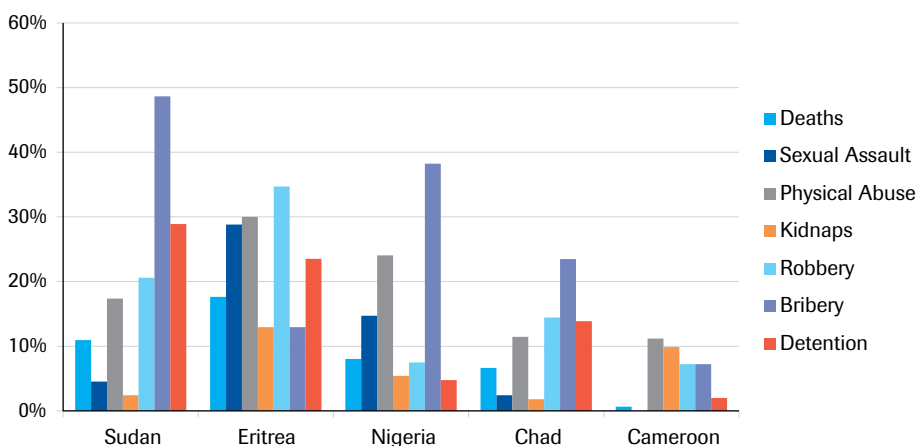
56 Many Nigerians are – paradoxically – relatively protected from detention by the well-established nature of the smuggling and trafficking networks that facilitate their journeys. IOM encountered 27 Nigerians (1,3% of the total) in the 12 detention centres it monitored from October to November 2018.

57 Response rate: deaths (98%), sexual assault (98%), physical abuse (98%), kidnapping (98%), robbery (98%), bribery (96%), and detention (98%).

Table 5   Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Libyan detention centres – breakdown across nationalities[58]

Centre	Date	Total	Eritrea	Sudan	Ethiopia	Somalia	Chad
Abusliem	5/11/18	503	240	18	115		45
Ain Zara	2/12/18	15				15	
Al Kufra	25/11/18	14		12			2
Alsabaa	28/11/18	231	205	17	1		
Benghazi Ganfou	25/11/18	66		29		8	18
Ejdabia	18/10/18	13		9			1
Janzour	25/11/18	109		15			
Misrata Kararim	18/11/18	112		30			
Qasr bin Gasheer	18/10/18	265	150	90		7	
Tobruk	25/11/18	22		4			
Trig Seka	28/10/18	680	189	38		88	
Zilten	25/11/18	53		6			10
Total		2,083	784	268	116	118	76
Percentage of total			38%	13%	6%	6%	4%

The increasingly dire situation for foreigners in Libya calls for an urgent response to alleviate the situation, prevent human suffering, and mitigate against migrants taking life-risking actions. Increased humanitarian evacuations of asylum seekers and refugees identified among the migrants in Libya are recommended provided the migrants pass a security screening assessment ensuring they do not have any Article 1F exclusion triggers.

Unrest in southern Libya

Unrest in southern Libya may act as a third push factor that may lead (foreign) nationals to try to reach a protection space, such as Niger. This third factor is particularly relevant given the close smuggling ties between southern Libya and northern Niger, which could facilitate future movement of people to the Agadez region. This may explain why many asylum seekers who arrived in Agadez in the first half of 2018 came from southern Libya

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58   IOM DTM 2018. 'Libya – Detention Centre Profile Generator', October and November. Available at http://www.globaldtm.info/libya-detention-centre-profile-generator-october-2018/ + http://www.globaldtm.info/libya-detention-centre-profile-generator-november-2018/ (accessed February 2019). The most recent data available were used in this table. Other nationalities identified by the monitors are Niger (5%), Egypt (2%), Sierra Leone (2%), Pakistan (2%), Mali (1%), Ghana (0,5%), and Cameroon (0,3%).

(Figure 3). As can be gauged from the size of the black markers, a substantial number of 814 Sudanese, or 43,7% of the total arrivals, arrived from southwestern Libya.

Figure 3   Asylum seekers' last city of (informal) residence before arrival in Agadez, Niger[59]

The year 2018 saw an increase in tensions in southern Libya caused by the presence of Sudanese and Chadian militias. Initially allies for the Tubu in their conflicts over territory with the Tuareg and Awlad Suleiman tribes, their presence became increasingly problematic over the course of 2018.[60] The foreign militias increased their civilian kidnapping and banditry efforts to compensate for the loss of income they suffered as a result of Chadian President Déby's campaign to drive rebel groups out of the west and east of Chad (discussed in more detail below).[61] This sparked a broad-based offensive movement that united Libyan militias, even across ethnic lines. Attacks on Chadian and Sudanese militias have become frequent.[62]

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59 UNHCR data file 'Agadez Localite d'origine par nationalite'. Version received on 3 October 2018. Locality of origin in the title of this file refers to the last city/country in which asylum seekers stayed prior to their arrival in Agadez, Niger (rather than the country of embarkation).

60 In addition, these militias played an important role for both national camps in the Second Libyan National War that started in 2014. Howes-Ward, T. 2018. 'The presence of foreign armed groups in Libya's south poses an increasing threat to local security and regional political ties'. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 10 April 2018.

61 Middle East Online and African News Gate

62 Libya Herald 2018. 'Southern Libyans crack down on crimewave by Chadian militias', 15 October, https://www.libyaherald.com/2018/10/15/southern-libyans-crack-down-on-crimewave-by-chadian-militias/; 218tv.net; smc.sd

These efforts do not stand alone. In response to the surge in banditry, the Libyan National Army (LNA) has become more active in law enforcement activities in southern Libya as well. This occurred first in March, when LNA Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar also gave 'African mercenaries' an ultimatum to leave the country.[63] Law enforcement activities continued in May and June 2018, when the LNA carried out several airstrikes against opposition Chadian militias throughout the Fezzan.[64] More recently, in October 2018, the LNA announced the launch of another series of airstrikes in the Um al-Aranib area. That same month, Haftar also ordered operation 'Murzuq Basin' – a substantial movement of forces to the south to address the foreign banditry issue.[65] In a countermove, GNA President Serraj promised to allocate 100 million Libyan dinars to address the lack of service provision and banditry in the Fezzan.[66]

Fighting foreign bandits in the Fezzan has thereby become an important geopolitical instrument for these two national warring parties. It also fits within a trend of the Chadian, Sudanese, Nigerien, and Libyan (Haftar) governments increasingly working together to address the threat of foreign militias in their border regions. To this end, they have taken to organizing joint ministerial border-security meetings, which recently resulted in the decision to set up a joint operations room in N'Djamena.[67] One important question that remains unanswered is where the militias will seek recourse when faced with this concerted effort to drive them out of the region. One way out could be for them to move into the unguarded northern Nigerien Aïr mountains, southern Algeria, and northern Mali.

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63 MEMO. 2018. 'Haftar gives African mercenaries 9 days to leave southern Libya.' 9 March https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180309-haftar-gives-african-mercenaries-9-days-to-leave-southern-libya/ (accessed February 2019).

64 https://www.libyaherald.com/2018/10/15/southern-libyans-crack-down-on-crimewave-by-chadian-militias/; Libya Herald 2018, *op. cit.*; Almarsad.co; alhadath.net; skynewsarabia.com

65 Arabic Sputnik, Al-Dostor, and Erem News

66 Libyan al-Wasat

67 Al-Hayat

Figure 4   Map of mixed movement routes through Libya

Source: © MAP grafix 2018

One population of immediate concern for UNHCR is the African civilians reportedly living among rebel fighters in the so-called Chinese company flats in Um al-Araneb.[68] This large (unfinished) housing project – mainly occupied by foreign nationals – has become a main battlefield in current attempts by local militias to expel foreign militias from the country.[69] Given that 174 (9,5%) of the Sudanese asylum seekers who arrived in Agadez,

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68   janaly.com and ewanlibya.ly

69   The Libya Observer 2018. 'Southern battalions withdraws from Chinese company perimeter', 28 October.
     https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/southern-battalions-withdraws-chinese-company-perimeter

Niger in early 2018 originated from Um al-Aranab,[70] it may well be the case that more southbound movement will originate from this region in the future. Such southward movement may entail a mix of Sudanese and Chadian militia fleeing the attacks, migrants who feel that living and working in the Fezzan has become increasingly dangerous for them, and Sudanese and Chadian asylum seekers and refugees who feel their chances at receiving protection is better in Agadez.

The situation of these civilians is especially precarious, as UNHCR does not have the capacity at the moment to evacuate vulnerable persons from southern Libya. Also of concern is UNHCR's ability to undertake security screening to determine who should be evacuated. Lastly, and as discussed in the recommendations for UNHCR Niger, care should be taken to invest in the capacity of the Nigerien government to undertake security screening in Agadez of existing and new refugee and asylum seeker populations.

Unrest in northern Chad

Unrest in northern Chad constitutes a fourth potential push factor. Conflict in this region may result in (foreign) nationals in this region trying to reach a protection space, such as Niger. As is the case in southern Libya, northern Chad currently is experiencing an increase in state action against rebel groups (most recently since August 2018). These actions mainly focus on – but are not limited to – the gold mining areas on the Libyan border.

Since the beginning of these actions, the Kouri Bougoudi gold mines in northwestern Chad have been subject to repeated and violent evacuations and routes to the gold mines have been closed repeatedly for months on end, leading gold miners living in Kouri Bougoudi to flee to the Libyan side of the border.[71] The Chadian government also has repeatedly confiscated, or threatened to confiscate, pickup trucks in northern Chad throughout this period.[72] This has considerably aggravated tensions between the state and the northern communities (Tubu, Goran, and Zaghawa), for which the pickup trucks are a key economic asset.[73] At the same time, Chadian administrative policies

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70   UNHCR data file 'Agadez Localite d'origine par nationalite'. Version received on 3 October 2018. Locality of origin in the title of this file refers to the last country in which asylum seekers stayed prior to their arrival in Agadez, Niger (rather than the country of embarkation).

71   Molenaar et al. 2018. *Caught in the Middle*, *op. cit.*

72   N'Djaména equates these pickups to military vehicles that should only be used by the Chadian armed forces, and thus considers the owners of civilian pickups as rebels.

73   Similar policies were implemented in Sudan at the same time, which left the Chad-Sudan Zaghawa feeling targeted on both sides of the border.

in the Tibesti region have created tensions between the Tubu and the Goran and, even more, between the Tubu and the state, which is seen as responsible for fuelling ethnic tensions.[74]

In recent months, state responses to rebel groups also have included air strikes. In August and September 2018, as a reaction to a rebel attack in Kouri Bougoudi, Chadian air forces reportedly struck the Kouri Bougoudi area twice, killing two traders. In the same period, the Miski gold mining area was also bombed and three Tubu wounded, despite Miski being far away from Kouri Bougoudi and the Tubu being neither part of, nor supporters of, the rebel attack.[75] Then, in October 2018, Chadian ground forces attacked self-defense militias in Miski, which had initially formed to protect the area from gold miners and which had cooperated with the army before tensions began to pit them against each other after late 2017.[76]

The attacks have been perceived as further hostile acts towards the Tubu and have generated considerable anger against the state among the Tubu. These developments may push the Tubu, including existing self-defence militias and more recently mobilised youths, to start another insurgency or join existing rebel groups in spite of the fact that the Tubu community has not been part of, or supported, the Chadian armed opposition since 2010.[77] This has the potential to create displacement from northern Chad to southern Libya. Given that, as mentioned above, state actors and local militias in southern Libya have mobilised against foreigners as well, displaced persons might subsequently be pushed into northern Niger.

Changes in the refugee camps in eastern Chad and Sudan

Since 2003, the number of refugees in Chad has been growing steadily, reaching more than 451,000 refugees by the end of 2018.[78] Sudanese refugees from Darfur comprise almost 75% of the refugee population, increasing from 323,000 in November 2017 to 336,000 by the end of 2018.[79] They are mainly Massalit, the same ethnic group as their

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74   Molenaar et al. 2018. *Caught in the Middle*, *op. cit.*

75   Molenaar et al. 2018. *Caught in the Middle*, *op. cit.*

76   RFI 2018. 'Tchad: affrontements entre l'armée tchadienne et une rébellion du nord', 25 October. http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20181025-tchad-affrontements-armee-tchadienne-rebellion-nord-ccmsr; Alwihda Info 2018. 'Tchad : plus d'un millier d'esclaves libérés au Tibesti, annonce le ministère de la Sécurité', 30 0ctober. https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Tchad-plus-d-un-millier-d-esclaves-liberes-au-Tibesti-annonce-le-ministere-de-la-Securite_a67923.html

77   Molenaar et al. 2018. *Caught in the Middle*, *op. cit.*

78   UNHCR 2018. *Operational Portal – Chad.* https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/tcd

79   UNHCR 2018. *Operational Portal – Chad. Sudanese Refugees.* https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/tcd

Chadian hosts. Yet tensions with the host population have emerged, especially due to competition over access to resources, such as food, water, and health provision.[80] Some of the refugees who have subsequently made their way to UNHCR in Agadez also complain about insecurity and the lack of prospects for solutions in the Chadian camps.[81]

In April 2018, the repatriation of Sudanese refugees started, reaching 353 returnees by the end of October 2018.[82] This campaign aims to foster voluntary returns to lessen the refugees' socioeconomic burden on the weak Chadian economy. The repatriation process was instituted by a tripartite agreement on the voluntary repatriation of Sudanese refugees brokered by UNHCR, Sudan, and Mali in May 2017.[83] Yet both returnees and internally displaced persons in the camps report that insecurity is still rampant in most parts of Darfur.[84] In addition, returnees face the danger of conflict with armed new settlers in their home villages.[85] The prospect of repatriation may lead some refugees to search for protection elsewhere.

In Sudan, around 2 million people are currently displaced inside the country.[86] Despite government-led talks with rebel armed groups, refugee elders and sheikhs assert that the security in Darfur remains volatile and there are insufficient guarantees to ensure refugees' safety in case of an unplanned mass return.[87] The number of refugees and

80 North, M, 2005. 'Darfur's refugees in Chad'. The Magazine of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, http://www.redcross.int/EN/mag/magazine2005_2/22-23.html (accessed January 2019).

81 Interviews with 10 asylum seekers (8 men and 2 women with children), 2018. Agadez, Niger, July and September. In addition, the researchers conducted two afternoons of participatory observation with a group of 5 asylum seekers in Agadez. 2018. Agadez, Niger, September.

82 UNHCR 2018. Sudan: Voluntary Repatriation Dashboard, 31 October, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb. int/files/resources/67677.pdf

83 https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/65736 ; also see https://www.unhcr.org/news/ briefing/2018/4/5ad9a4604/first-darfur-refugee-returns-from-chad.html UNHCR 2018. *Joint Communique: First Tripartite Commission Meeting on Voluntary Returns of Sudanese Refugees in Chad, Operational Portal – Chad*, 14 September; also see UNHCR 2018. 'First Darfur refugee returns from Chad', 20 April, https://www. unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/4/5ad9a4604/first-darfur-refugee-returns-from-chad.html

84 Radio Dabanga 2018. 'Again voluntary returnees killed in South Darfur', 22 April. https://www. dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/again-voluntary-returnees-killed-in-south-darfur

85 Radio Dabanga 2018. 'Darfur: Voluntary repatriation from Chad continues', 1 July. https://reliefweb.int/ report/sudan/darfur-voluntary-repatriation-chad-continues

86 UNOCHA 2018. Humanitarian Needs Overview Sudan, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/ resources/Sudan_2018_Humanitarian_Needs_Overview.pdf

87 Radio Dabanga 2015. 'Refugees in eastern Chad refuse to return to Darfur', 1 November, https://www. dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/refugees-in-eastern-chad-refuse-to-return-to-darfur; UNAMID 2018. 'UNAMID deeply concerned about recent attacks on IDP camps in Central Darfur', 24 May, https:// unamid.unmissions.org/unamid-deeply-concerned-about-recent-attacks-idp-camps-central-darfur.

asylum seekers in Sudan has reached about 920,000 people, remaining somewhat stable in the last year, with precarious health and humanitarian conditions.[88] As is the case for the Darfurian refugees in Chadian refugee camps, there is a potential for displacement of these refugees. If the situation in early 2018 is anything to go by, this could potentially result in onward movement to Niger.

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88 UNHCR 2018. *Sudan Population Report, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers*, August. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66013 (accessed December 2018); All Africa 2012. 'Dire Health Conditions in Darfur Camps'. https://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00019911.html

Refugees' and asylum seekers' means to reach Niger

The extent to which the events identified throughout this report might influence southbound movement of refugees and asylum seekers to Niger also depends on the availability of means that would allow refugees and asylum seekers to move from one region to another. Refugees' and asylum seekers' own ability to travel from one region to the next determines the extent to which changing circumstances actually translate into movement. Put differently, refugees and asylum seekers require the means (finances, logistics, information) to be able to respond to push and pull factors. The following sections analyse to what extent the different nationalities of interest to this report have access to these different means.[89]

Changes in the smuggling networks in northern Niger

Increased human smuggling activity in northern Niger may provide refugees and asylum seekers with the logistical means to reach Niger. In northern Niger, smugglers of goods and people, traffickers of various illegal commodities, road bandits, and non-state armed groups have historically used remote Saharan routes across and along the borders with Mali, Algeria, Libya, and Chad to transport their wares and/or attack the convoys of others.[90] In mid-2016, the situation for those involved in the facilitation of mixed movement started to change. This is when Law No. 2015-036 against human smuggling began to be enforced, resulting in the arrests of at least 282 facilitators of migration and

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89   Given the dearth of information on refugees' and asylum seekers' access to financial resources, this section only focuses on access to logistical means and information to facilitate onward movement.

90   Molenaar, F. and El Kamouni-Janssen, F. 2017. *Turning the Tide: The politics of irregular migration in the Sahel and Libya*. CRU report. Clingendael Institute: The Hague.

the confiscation of at least 300-350 pickup trucks used to transport migrants through the desert.[91] Northbound mixed movement was reduced an estimated 75%.[92]

This does not mean, as many officials acknowledge, that the facilitation of mixed movement has ceased to exist completely.[93] Instead, a shift has taken place from one official route to many unofficial ones. Many smugglers now drive on lesser-used roads, avoiding entering Agadez and other towns altogether. The Agadez ghettos, the walled compounds where migrants are lodged during their stay in Agadez, also have gone underground and have downsized significantly.[94] As a result, the capacity to transport migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers southwards, including to transport them from Libya to Agadez, is still available in northern Niger. Accounts of Sudanese asylum seekers who arrived in Agadez at the start of 2018 confirm this, as they generally used smugglers to travel from Chad and Libya to Niger.[95] One Sudanese asylum seeker said

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91 Data are available for the period from July to mid-October 2016 and from January to August 2017. Actual numbers may therefore be higher because no data are available for mid-October to end-December 2016. See European Commission 2016, *Second Progress Report: First Deliverables on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration*, December 2016. Brussels. https://eeas. europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/secondprogressreport-1_en_act_part1_v11.pdf (accessed September 2017); European Commission 2017, *Fifth Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration*, September 2017. Brussels. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/ headquartershomepage_en/31673/Fifth%20Progress%20Report%20on20the%20Partnership%20 Framework%20with%20third%20countries%20under%20the%20European%20Agenda%20on%20 Migration (accessed 24 October 2018).

92 The number of (non-Nigerien) migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers entering Agadez reportedly declined from 350 per day in 2016 to 60 to 120 per week in 2018, a decline of 95%-97,5%. At the Seguedine (also known as Segedim or Sow) checkpoint midway between Dirkou and the Libyan border, the number of registered people travelling north dropped from 290,000 in 2016 to 33,000 in 2017, a decline of 91%. The IOM estimated that, all in all, migration north of Agadez had gone down by 75% during this period. Personal interview with Nigerien official, 2018. Niamey, Niger. April. See RFI 2018. 'A Agadez, on est passé de 350 migrants par jour à 100 par semaine', 23 May. http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20180523-agadez-on-est- passe-350-migrants-jour-100-semaine; Zandonini, G. 2018. 'The new European border between Niger and Libya', *OpenMigration*, 11 May. http:// openmigration.org/en/analyses/the-new-european-border-between- niger-and-libya; Tubiana, J. et al., *op. cit.*, 24.

93 Even Nigerien officials such as Minister of Interior Mohamed Bazoum, while defending the 2015 law and claiming the decrease of migration as a success, recently declared to the *New York Times* that 'the fight against clandestine migration is not winnable.' Penney, J. 2018. 'Europe Benefits by Bankrolling an Anti-Migrant Effort. Niger Pays a Price', *The New York Times*, 25 August. Those smugglers who still enter Agadez and carry on with business as usual tend to be well connected to local political elites and therefore operate without restrictions. See: Molenaar et al. (2018). *Caught in the Middle*, *op. cit.*

94 Molenaar et al. (2018). *Caught in the Middle*. Ibid.

95 Interviews with 10 asylum seekers (8 men and 2 women with children), 2018. Agadez, Niger, July and September. In addition, the researchers conducted two afternoons of participatory observation with a group of 5 asylum seekers in Agadez. 2018. Agadez, Niger, September.

that he was held hostage in an Agadez ghetto until he had paid his smugglers their fee.[96] According to a staff member working for a humanitarian organisation in Agadez, this has become quite a common practice.[97]

The facilitation of irregular migration might receive a new impulse due to the ongoing peace negotiations currently taking place between the Nigerien government and the Movement for Justice and Rehabilitation of Niger (MJRN). This armed group, mainly composed of Tubu fighters, has requested the release of the pickup trucks that were confiscated by the state during its anti-human smuggling campaign in the Agadez region. In addition, the MJRN has requested the reopening of the Djado goldfields, which the government closed at the start of 2017, as well the incorporation of Tubu security forces into security operations in the region.[98] The return of vehicles to Tubu smugglers would create more potential for them to facilitate north- and southbound mixed movement. At the same time, the reopening of the Djado goldfields could potentially attract a new wave of Chadian and Sudanese gold miners, increasing the diaspora presence in Niger.[99]

Access to information on a potential protection space in Niger

Access to information and means of communication may inform refugees and asylum seekers on the availability of a protection space and on how to reach Niger. The ways in which people on the move access information on migration may explain why some nationalities are more prone to reach Niger than others. It can also be used to identify the capacity of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to reach Agadez/Niger in the future.

An example of this dynamic took place at the start of 2018, when misinformation that an application for asylum in Niger would result in resettlement to Europe quickly spread through Sudanese information networks in Libya, Chad, and Sudan.[100] As one asylum seeker explains, 'as Darfurians, we are refugees and we thought it would be better to

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96 Interview with a Sudanese asylum seeker, 2018. Agadez, Niger, 6 July.

97 Interview with member of a humanitarian organisation, 2018. Agadez, Niger, 27 August.

98 Telephone interview with migration expert working in Libya, 2018. 12 December.

99 The mines could also attract asylum seekers and refugees, which would make it more difficult to assess their protection needs and engage them in proper security screening procedures.

100 Tubiana, Warin, and Saeneen, *op. cit.* It should be noted that not one single person was resettled out of Agadez until November 2018. It is very likely that asylum seekers mistook the ETM (see Box 1) for a resettlement procedure applicable to anyone who applied for asylum in Niger.

come to Europe legally. We heard UNHCR offered good services in Agadez and could take us somewhere else, in Europe. Some of us also [mistakenly] heard the French government gave asylum in Niger'.[101] A researcher working in Sudan at the start of 2018 similarly notes having come across rumours that a new route to Europe had opened up in Niger.[102]

The fact that it was mainly Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers who responded to this information can be explained by the fact that this group is most prone to use personal communication channels when on the move. Indeed, 4Mi survey data show that Sudanese respondents mention friends and family in the country of destination as the primary source of information on migration when deciding to leave (Figure 4). Throughout their migratory journeys, Sudanese respondents similarly relied on information obtained from 'others ahead of us', as well as their families back home, as their primary sources of information (Figure 5). Chadian and Eritrean 4Mi respondents assigned similar value to these primary sources of information, although they also identified smugglers as relevant sources of information.

Nigerian 4Mi respondents are an exception, as their main source of information is their smugglers, both before and during their journeys. This may explain the discrepancy between the Sudanese and Nigerian asylum seekers who arrived in Agadez at the start of 2018. Whereas the Sudanese arrived from several different countries, and from several different cities within these countries, the majority of Nigerian arrivals could be traced back to three cities located in the northeast of Nigeria.[103] This suggests that a more centralised form of mobilisation took place here – such as through established smuggling networks – than would be possible through diaspora communication channels.

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101 Personal telephone interview with B., Sudanese asylum seeker, 2018. Agadez, Niger, May. Cited in Tubiana, Warin, and Saeneen, *op. cit.*, 19.

102 Interview migration expert working in Sudan, 2018. Brussels, 12 November.

103 UNHCR data file 'Agadez Localite d'origine par nationalite'. Version received on 3 October 2018. Locality of origin in the title of this file refers to the last country in which asylum seekers stayed prior to their arrival in Agadez, Niger (rather than the country of embarkation).

Figure 5 **First source of information on migration used by respondents from different nationalities (4Mi Libya data)**

Legend:
- Talking to UN Organizations and NGOs
- Friends and family in country of destination
- Friends and family in country of origin
- Calling others ahead of us
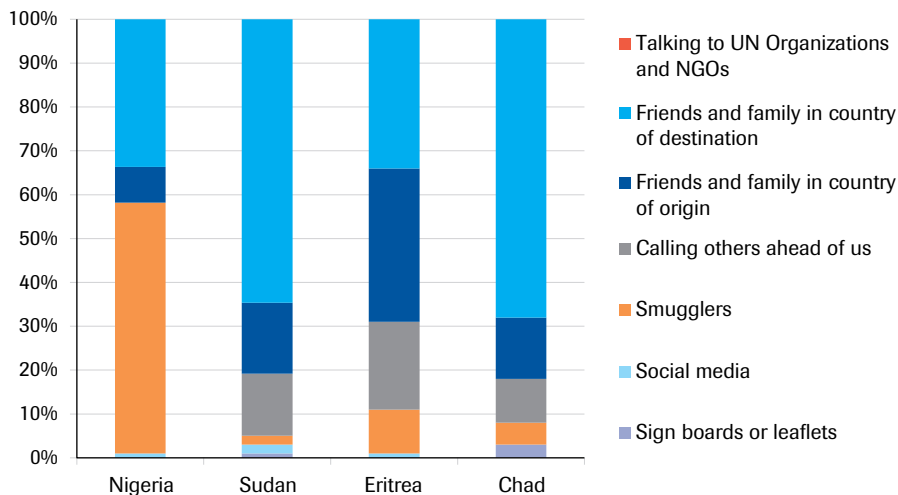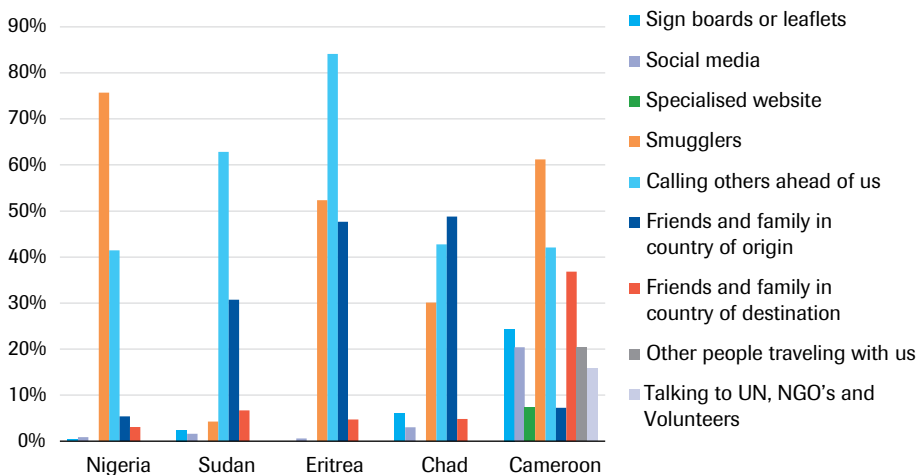- Smugglers
- Social media
- Sign boards or leaflets

Figure 6 **Weighted percentage of respondents (by nationality) who accessed information through different channels of communication during migration (4Mi Libya data)[104]**

Legend:
- Sign boards or leaflets
- Social media
- Specialised website
- Smugglers
- Calling others ahead of us
- Friends and family in country of origin
- Friends and family in country of destination
- Other people traveling with us
- Talking to UN, NGO's and Volunteers

104 Response rate could not be calculated because respondents could select more than one option. The minimum response rate for the most selected option was 76% for Nigerians, 63% for Sudanese, 84% for Eritreans, 49% for Chadians, and 56% for Cameroonians. The actual response rate for all options may be higher.

Another difference between the Sudanese and the other nationalities of interest for this report are their phone and social media use. Of all five nationalities, Sudanese 4Mi respondents are the largest possessors of smartphones (Figure 6).[105] When they use social media, they mainly do so to communicate with friends and family (Figure 7). The other surveyed nationalities of interest tend to travel with basic cell phones or no cell phones at all. They also use social media to communicate with their friends and family. Yet in contrast to the Sudanese respondents, they additionally use social media to contact smugglers. This reinforces the image of Sudanese migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers as a population that remains relatively well-connected to the diaspora throughout its journey and that use the information obtained through these channels to orient themselves (the same goes, to a lesser extent, for the Chadians as well), while other nationalities rely much more on smuggling networks.

Figure 7   Weighted percentage of respondents (by nationality) who travelled with a phone (4Mi Libya data)[106]
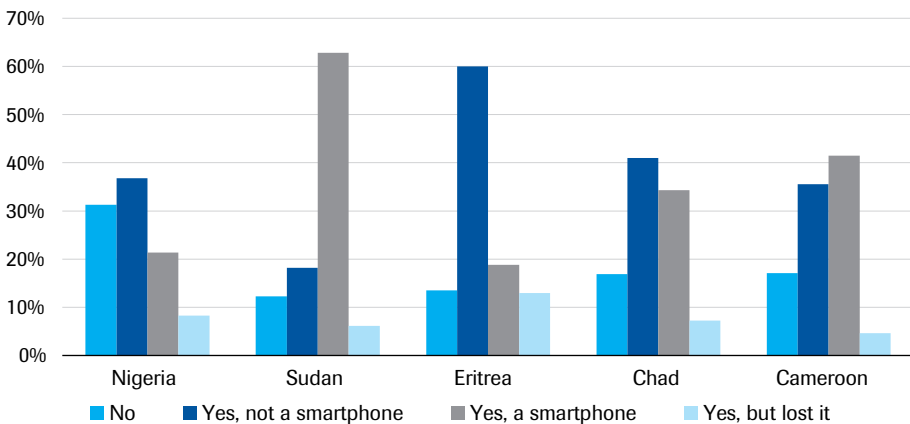
105 The majority of interviewed Sudanese asylum seekers in Agadez similarly possessed smartphones.
106 Response rate: Nigeria (98%), Sudan (99%), Eritrea (100%), Chad (99%), and Cameroon (90%).

Figure 8   **Weighted percentage of respondents (by nationality) who used social media during their journey (4Mi data)**
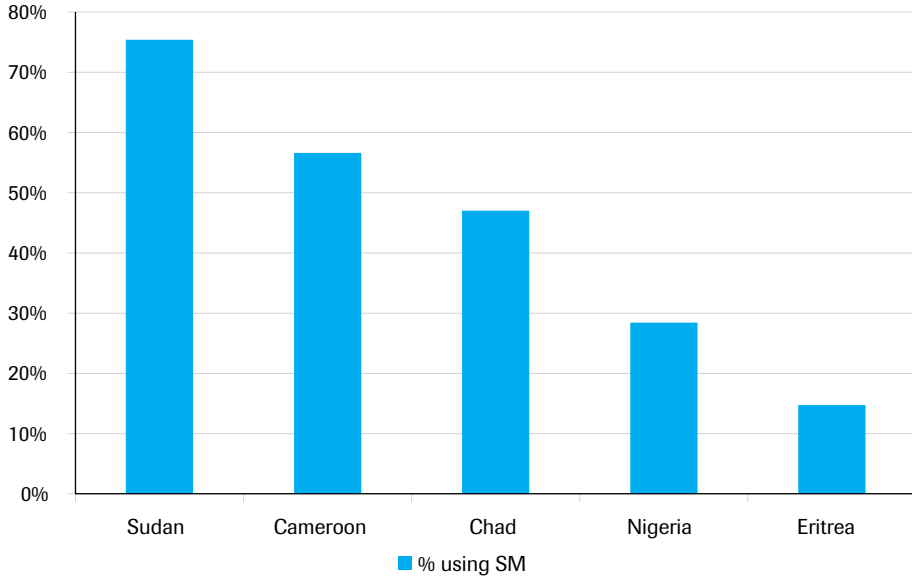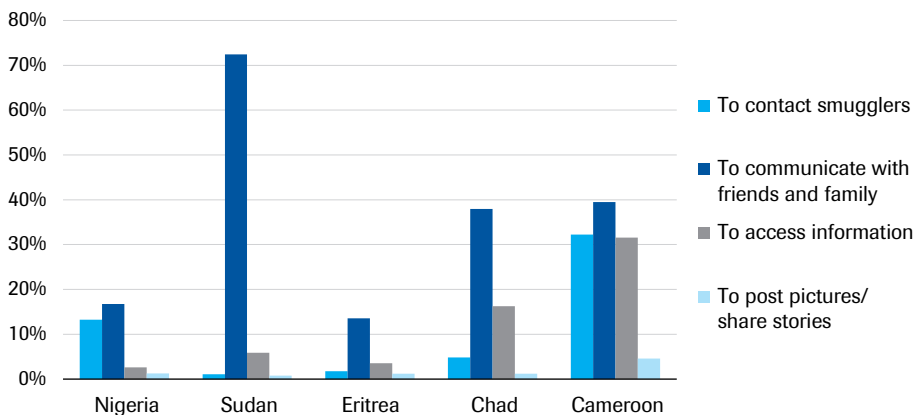

Figure 9   **Weighted percentage of respondents (by nationality) who used social media for different ends (4Mi Libya data)**

This information is particularly relevant given the presence of substantial Sudanese and Chadian diasporas in Niger. Experienced Chadian and Sudanese miners exploited the prosperous Djado gold mines in the northeastern Agadez region, which were closed down by the Niger government in March 2017.[107] Sudanese involvement in gold mining also resulted in the creation of Sudanese ghettos in Agadez.[108] The resultant information and logistical networks that followed from the Sudanese presence in the Agadez region may have contributed to mainly Sudanese asylum seekers coming to Agadez at the start of 2018.[109] One Sudanese ghetto allegedly hosted a large group of Sudanese asylum seekers before they moved to the UNHCR facilities.[110] The presence of these Sudanese and Chadian diasporas, combined with the propensity of Sudanese and Chadians to use diaspora communication networks to facilitate their journeys, suggests a potential for new arrivals if push factors in Libya and Chad continue to increase.

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107 Molenaar et al. (2017). *A Line in the Sand*.

108 Molenaar et al. (2018). *Caught in the Middle*, *op. cit.*

109 Several Sudanese refugees revealed that they were smuggled from Libya to Agadez ghettos, where they were held for a ransom before they were allowed to leave the ghetto and present themselves at the UNCHR offices. Interviews with Sudanese refugees, 2018. Agadez, Niger, 6 July. Interview staff member of a humanitarian organisation, 2018. Agadez, Niger, 27 August.

110 Interview staff member of a humanitarian organisation, 2018. Agadez, Niger, 27 August.

How can UNHCR prepare?

There are reasons to believe that southbound mixed movement will only increase in the near future. As this report has shown, the situation in Libya has become more pressing for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, who might start to lose hope of ever reaching Europe the longer they remain stuck in Libyan detention centres and/or in the hands of smugglers in clandestine prisons. To the extent that their detention does not prohibit their southbound movement (which is not always the case because of evacuations and escapes), this may increase future pressure on Niger. In addition, foreigners in southern Libya may flee the ongoing attempts to clear the south from the presence of foreign militias. Looming conflict in northern Chad may result in displacement. In addition, the voluntary return of Darfurian refugees from refugee camps in eastern Chad, and the return of IDPs to Darfur, may lead these refugees to move onwards in search of protection elsewhere when faced with continued insecurity.

In the first half of 2018, Niger experienced the arrival of a group of predominantly Sudanese asylum seekers, as well as almost 200 Nigerian asylum seekers. A small group of Chadian, Malian, and Cameroonian asylum seekers also made their way to Niger. Based on the findings in this report, we do not expect a major change in the composition of future asylum seekers arriving in Niger. The Sudanese and Chadian asylum seekers are able to capitalise on their existing social networks that stretch across the Sahel and that facilitate their travels. Nigerians can similarly capitalise on the presence of established smuggling networks. One question that deserves further attention is whether new arrivals from Cameroon or Eritrea can be expected in the near future. Given these nationalities' reliance on smugglers for information and the facilitation of their travels, that would depend on the presence of Eritrean and Cameroonian smugglers in Agadez. Informants from the field have not yet come across these nationalities in the Agadez smuggling business.

Table 6   Trend table – potential impact of push factors on mixed movement to Niger

Push factor	Suda-nese	Chadi-ans	Eritreans	Ethiopi-ans	Somali-ans	Came-roonians	Nigeri-ans
Decrease in departures Libya	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑↑
Law enforcement & detention	↓/↑	↓/↑	↓/↑	↓/↑	↓/↑	↓/↑	↓/↑
Situation southern Libya	↑	↑					
Situation northern Chad	↑	↑					
Changes in refugee camps Chad	↑						
Situation northern Niger	↑↑	↑↑	↑	↑	↑		↑
Access to information	↑	↑					

The arrival of new asylum seekers in Agadez may recreate the tensions between the Agadez population, their authorities, and asylum seekers that resulted in the deportation of asylum seekers to the border with Libya in May 2018. The situation stabilised after the organisation of a regional forum on Asylum Space in the Context of Mixed Migration, held in Agadez on 4 July 2018.[111] The forum produced a list of recommendations and accelerated the assessment of refugee status determination for potential asylum seekers and the provision of asylum seeker attestations.[112]

Over the course of July to September 2018, UNHCR subsequently oversaw the construction of a humanitarian centre for asylum seekers 15 kilometres outside of

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111 UNHCR and the regional authorities also undertook several activities to deflate potential conflict dynamics. Interview Rhissa Feltou, Agadez Mayor. 2018. Agadez, Niger, 7 July. Interview member Agadez Regional Council, 2018. Agadez, Niger, 7 July. Interview staff member of a humanitarian organisation, 2018. Agadez, Niger, 27 August. Interview Oumarou Ibrahim Oumarou, Sultan of Aïr, 2018. Agadez, Niger, 28 August. Interview Issa Hadjia Habsou and Hadjia Hadizatou François, Secretary General and Project Leader of the Agadez office, Association des Femmes Nigériennes Contre la Guerre (AFNCG), 2018. Agadez, Niger, 29 August.

112 Agadez Regional Council, 2018. Forum Regional sur l'espace d'asile dans le contexte de la migration mixte. Agadez, Niger, 4 July. Communiqué final points 3 and 5.

the city.[113] In December 2018, the first group of asylum seekers were granted refugee status.[114] More than 250 cases are currently being processed. Yet at the current staffing capacity, it will take at least two years to complete the individual refugee status determination (RSD) process for the current asylum seeker population in Agadez. Currently, all vulnerable profiles are being prioritized for RSD after the latest screening and update of specific needs.[115] This suggests that the potential arrival of new asylum seekers would put further pressure on a system that is already quite overburdened.

Recommendations for a conflict-sensitive protection response

Preparation for the arrival of new asylum seekers requires a strong monitoring effort that keeps track of current events in Libya, northern Chad, and north Niger that could potentially produce new, or increase current, southbound mixed movements. Indeed, this report has shown that migration, or refugee-related interventions, in one country or region may have direct implications for the (need for) interventions in other countries. This is the obvious effect of the fact that mixed movements are the product of pressures that force people to flee, the protection options that are available to them, and the available means that allow them to move to protection spaces. As a consequence, all migration- and refugee-related interventions – including those that aim to prevent further onward movement – should be designed to take into account regional spill-over effects and should plan and budget to address these. The potential for such spill-over effects could be monitored by setting up regional programming coordination efforts that keep track of information flows across migrant and smuggling networks.

In light of the tensions that Agadez experienced due to the arrival of a comparatively small group of 2,000 asylum seekers in the first half of 2018, preparations for future potential southbound mixed movements should also take into account the fragile equilibrium that has been reached in Agadez. On the one hand, the Agadez community and their authorities generally have shown a welcoming attitude towards vulnerable populations. On the other hand, Agadez residents have been hit hard by the closure of

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113 UNHCR rerouted 250 prefab houses that had been destined for the Diffa province to Agadez, and over the course of August 2018, 326 asylum seekers were moved from the city to the new centre. COOPI manages six guesthouses, under the supervision of UNHCR, for vulnerable persons in the Agadez city centre. Other Sudanese asylum seekers remain at the old UNHCR centre in the city centre. REACH 2018, *Situation Brief: Situation of displaced persons registered by UNHCR and hosted in Agadez*. Agadez, Niger, August. The centre now houses over 1,000 asylum seekers.

114 UNHCR 2018. *First Refugees from Darfur receive official refugee status in Agadez, Niger*. 11 December. http://unhcrniger.tumblr.com/post/181196054124/first-refugees-from-darfur-receive-official (accessed February 2019).

115 Email correspondence with a UNHCR Niger staff member. 2019. 11 January.

gold mines in early 2017 and the implementation of law prohibiting migrant smuggling in mid-2016. Frustrations abound that the population has not been compensated for the income and economic opportunities it lost.[116] International support for vulnerable populations runs the risk of aggravating these frustrations. In particular, the presence of future southbound movements of refugees and asylum seekers may be perceived by the host community to:

- increase unsafety and insecurity (related to vetting, presence of fighters, or potential recruitment pool for terrorism and other crimes);
- affect the livelihoods of the host population (competition in the lower segment of the labour market);
- put pressure on services (water, sanitation, health care).

To address these concerns, the following recommendations apply.

In response to security concerns:
- support faster screening procedures and resettlements (show Niger that it runs no risk) – particularly for refugees and asylum seekers coming from Libya and Chad;
- expand ETM to keep vulnerable populations from mixing with armed groups and having to rely on smuggling networks to reach safety (focusing on detention centres and contentious areas in the Fezzan);
- invest in joint community-based protection programmes with the local population.

In response to food security or livelihood concerns:
- when investing in livelihood interventions, ensure that vulnerable local populations are included as well (for instance, if there are cash-based interventions, UNHCR could screen also the host community for cases of extreme vulnerability);
- when investing in service delivery, ensure that vulnerable local populations are included as well (for instance, if there are health programmes, water distribution, or shelter improvement interventions, UNHCR could screen also the host community for cases of extreme vulnerability).

In response to host population concerns about refugees:
- if realistic/culturally sensitive, invest in the creation of spaces where the refugee population and the local community could meet – soccer matches, markets, child-safe spaces, shared vocational training, etc.;
- invest in skills-exchange workshops, such as French/Hausa classes in exchange for carpentry, agricultural skills, masonry, Arabic classes, etc.;
- continue to invest in awareness campaigns at the local level (including traditional and religious leaders).

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116 Molenaar et al. (2017) *A Line in the Sand*; Molenaar et al. (2018). *Caught in the Middle*, *op. cit.*