

Mediterranean Review



October 9, 2012

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

In Focus	1
North Africa	2
Northeast Africa	4
Horn of Africa	6

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This document provides an overview of developments in the Mediterranean Basin and other regions of interest from 02 – 08 October, with hyperlinks to source material highlighted and underlined in the text. For more information on the topics below or other issues pertaining to the region, please contact the members of the Med Basin Team, or visit our website at www.cimicweb.org.



In Focus: Tunisia's Irregular Migration **By Maya Moseley**

In early 2011, Europe experienced a surge in [irregular migration](#),¹ reports the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Of the 56,000 migrants and asylum seekers that arrived in Italy by sea, 28,000 were Tunisians fleeing the internal upheaval of revolution. During the same year, over 1,500 people drowned or went missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean, a voyage fraught with [extreme risk](#) due to unseaworthy vessels, inexperienced seafarers, adverse weather, as well as insufficient on board food and water, informs Human Rights Watch (HRW). Following an accelerated [repatriation](#) agreement between Italy and Tunisia on 05 April, migration dropped 75% in the second quarter of 2011, according to Frontex.²

During the Tunisian revolution, the Italian island of [Lampedusa](#) experienced an influx of Tunisian asylum seekers and migrants that overwhelmed its detention centres. In September 2011, Tunisians at the Contrada Imbriacola [detention centre](#) in Lampedusa revolted, burning down one of the facility's wings, allowing for the escape of an estimated 1,247 migrants. The migrants slept outdoors overnight and clashed with local residents the following day. While Italian officials cited the rapid repatriation agreement with the Tunisian government as the motive behind the revolt, many others believe the inhumane conditions of detention centres are the real impetus³.

The Lampedusa revolt led to the repatriation of the migrants, as well as the implementation of new practices, including the utilisation of floating collection points – three vessels off the port of Palermo which held 700 men awaiting repatriation. The migrants were reportedly handcuffed, barred from

Continued on page 8



North Africa

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Algeria

Yacine Zaid, a member of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights, was [beaten and arrested](#) by Algerian police on 02 October, claiming that Zaid “had shown a lack of respect for police”, reports *Associated Press (AP)*. The daily *El Watan* newspaper quoted an eyewitness as saying that Zaid was not “aggressive”. His lawyer, Sidhoum Mohamed Amine, told *AP* that “verbal aggression” is a frequently used excuse to justify police actions. Zaid was previously detained on 25 September after attending a support rally for another human rights activist on a hunger strike, but was subsequently released.

In order to attract foreign investment in the oil and gas sectors in Algeria, the government will amend the 2005 [hydrocarbons law](#), informs *Magharebia*. The new law will introduce tax incentives to increase operations in those sectors which did not receive interest from foreign investors under the previous law. Moreover, the amended law will require the state-owned company Sonatrach to share exploration risks with foreign investors. On the other hand, Sonatrach will retain exclusive rights over pipeline transportation and will hold majority shares in projects involving foreign investors with a 51% versus 49% agreement. In other economics news, the Algerian Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) proposed an investment programme for 2012-2016 which will double [electricity production](#). The plan came after power cuts in the country caused unrest and protests in several locations. Algeria is experiencing a faster-than-projected growth in annual consumption, which will increase power demand to 11,436 MW next year and an estimated 20,000 MW in 2017. Currently, the Algerian infrastructure can only meet a demand of 9,700 MW.

Libya

A deadly attack at a checkpoint at Susa, Libya on 03 October [killed three](#) policemen and severely wounded a fourth, informs *Agence France-Presse (AFP)*. Nasser Zayed, head of the police force of the Green Mountains district said preliminary investigations indicate that radical Islamists were responsible. The incident is the latest in a chain of recent attacks targeting Libyan police and army.

Tensions have risen again between the towns of [Misrata and Bani Walid](#) after the death of Omran Shaban, the Misratan fighter who caught the former Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi during last year’s revolution, according to *Reuters*. Shaban was taken hostage on 12 July and reportedly tortured for nearly sixty days in Bani Walid, a town known for its loyalty to the former regime. On his release the twenty-one-year-old was unconscious and died a few days later. The national congress ordered Bani Walid, to hand over Shaban’s abductors by 12 October. While a direct attack is postponed, militias aligned with the Defence Ministry [positioned themselves on the outskirts some fifteen miles away](#). The pro-government forces were then able to initiate shelling resulting in the death of a child and two others while injuring seven more. The counterattacks from Bani Walid injured nine others.

Libyan Prime Minister-elect Mustafa Abushagur presented [the list of names](#) for his cabinet to the congress for approval on 03 October, reports *Reuters*. The list which is deemed controversial excludes the liberal National Forces Alliance (NFA), the biggest party in congress. Additionally, in response to news of the list, 100-150 demonstrators from the western town of Zawiyah stormed the national assembly on 04 October to protest their underrepresentation. On the same day, the cabinet line-up presented by Prime Minister Abushagur [was rejected](#) for failing to represent the country in its entirety, informed *South African Press Association-Agence France-Presse (SAPA-AFP)*. Abdelali al-Dersi, the assembly representative from the eastern town of Al-Bayda, said that “[t]he government didn’t represent all the sectors or regions of Libyan society. It was thrown together arbitrarily and on the basis of friendships”. The Prime Minister was given a deadline of 07 October to present a new recommendation but was [dismissed from the post](#) for his inability to gain approval from the General National Congress (GNC) for the second time. The GNC is now required to select a new Prime Minister within three to four weeks.

Morocco

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy met his Moroccan counterpart Abdelilah Benkirane in Rabat, Morocco on 03 October to [strengthen economic relations](#), according to *Reuters*. Spain replaced France as Morocco’s “top economic partner” in January. [Eight agreements](#) have subsequently been signed between the two countries, including the abolition of visa requirements. In other diplomatic news, King Mohammed VI of Morocco expressed willingness to resolve the [Western Sahara](#) territorial dispute in his address to the UN General Assembly, according to *Moroccan American Center for Policy*. The autonomy of Western Sahara within sovereign Morocco was rejected by the Polisario Front, a group fighting for the independence of Western Sahara.

Morocco is expecting [economic growth](#) of 4.5% in 2013, which is higher than the initially projected 3.4% growth rate, informs *Reuters*. However, the budget deficit is only expected to decline slightly. The budget deficit is expected to be cut from 5% for 2013 to 4.8% of the gross domestic product (GDP), according to Finance and Economy Minister Nizar Baraka.

The Dutch group [Women on Waves](#), which provides sea-based abortions and counselling by anchoring in international waters off the coast of countries where abortion is illegal, attempted to enter the Moroccan port of Smir on 04 October; however, the Moroccan authorities blocked the boat's entry, reports *BBC*. Women on Waves was invited by a Moroccan youth group called Alternative Movement for Individual Freedoms, and Morocco was the first Muslim country the group planned to visit, but the Ministry of Health intervened, calling on all relevant authorities to "apply the law" against the boat and the group. [Abortion is illegal](#) in Morocco, yet according to the founder of Women on Waves, Dr. Rebecca Gomperts, six to eight hundred women have an abortion in Morocco every day. Of these, only about 200 abortions are "done properly" she says. Gomperts also said that according to World Health Organization (WHO) figures, 78 women on average die each year due to improper abortions in Morocco.

Tunisia

According to defence lawyers, Anouar Ouled Ali and Mondher Charni, 2 of the 87 people detained over the attacks on the US Embassy and adjacent American school on 14 September could receive the [death penalty](#), reports *AP*. Demonstrators stormed and burned the buildings, leaving four people dead and many injured.

Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki reportedly offered a [state apology](#) to the woman who was raped by two policemen, informs *AFP*. Marzouki also condemned the rape and stated that the problem "is not the security institution itself but the mentality of some of its members." While the president's office committed to closely follow the case to ensure proper application of the rule of law, the 27-year old rape victim is still awaiting notice of whether she and her fiancé will be charged with indecency. The police officer responsible for the crime has been arrested and is awaiting trial.

At least "130 [attacks on press freedom](#)" have occurred in Tunisia since 01 January 2012, according to *Reporters without Borders (RSF)*, informs *SAPA*. Eighty-four of these incidents were direct physical attacks on journalists. Since the ouster of the former president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011, journalists have been targeted by both police and radical Islamists. Moreover, the government is also blacklisting journalists who were "accomplices of the fallen regime" or who were "implicated in corruption cases" during the Ben Ali era. *RSF* director Christophe Deloire said that "[i]f journalists are guilty of acts of corruption, it's perfectly right that they should be sentenced. But an independent judiciary should carry out that work, relying on the facts, and not by publishing black lists". In related news, Tunisian Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali, during a meeting with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), expressed his commitment to [resolve problems](#) related to freedom of the press in the country, reports *AFP*. Jebali also promised the implementation of government decrees 115 and 116, which date back to 2011, guaranteeing media independence and press freedom.

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Northeast Africa

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Egypt

The [Salafist Al-Nour Party](#) confirmed on 01 October that it will hold internal elections as planned, reports *Ahram Online*. The decision to proceed with elections contradicts an earlier decision by former party leader Emad Abdel-Ghafour to postpone them, after which he was removed from his role by the party's Supreme Committee. Party spokesman Nader Bakkar stated that the party will form a reconciliation committee comprising key members of the party and the Salafist Calling, the umbrella group which encompasses the Al-Nour Party. Recently, a number of reports have materialised suggesting there are internal apertures within the Al-Nour party leadership. Following his dismissal, Abdel-Ghafour called for the removal of the Supreme Committee, maintaining that he remained the real head of the party, and that body did not possess the authority to remove him as party leader. The Al-Nour Party was founded in 2011 and, following parliamentary elections later that year, garnered the second largest number of seats in the People's Assembly, after the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party.

A decision on lawsuits regarding the legality of the [Constituent Assembly](#) has been postponed until 09 October, informs *Gulf News*. The assembly, established in March 2011 to draft a new constitution, has been challenged by more than forty lawsuits alleging that the composition unlawfully includes former members of the now-dissolved parliament. In addition, liberals continue to voice concerns that the Islamist-dominated assembly will create a constitution that restricts fundamental freedoms and discriminates against minorities. Assembly Chairman Hossam Al Geriyani expects a draft constitution, which will delineate presidential powers and the role of the army, to be completed by November; however, liberal members have threatened to quit if Islamists retain control of the process. The new constitution will be presented to the public in a referendum. In other news, protests over [Article 36](#) of the draft constitution were held in Cairo on 02 October, informs *Ahram Online*. Both women and men voiced their concern that the new constitution will not protect women's rights and made demands that the Constituent Assembly remove Article 36, which states that men and women will be equal except where such equality conflicts with Islamic law, and ensure that women receive full rights and protection under the law.

During a visit to the [Sinai Peninsula](#) on 05 October, President Mohammed Morsi announced plans to ease the military's recent security crackdown in the troubled area, reports *Associated Press (AP)*. A number of attacks and cross-border incursions have been carried out by Islamic militants over the past few months. However, President Morsi, who met with tribal leaders and Salafi clerics, indicated that security forces will no longer hunt the lawless fugitives from the lawless region referred to as "sons of Sinai". Morsi also met with Coptic Christians who were forced to flee their homes in the peninsula after receiving death threats from Islamic militants. Also in the Sinai Peninsula, 21 [Egyptian army](#) members were killed and another 20 were injured in a road accident on 08 October, reports *BBC*. Authorities do not suspect the crash to be a result of on-going military operations in the area.

Two Coptic Christian boys, ages nine and ten, from a village south of Cairo, were taken into [custody and detained](#) on 04 September, accused of defiling a Koran, reports *BBC*. The boys were released the next day by an Egyptian court pending an investigation. The boys were discovered by the imam of a local mosque, who claims he witnessed the boys tearing up pages from a Koran and urinating on them. The children were held on charges of blasphemy against Islam; however, neighbours in the village claim the boys are illiterate and had no knowledge that they were destroying a Koran.

South Sudan

South Sudan signed border and trade agreements at a summit with Sudan that will allow [oil production](#) to resume after an eight-month shutdown, reports *Reuters*. The biggest oil operator in South Sudan, Dar Petroleum Operating Company, estimated it would take eighteen weeks for its crude oil to reach Sudan's Red Sea export terminal, Port Sudan, assuming there are no complications or disruptions in production. Dar will initially aim for production of 180,000 barrels per day (bpd) and has committed to transparency under the new Petroleum Act. In other economic news, South Sudan's ambitions to join the East African Community (EAC) [economic block](#) have stalled due to divisions among senior South Sudanese government officials, reports the *Daily Nation*. Some officials are seeking immediate membership while others prefer that the country is granted observer status rather than membership or that South Sudan enters into bilateral agreements with EAC member states. Further discussions on South Sudan's membership have been postponed until November.

Amnesty International reports that security forces carrying out a civilian [disarmament campaign](#) in Jonglei state committed human rights violations including torture, shootings and sexual violence, in addition to the looting of property and destruction of crops. Amnesty International has called upon the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to increase protection of civilians in areas where there is a significant potential for violations by the South Sudanese army.

The humanitarian response to [flooding](#) across South Sudan (and Eastern Africa) is on-going and the primary needs are household items, shelter, food, water, sanitation and hygiene, reports *Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)*. Between June and September, flooding affected over 258,000 people (triple the number of those affected in 2011) and encompassed 39 of South Sudan's 79 counties, with the counties of Jonglei state impacted most severely. The rainy season, which normally ends in November, could extend longer due to El Niño conditions, thereby increasing the likelihood of heavier rainfall and affecting the crop season. The rains delay and sometimes prevent the delivery of humanitarian supplies and drugs to health facilities across the country.

Sudan

Four [Nigerian peacekeepers](#) were killed and eight wounded in an ambush in the western region of Darfur, according to the joint UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). More than 16,000 UNAMID troops are currently based in Darfur and some 78 peacekeepers have been killed since UNAMID's mandate began 5 years ago. Violence has decreased in the region since peaking in 2003; however, tensions continue to escalate since last year. On 08 October, the Small Arms Survey reported that at the "military level in the field, all the Darfur [rebel factions](#) are cooperating exhibiting a pragmatic survival instinct that is rallying the disparate militias against their common enemies". Citizens from the Saraf Omra locality in [North Darfur](#) informed *Radio Dabanga* that diseases including conjunctivitis, diarrhoea, malaria and allergies are spreading. Local citizens claim there is an absence of hospitals and doctors, and healthcare is only available at centres currently operated by medical assistants.

The governor of Sudan's central bank, Mohamed Kheir Al-Zubeir, said that Sudan has enough [foreign exchange](#) (Forex) reserves to cover five months of imports, according to *Sudan Tribune*. This contradicts the annual review from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which reported Sudan has enough Forex reserves for less than two months of imports. Al-Zubeir declined to say what Sudan's total amount of Forex reserves are, but he forecasted the Sudanese pound to appreciate against the dollar once oil exports resume in the coming months.

An [attack](#) in the capital of South Kordofan state, Kadugli, on 08 October left 5 people dead and 23 wounded, reports *BBC*. Though rebels have been fighting in the state since last year, the capital has remained largely peaceful. Over the last year, fighting in the state has forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee into neighbouring South Sudan (See CFC [In Focus: A Synopsis of the Humanitarian Crisis along the Sudan / South Sudan Border](#)). Sudan has been accused of denying UN organisations from [accessing areas](#) in South Kordofan and Blue Nile state that are in desperate need of humanitarian aid, reports the *Guardian*. Despite an August agreement by President Omar al Bashir to allow aid in to the regions, sources on the ground report that no supplies are arriving.

South Sudan and Sudan Political Agreement

South Sudan concluded a round of negotiations with Sudan in Addis Ababa on 27 September which led to [cooperation agreements](#) on oil, freedom of movement, trade and security on their common borders. However, various issues remain unresolved, including the status of Abyei and border demarcation. South Sudan negotiator Pagan Amum announced that his delegation would no longer hold further talks on the disputed area of Abyei with Sudan. The two countries stated they are committed to holding a referendum to determine if Abyei will remain in Sudan or join South Sudan, but have failed to reach an agreement on the participation of the Misseriya pastoralists in the vote, which Juba continues to reject. Sudanese [opposition figure](#) Hassan al Turabi said that the border security deal reached will likely not last because "there is no trust" between the two sides and the serious problems have not yet been settled, reports *Reuters*. The South Sudan Law Society (SSLS) and several government officials have also rejected the [bilateral co-operation](#) deal signed with Sudan, reports *Sudan Tribune*. The groups claim that the government has "compromised territorial rights and national sovereignty" of certain areas, allegedly due to the current dire economic situation. Governor of Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, Paul Malong Awan, declared he would not support the withdrawal of armed forces from the fourteen-mile buffer zone.

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Horn of Africa

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Ethiopia

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Donald Booth, opened a new airstrip on 04 October for the [Dolo Ado refugee camps](#), reports *All Africa*. The airstrip was funded by a contribution of USD 700,000 from the US government. More than 400 Somali refugees continue to arrive in Dolo Ado each week. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Ethiopian Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), in cooperation with WFP, provide refugees with food assistance. The new airstrip will provide year-round access to the refugee camps; the location is typically flooded during the rainy season, severely inhibiting access and preventing the delivery of vital aid and supplies.

The Ethiopian government is drafting legislation that will make it easier for members of the [Ethiopian diaspora](#) to return to Ethiopia from North America or Europe, reports *Voice of America*. Recently, large numbers of Ethiopians have returned to the country, positively impacting the national economy, one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Currently, there are approximately three million Ethiopians living abroad; however, thousands of young professionals have recently returned to Ethiopia in search of business opportunities. The director of the Diaspora Office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Feisel Aliyi Abraham, stated the young returnees are “our development partners, we need them and also they need us because they do business here they also benefit, the return is very high. And we need them because they bring us knowledge, they bring us technology, they bring us foreign direct investment, they create jobs, so this overall has very significant role in reducing poverty, he said.” The initial draft of the legislation is expected to be reviewed by the government later this month.

The Ministry of Mines has announced that Brazil’s state oil company, [Petroleo Brasileiro SA](#), is planning an exploration project in the country, informs *Bloomberg*. The Ethiopian government additionally has plans to create a national oil company to ensure proper resource management. East Africa, with a number of proven oil reserves, has recently experienced a rapid expansion in exploratory activities. Tullow Oil, in cooperation with Marathon Oil, is planning to start drilling a well in the South Omo Block later in the year.

Kenya

Four people were killed and several others were injured during a [youth empowerment rally](#) near Mombasa on 05 October, reports *AllAfrica*. The rally, organised by the Bahari Youth Forum Group, was interrupted by three men armed with machetes. According to witnesses, the Minister of Fisheries, Amason Kingi, who was just about to address the crowd, appeared to be the [target](#) of the attack. Fighting broke out as efforts were made to subdue the attackers, who were subsequently beaten to death by the crowd. One of the Minister’s bodyguards was also killed during the attack. The attackers were suspected to be members of the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), a separatist group campaigning for the secession of Kenya’s coastal area. In related news, a senior official from MRC was arrested on 08 October, on charges of [inciting violence](#), informs *Reuters*. The government accused Mohamed Mraja, MRC spokesman, of provoking MRC members to break the law by declaring the coastal area is not a part of the East African country. MRC’s campaign has unsettled both investors and tourists in the popular vacation area and has threatened to disrupt March elections if demands for secession are unmet.

[President Mwai Kibaki](#), speaking at Nairobi’s International Trade Fair on 05 October, reassured Kenyans the country will remain secure, although he urged citizens to remain vigilant and work with the police in their fight against terrorism, informs *AllAfrica*. His remarks came after several recent terror attacks in the country, including one on 30 September when an [attacker threw](#) an improvised explosive device (IED) into a church in Nairobi, killing a nine-year-old boy and wounding several others. There have also been several intelligence reports indicating imminent terror attacks following the Kenyan forces’ success in Kismayo. Kenyan Defence Forces, as a part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), captured the port city earlier in the week. President Kibaki, however, reiterated his support for the peace process in Somalia, elaborating that regional peace and security is contingent on the defeat of al Shabaab in Somalia.

A court in London has ruled that three Kenyans, [tortured in the 1950s](#) at the hands of British colonial authorities, can proceed with their legal case against the British government, reports *BBC*. The case originates from the Mau Mau uprising, where thousands of people were killed during a revolt against British rule throughout the 1950s and 1960s, resulting in Kenya’s independence in 1963. The British government does not dispute the torture claims of the three, which included castration, rape and beatings. The judgement is regarded as “historic” given the length of time that has elapsed since the crimes were committed. “The normal time limit for bringing a civil action is three to six years. In this case that period has been extended to over 50 years despite the fact that the key decision-makers are dead and unable to give their account of what happened”, a UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) spokesman said.

Somalia

[Al Shabaab's](#) withdrawal from Kismayo, the last urban strong-hold of the Islamic extremists, was met with relief by the local population, reports *Associated Press (AP)*. Al Shabaab was driven out of Mogadishu in August 2011, but had maintained control of Kismayo, a major source of funding for the group, through a system of taxation on goods coming into the port. Last week, African Union and Somali troops recaptured the city; however, the power vacuum left by al Shabaab may allow for renewed clan rivalry. While Somali forces are currently patrolling the streets, the Somali government is considered too weak to exert full control over the city which has a history of violent clan rivalry, predominantly between the Marehan, Majerten and Ogaden clans, each of whom would be interested in controlling the lucrative revenues from the port. Kenya, whose troops captured the city as part of AMISOM, invited representatives of the clans to Nairobi in order to facilitate the creation of a new administration for the city. The UN special representative to Somalia, Augustine Mahiga, stated that "Kismayo has one of the most complex clan mixes in Somalia and that the Somali people must work to achieve a sustained peace there." Al Shabaab extremists, meanwhile, without a base for control, could continue operations as insurgents, carrying out suicide and roadside bomb attacks.

The new Somali President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, has appointed Abdi Farah Shirdon as the [country's new Prime Minister](#), reports *Garowe Online*. Mr Shirdon has been living in Kenya since the outbreak of Somalia's civil war in 1991. Once approved by the Federal Parliament, the new prime minister will be responsible for selecting a cabinet. Similar to President Hassan, Prime Minister Shirdon is new to politics, but worked as a government economist prior to moving to Kenya, and his wife, Asho Haji Elmi, is an influential member of parliament.

Al Shabaab has [imposed a ban](#) on the UK-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) Islamic Relief, ordering the NGO to cease operations in areas controlled by the militants, reports *BBC*. Islamic Relief, working in Somalia since 2006, was one of the few NGOs allowed to continue implementing activities in al Shabaab-controlled areas. The militants claim that Islamic Relief has been secretly working on behalf of other previously banned aid organisations, including WFP, which was banned in January 2010. Islamic Relief's regional director, Iftikhar Shaheen, in a released statement denied that any of their programmes are funded by WFP and warned that "If this decision is confirmed, it could put many lives at risk, jeopardising our work providing food, water, sanitation, health care and support for income generation to 1.3 million people in Somalia".

Somalia has become the newest state party to the [Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention](#), also known as the Ottawa Convention, reports *Xperedon Charity News*. Somalia, one of the African countries most affected by landmines, will attend the Twelfth Meeting of States Parties in Geneva in December. As a signatory to the Convention, Somalia promises never to use, produce or transfer anti-personnel mines and commits to the elimination of current stockpiles. The NGO Mines Advisory Group (MAG), operating in Somalia since 2008, welcomed the news but reiterated the need for renewed efforts to bring peace and security to all Somali communities. MAG will continue to provide technical support and other expertise to support the stabilisation of the country through a Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) project, Police Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams and risk education campaigns throughout the country.

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Continued from page 1

outside communication, and denied access to legal counsel or medical attention in violation of UNHCR Detention Guidelines. While detention itself is not illegal, [conditions of detention](#) must include basic necessities, as well as access to medical treatment, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations. Amnesty International called into question the conditions of detention centres, as well as [asylum procedures](#) in Lampedusa in March 2012. [Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (MSF, also known as Doctors Without Borders) has documented how difficult the situation can be for those fleeing to Italy.

In response to the migration influx from North Africa, the European Union (EU) launched the [Hermes operation](#), a joint EU sea border patrol led by Frontex. The operation initially focused on patrols between Tunisia and Italy but was later extended to cover the area between Southern Europe, Libya, and Egypt. Italy and Tunisia have [cooperated](#) on immigration issues since 1998, when the countries agreed on the repatriation of Tunisian immigrants, as well as the provision of Italian funding for detention centres within Tunisia, according to the Global Detention Project. The Tunisian government does not release details of detention practices, and statistics on the current number of detention facilities, detainees, their nationalities, and rates of repatriation remain unknown. The transitional government did lift a twenty-year old ban on human rights groups visiting prisons. [As of 2010](#), the NGO Migreurop and the Algerian newspaper *El Watan* both reported the existence of thirteen detention facilities [and some 300 detainees residing within](#).



Source: [The New York Times](#)

Tunisia is not a signatory to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All [Migrant Workers](#). Under Tunisian law, it is a [criminal offence](#) to cross borders irregularly. The government claims that the law is not enforced; however, Francois Crepeau, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, has documented cases of Tunisians and foreigners being imprisoned by authorities for the offence. According to Crepeau, the imprisonment of unaccompanied minors in prisons and detention centres is particularly concerning. Additionally, charges against Tunisian nationals who seek to leave the country via irregular border crossings violate the fundamental principle of the right to leave one's country. *Inter Press Service* has documented claims by repatriated migrants facing [harsh treatment](#) by the Tunisian army after their return, including being bound with ropes and facing interrogation before their release.

Tunisian migrants are a mix of high and low [skilled workers](#), primarily migrating due to lack of economic opportunities and high unemployment, reports ICMPD. [Unemployment](#) overall in Tunisia has increased from 13% before the revolution to 18% in March 2012, according to *Reuters*. University graduates face unemployment at a rate of almost 35%. These circumstances continue to create [high pressures](#) to migrate despite limited legal migration options, informs the International Organization for Migration (IOM). According to Tunisia's former Minister of Education, Hatem Ben Salem, unemployed youth are an [invisible generation](#) in Tunisia; they were an integral part of the revolution but are "not in the government, nor in the institutions", reports the *Voice of America* (VOA).

While Tunisian migration had taken a heavy toll, costing untold lives and resources, recent [policy developments](#) by the Tunisian government have started to address migration to Italy in both the short and long-term. Following the sinking of a vessel carrying Tunisian migrants in September 2012, the transitional government, led by Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali, faced criticism over the [government's failure](#) to address unemployment and poverty, reports *Agence France-Presse* (AFP). The government quickly responded by announcing [increased patrols](#) along the Tunisian coast from which boats commonly depart, as well as a public information campaign on the requisites for a "decent life", which it is hoping will immediately curtail the number of migrants attempting to leave the country. In addition, as Rachid Ghannouchi, leader of the ruling Ennahda party, pointed out, the government has been [slowly improving](#) the country's economy, and maintains an ambitious goal of creating 50,000 new jobs. As irregular migration has continued since the revolution, [Italy and Tunisia](#) continue to work closely on the issue, informs *Tunis Afrique Presses* (TAP). The countries have begun looking beyond security measures, recognising the need for joint economic development.

¹ See [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM) for explanation of the term.

² The European Union's Agency for the Management of Operation Cooperation at the [External Border](#) of the Member States. (Frontex) was established in 2004 to coordinate and develop European border management.

³ Revolts in Italian detention centers are not uncommon, nor are mass escapes.

