

PRESS REVIEW

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Africa

Egypt

- *Jurist News, "[Egypt criticised over treatment of Sudanese refugees](#)", 22 February 2025*

The degrading living conditions of Sudanese refugees in Egypt have been the subject of a [report](#) by the NGO Refugee International, which warns of their lack of access to health services, education and employment, and the likelihood that this situation will worsen in the wake of the adoption and entry into force of Egypt's new asylum law. This law raises several concerns¹ : end of UNHCR's registration of asylum applications and transfer of this responsibility to a national commission with broad discretionary powers, retroactive application, revocation of refugee status for beneficiaries engaging in political or trade union activities, increased risk of expulsion, etc.

With more than 925,000 refugees in Egypt according to the UNHCR (70% of them Sudanese), in March 2024 the EU announced the signing of a comprehensive strategic partnership with Egypt, with a budget of 200 million euros earmarked for migration issues: this new law on asylum would have been one of the quid pro quos unofficially expected by the EU at the end of the negotiations² . The EU has thus chosen to delegate to Egypt, in a transactional approach similar to what it resorted to with other countries around the Mediterranean, the implementation of policies aimed at preventing migratory movements towards its territory - thereby seeking to free itself from its responsibility for the human rights violations that these policies entail.

¹ The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP), "[A crossroads for Refugee Rights: Examining Egypt's New Asylum Law](#)", 6 February 2025.

² Mada, "[Egypt's 1st bill on asylum-seekers to balance rights against 'stability of Egyptian society'](#)", 5 November 2024.

Libya/Tunisia

- *L'Orient-le Jour*, "[93 bodies now exhumed from two mass graves, according to the UN](#)", 19 February 2025

The discovery of mass graves containing dozens of bodies (probably those of people on the move) in Jakharrah and in the Alkufra Desert in Libya seems to confirm that human rights violations against people on the move in Libya are continuing, as already documented by the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya and other organisations³.

These exhumations are consistent with the allegations of "state crimes" made against Tunisia⁴, accused of taking part in an organised system of trafficking in human beings and kidnapping of people on the move, based on collaboration between its police and military apparatus, and Libyan traffickers, militias and armed forces. The EU is accused of contributing to these crimes, in the context of funding granted to both Tunisia and Libya to "strengthen border control" or "migration management", through funds such as the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa or the NDICI fund⁵. Italy, on the other hand, provides the Tunisian and Libyan border control authorities with equipment and training. This support, which is designed to deliberately prevent people on the move from migrating, with no regard for their rights, has been strongly criticised. In January, revelations by the *Guardian* about the numerous assaults (including sexual assaults) allegedly committed on people on the move by the Tunisian national guard prompted the European Commission to begin a review of its funding policy in Tunisia⁶, although no concrete changes have been announced to date.

Middle East

Jordan

- *The Jordan Times*, "[King witnesses signing of Joint Declaration on EU-Jordan Strategic, Comprehensive Partnership](#)", 29 January 2025

A joint declaration⁷ announcing a strategic and comprehensive partnership between Jordan and the EU was signed on 29 January 2025 during a visit to Brussels by King Abdullah II. Based on the model of previous "strategic and comprehensive partnerships" signed by the EU with countries on its external borders ([Memorandum of Understanding](#) with Tunisia in July 2023, [partnership](#) with Egypt in March 2024), this partnership, which is not legally binding, aims to encourage cooperation between the parties on a number of subjects (economy, trade, defence, etc.) including "*migration, protection and support for refugees*". The partnership comes with a pledge of €3 billion in EU funding (including €640 million in the form of grants).

The migration component of the partnership is in line with the logic already at work in relation to Tunisia and Egypt: "border management" and the fight against all forms of migration deemed to be irregular are set as priorities, and international protection is implicitly treated as the only legitimate reason for migration, and the only one to be likely to receive EU support.

³ See the OMCT report, "[Torture Roads](#)" (vol. 3), dated 8 January 2025.

⁴ See the *State Trafficking* report, "[Expulsion and sale of migrants from Tunisia to Libya; 30 testimonies from a EU external border](#)", dated 29 January 2025.

⁵ NDICI: [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument](#)

⁶ The Guardian, "[Europe overhauls funding to Tunisia after Guardian exposes migrant abuse](#)", 24 January 2025

⁷ [Full text](#) available online.

European Union Member States

Cyprus

- [The New Arab, "€1,500 and a one-way ticket: how Cyprus deports Syrian refugees with EU support", 17 February 2025](#)

In a joint investigation⁸ published on 17 February, Statewatch, The New Arab and UntoldMag describe how Cyprus, with financial and operational support from the EU and Frontex, is forcing Syrian refugees to leave its territory under the guise of its "assisted voluntary return" programme. Under the threat of deportation, against a backdrop of obstructed access to asylum⁹, unfounded accusations of serious crimes, and illegal detention in degrading conditions¹⁰, Syrian refugees are forced to sign voluntary return agreements in exchange for financial compensation (€1,500). Although the EU granted €9.7 million to Cyprus under this programme between May 2022 and September 2024 (90% of its total budget), no provision has been made to supervise and monitor the programme or to ensure that the refugees to whom it is "offered" are properly informed and can make their own decisions. The EU is also funding the construction of camps in Cyprus where asylum seekers will be detained prior to their possible deportation, thereby contributing to a climate aimed at forcing people on the move to accept expulsions disguised as "voluntary returns", which are less costly in both financial and reputational terms.

Spain

- [El País, "Un superviviente que perdió visión en un ojo en la tragedia de El Tarajal denuncia a España ante la ONU", 6 February 2025](#)

A second survivor of the Tarajal massacre¹¹ has lodged a complaint against Spain with the UN Committee against Torture, 11 years after the events. Spain is accused of having neither prevented nor effectively investigated the acts of violence and torture committed by the *Guardia Civil* against the more than 200 people who tried to reach Ceuta from Morocco on 6 February 2014.

The enclave of Ceuta, which borders Morocco, has for decades been heavily militarised and guarded by Spain¹², with the cooperation of the Moroccan authorities, in a vain attempt to prevent people on the move from crossing into these territories. According to Morocco, more than 4,200 people attempted to cross the border in 2024¹³ despite the danger to their lives (27 deaths and 17 disappearances recorded in 2024¹⁴) and the almost systematic use of *refoulement* by the Spanish authorities. Under certain circumstances, this practice was deemed to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights, in a European Court of Human Rights ruling, on 13 February 2020¹⁵, even though the fourth protocol to the Convention prohibits any collective expulsion of foreign nationals.

⁸ See the full report on Statewatch's website, ["€1,500 and a one-way ticket: how Cyprus deports Syrian refugees with EU support"](#), dated 17 February 2025.

⁹ As a reminder, the examination of asylum applications from Syrian nationals has been suspended by Cyprus [since April 2024](#), in violation of its commitments under the 1951 Geneva Convention: on 17 February, the "Syrians in Cyprus" collective sent an [open letter](#) to the Cypriot Minister of State for Migration and International Protection, questioning the legitimacy of this suspension and pointing the finger at the discrimination suffered by Syrian exiles, which has led to particularly long administrative delays.

¹⁰ See the [full report](#) of the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture, published following its visit in May 2023.

¹¹ Migreurop, ["6 février 2014 : Massacre de Tarajal"](#), 6 February 2018.

¹² Migreurop, ["Infographie sur la militarisation des frontières à Ceuta"](#), 21 March 2024.

¹³ El Faro de Ceuta, ["Balance de Marruecos: 14 intentos de entrada en Ceuta y Melilla durante 2024"](#), 22 January 2025.

¹⁴ APDHA, ["Informe Frontera Sur 2025"](#), 21 January 2025.

¹⁵ Migreurop, ["Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme : l'Espagne et l'Union européenne \(UE\) pourront faire prévaloir la protection des frontières européennes sur le droit d'asile"](#), 21 February 2020.

France

- *Alarm Phone, "[Abandon and punish: how France treats victims and survivors of tragedies in the Channel](#)", 28 February 2025*

On 28 February 2024, around 60 migrants attempted to cross the Channel in an inflatable dinghy: the overcrowding of the boat and the high waves it faced caused four people to fall overboard. *Alarm Phone* reveals that despite the rapid detection of the dinghy and its surveillance by the French authorities, who dispatched several of its boats to the scene, search and rescue operations were not launched until two and a half hours later, without requesting assistance from the British for more than another hour. Of the four people who fell into the water, three were located, but only the body of one was recovered; the French authorities then ceased their search (while their British counterparts continued theirs for a further ten hours). The other two people initially located at sea are still missing. *Alarm Phone* highlights the negligence and harassment displayed by the French authorities towards the survivors: three survivors were arrested and questioned, and one of them was subsequently remanded in custody on charges of manslaughter and assisting illegal entry and residence, risking up to 15 years in prison.

While 2024 was the deadliest year ever recorded in the Channel, and the average number of people on boats bound for the UK has been rising since 2018, the policy of "deterrence" pursued by the French and British authorities is contributing to endangering the lives of people on the move seeking to reach the UK¹⁶. The French government's announcement¹⁷ that the "border force" already deployed on the French-Italian border since 2023 will be extended¹⁸ to all of France's borders augurs an acceleration of the logic of militarisation and massive surveillance already at work in the Channel, despite the fierce criticism generated by this arrangement in the south of France.

Greece

- *InfoMigrants, "[Naufrage de Pylos : un rapport indépendant accable les gardes-côtes grecs](#)", 5 February 2025*

More than a year and a half after the Pylos shipwreck, which claimed at least 500 lives, the Hellenic Ombudsman has announced in a [press release](#) the conclusion of their independent investigation into the responsibility of the Greek authorities for the shipwreck. The report points to "*a series of serious and persistent omissions in the search and rescue tasks on the part of senior officers of the Coast Guard*" as well as their "*neglect of the risk to the life, health and integrity of foreigners on board the ship*".

The report, the conclusions of which do not impose any constraints on the Greek authorities, was published against a backdrop of mobilisation by the survivors and victims of the shipwreck and their lawyers, who in December 2024 filed a [petition](#) with the Public Prosecutor of the Maritime Court of Piraeus demanding a thorough investigation and criminal proceedings against the various officials in charge of the National Search and Rescue Coordination Centre and their superiors. These demands come up against the chronic flaws in the rule of law in Greece, where state officials and their superiors are not held accountable before the courts when accused of *refoulement*, violence against people on the move, or intimidation of human rights defenders, despite numerous complaints and

¹⁶ Migreurop, "[Face aux drames de la Manche, marchons pour la justice et la dignité](#)", 9 January 2025.

¹⁷ InfoMigrants, "[France : François Bayrou annonce de nouvelles mesures pour "reprenre le contrôle" de l'immigration](#)", 27 February 2025.

¹⁸ InfoMigrants, "[Drones, renforts policiers... à la frontière franco-italienne : des mesures prises "au détriment du respect des droits" des migrants](#)", 12 May 2023.

investigations¹⁹. At the same time, the Greek coastguard's deadly *modus operandi* continues: it is reported that they deliberately rammed a boat²⁰ with 27 persons on board, causing the violent death of eight of them, on 20 December last, off the coast of Rhodes.

- [Jurist News, "Rights Groups Criticize EU Commission Funding for Automatic Detention at Samos Migrant Center", 25 February 2025](#)

Five organisations operating in the Samos camp in Greece have sent an open letter²¹ to the European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs, to alert him, after his visit to Greece, about the detention conditions in the camp (arbitrary and automatic detentions, without individual assessment, overcrowding, restricted access to basic resources and services, worrying sanitary conditions, massive surveillance²² ...). The signatory organisations call for a better control of the conditions under which people on the move are received in Greece, particularly unaccompanied minors placed in "safe zones", to ensure that EU funding does not encourage, nor support, human rights violations.

The Samos camp has been criticised for several years for the degrading treatment to which people on the move are subjected there, with the financial support of the EU. More recently, on the 5th of February, the European Court of Human Rights upheld the *Human Rights Legal Project's* application for the application of provisional (urgent) measures²³ concerning the conditions of detention of four unaccompanied minors placed in the Samos camp's "safe zone". The living conditions of people on the move in Greek camps led a consortium of experts to describe "Dublin transfers" to Greece as incompatible with the obligation of States not to expose any individual to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment²⁴. In addition, since March 2022, the Court has ordered Greece to take provisional measures on 100 occasions in cases of risk of *refoulement*, involving a total of 1,140 people²⁵. However, in 58 of these cases, Greece did not take the measures indicated by the Court, and in 33 others, the applicants could not be found, which illustrates Greece's failure to comply with the Convention and the Court's decisions.

Italy

- [Corriere della Serra, "Nuovo decreto Albania, l'accordo sarà modificato: il piano del governo italiano per la competenza a Tirana", 10 February 2025](#)

The Italian government is said to be studying the possibilities of finding a new use for the camps in Albania, following the annulment by the Italian courts of three attempts to transfer migrants who had been rescued at sea to those camps²⁶. The Italian authorities are considering repurposing the camps as "pre-deportation" camps, where people on the move who are subject to a deportation decision could be detained while awaiting the enforcement of said decision. At this stage, Italy would not be ruling out waiving its jurisdiction over these centres, in order to transfer their management and exclusive responsibility to Tirana.

¹⁹ This is documented, among other things, in a report entitled "[Struggle for Accountability: The State of the Rule of Law in Greece](#)" produced by several organisations operating in Greece and published last January.

²⁰ See the joint press release issued by the Greek Council for Refugees and the RISE network, "[Neither an accident nor an incident - A brutal crime in the Aegean Sea](#)", dated 25 February 2025.

²¹ Amnesty International, "[Samos: Unlawful detention and sub-standard conditions must not become a blueprint for the EU Migration Pact](#)", 24 February 2025.

²² I Have Rights, "[NGOs on Samos uncover a covert operation against asylum seekers and the invasive use of technology in the Samos Closed Controlled Access Centre](#)", 21 January 2025.

²³ Human Rights Legal Project, "[Samos CCAC "safe" zone: ECtHR grants interim measures](#)", 5 February 2025.

²⁴ Legal Centre Lesbos, "[Expert Opinion: No Returns to Greece-Dublin Returnees Face Real Risk of Inhuman or Degrading Treatment](#)", 21 February 2025.

²⁵ Greek Council for Refugees, "[News from the field - February 2025](#)".

²⁶ See Melting Pot's summary, "[Quale futuro per l'accordo Italia-Albania?](#)", dated 4 March 2025.

However, this desire to "recycle" the camps could come up against obstacles of a diplomatic nature (Albania's public opposition to any change to the current protocol²⁷), as well as legal ones (compliance with the current "Return" Directive, or with the future European framework on returns, which is supposed to abolish it, and is to be presented in March by the European Commission).

- *Euractiv, "ROME - The European Commission backed Italy's stance in the Italy-Albania Migration Deal case, arguing that EU law allows states to designate countries as "safe" even if only for specific, well-defined migrant groups", 26 February 2025*

On the 25th of February, the Court of Justice of the European Union held a preliminary hearing in cases C-758/24 and C-759/24. These are the only countries whose nationals may be detained in camps in Albania pending an examination of their situation, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries (2023²⁸). The Court had already [ruled, on 4 October 2024](#), that a country could not be considered partially safe - even though this is made possible by the Pact on Migration and Asylum (adopted in 2024), which will come into force in June 2026. At the hearing, the European Commission supported Italy's hard-line position on externalisation. The opinion of the Advocate General is expected on 10 April²⁹, and the Court's ruling in May or June 2025.

Netherlands

- *Central Government of the Netherlands, "Europese Hof doet uitspraak over Nederlands inburgeringsbeleid", 4 February 2025.*

On February the 4th, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled³⁰ that the Dutch practice of: (I) making refugees bear the full cost of the civic integration courses and exams imposed on them; (II) offering them loans to pay for these courses, with repayment only due if they fail the exams within the set time limit; (III) systematically imposing fines if they fail the exams within this time limit; and (IV) setting the amount of these fines at unreasonably high levels, did not comply with EU law. On the other hand, the Court held that the compulsory nature of these courses and examinations could comply with EU law, provided that they take into account the specific needs of the beneficiaries, are based on requirements set at an appropriate level, and leave open the possibility of exemption for those with sufficient proof of integration. In a press release, the Dutch government announced that it had taken due note of the ruling and that it was considering the next steps to be taken in the wake of this decision, for its current and past integration system: since the law at the origin of the dispute (dating from 2013) has been amended (in 2022), two integration systems coexist depending on the date on which refugee status was granted. The government estimates that around 11,000 refugees are still subject to the 2013 law. Since 2022, the others have no longer been obliged to take out loans to finance their integration courses; however, they still risk fines if they fail the exam within the allocated time.

²⁷ La Repubblica, "[Decreto Albania bis, l'ostacolo ora è Rama: 'L'intesa non cambia'](#)", 11 February 2025.

²⁸ Migreurop, "[Protocole d'accord Italie/Albanie sur les migrations : une coopération transfrontière contraire au droit international](#)", 13 February 2024.

²⁹ Internazionale, "[I diritti violati nei centri di detenzione in Albania](#)", 26 February 2025.

³⁰ Court of Justice of the European Union, [Judgment of 4 February 2025 on case C-158/23](#).

Non-EU Member State European countries

United Kingdom

- Euronews, "[UK to deny citizenship to migrants who arrive via dangerous routes](#)", 12 February 2025

The United Kingdom has published new "guidelines" for its administration, imposing to refuse British citizenship to any foreigner who enters the country outside authorised border posts or in circumstances deemed dangerous (for example, by means of small boats or concealment in a vehicle). These guidelines will apply to all applications for naturalisation submitted on or after 10 February 2025. However, there seems to be some (uncertain) room for discretion in the wording of the measure, the expression "[...] will normally be refused [British citizenship]", implying that there may be exceptions to the rule.

This decision contradicts both the spirit and the letter of article 34 of the 1951 Geneva Convention, which states that "*the Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalisation of refugees [and] shall in particular make every effort to accelerate the naturalisation procedure and to reduce as far as possible the fees and costs involved in this procedure*". Moreover, the measure amounts to a form of criminalisation of illegal residence, which is prohibited by article 31 of the same Convention. An open letter has been sent by 148 representatives of NGOs, trade unions and religious organisations to the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, calling for this measure to be dropped.

- La Presse de Tunisie, "[Le Royaume-Uni alloue 6 millions de livres à la Tunisie](#)", 1st of February 2025

The Labour government has announced a £5 million investment in employability in Tunisia, to reduce the likelihood of people living in Tunisia seeking to return to the UK. A further £1 million has been pledged to support the IOM's "Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration" programme, and thus the deportation of people on the move in Tunisia to their country of origin. The British Foreign Secretary also mentioned "British technology" (night-vision goggles, drones) that would be provided to Tunisia to "*help save lives, reduce illegal migration and prosecute those responsible for migrant smuggling*".

In the context of the numerous allegations of serious human rights violations by Tunisia against people on the move on its territory ([see p. 2](#)), the United Kingdom's financial and material support for Tunisia illustrates the continuing British desire to externalise its borders, regardless of the human rights violations to which this policy contributes.

European Union

The "safe third country" concept

- Euractiv, "[EXCLUSIVE: Commission pushes to fast-track asylum rules review](#)", 24 February 2025

The European Commission is reportedly studying, a few months ahead of schedule, the revision of the "safe third country" concept, which the Asylum Procedures Regulation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum requires to begin before June 2025. The concept, which is distinct from that of "safe country of origin", allows a Member State to declare an asylum application inadmissible on the grounds that it could reasonably have been lodged in a non-EU Member State with which the person seeking asylum has a connection. The use of this concept by the Member States of the EU, Switzerland, Norway and Iceland varies (it is not defined in national law or not applied in 14 out of 30 States and is

only fully defined and applied on the basis of an adopted national list in 6 States³¹). The concept was to be reviewed by the Commission (but not necessarily amended) before the Pact came into force. According to information obtained by Euractiv, the Commission is considering, in line with requests made in a letter from 15 Member States in May 2024³² , the option of removing the connection criteria between an asylum seeker and the "safe third country" on the basis of which their application is deemed inadmissible. This would make it *de facto* possible to deport asylum seekers to any country in the world, as long as it agreed to take them in and could be considered safe under European law, regardless of the wishes of the person to be deported, or of the likelihood of their integration in said "safe third country". In addition, the Commission would reportedly be studying the possibility of abolishing the automatic suspensive effect of appeals against inadmissibility decisions, a principle enshrined in the current directive and not amended by the Pact. This change could result in a person seeking asylum being obliged to ask the judicial authority for permission to remain in the country pending a final decision on their case, while still being liable to be deported.

Refoulement

- [*InfoMigrants, "More than 120,000 migrants will be turned back at the EU's borders in 2024, according to a report by several NGOs", 25 February 2025*](#)

A report³³ , published on 17 February by nine human rights organisations from various European countries, highlights the systematic use of *refoulement* operations at the EU's external borders. In 2024, at least 120,457 foreign nationals were pushed back at the EU's external borders, without being given the opportunity to lodge an asylum application, in complete violation of the principle of non-*refoulement*. Bulgaria has allegedly carried out the most *refoulements* (more than 52,000, to Turkey), followed by Greece (more than 14,000), who was also condemned by the European Court of Human Rights on 7 January for a case of *refoulement*. At the same time, on 12 February, the Court began examining cases of *refoulement* to Belarus, allegedly committed by Poland³⁴ , Latvia³⁵ and Lithuania^{36 37}.

³¹ See the EUAA's analysis on page 13 of its [report](#) on the application of "safe country" concepts in asylum procedures.

³² The [letter](#) is available online on the Politico website.

³³ See the full report, "[Pushed, Beaten, Left to Die](#)" on the website of Croatia's *Centre for Peace Studies*, which helped to draw it up.

³⁴ See the [press release](#) from the European Court of Human Rights on the hearing of 12 February 2025 in the case of R.A. and others v. Poland.

³⁵ See the [press release](#) of the European Court of Human Rights on the hearing of 12 February 2025 in the case of H.M.M and others v. Latvia.

³⁶ See the [press release](#) of the European Court of Human Rights on the hearing of 12 February 2025 in the case of C.O.C.G and others v. Lithuania.

³⁷ The detailed arguments used against Latvia and Lithuania can be found [here](#)