

Crossing the Mediterranean



Editor's Note



Now let's face it. Nearly 1,000 migrants have been recorded dead or missing across the Mediterranean since the start of this year. As arrivals into countries such as Italy decline, the death toll continues to rise, exposing a grim contradiction at the heart of global migration governance. We have constantly watched the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) warn that

without accessible and safer pathways, people will continue to risk their lives at sea in search of asylum and basic human security.

In response, the European Union is advancing a controversial strategy: expanding “return hubs” in other countries to process and deport rejected asylum seekers. Framed as a solution to low return rates, the approach reflects a broader shift toward externalising migration control. Yet, recent efforts reveal its fragility. The United Kingdom’s Rwanda plan collapsed under legal challenges, while Italy’s agreement with Albania saw migrants returned within days. Negotiations elsewhere have stalled, and concerns persist over instability and reported abuses in potential host countries.

Human rights advocates continue to argue that such policies risk relocating vulnerability rather than resolving it, moving people away from Europe’s borders without guaranteeing safety or due process. As deaths mount in the Mediterranean, the question is no longer whether migration will continue, but whether the systems designed to manage it are compounding the high risks they claim to solve.

Cover Illustration

The Illustration depicts a drawing of migrant life jackets at sea, symbolizing the ongoing loss of lives along migration routes.

Migration Monitor

INCREASING DEATH TOLL ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN

2026 now constitutes one of the deadliest starts to a year since 2014, with the recorded deaths of nearly 1000 and missing persons reported. These casualties have been linked to migrants who constantly risk their lives in search of asylum and safer living conditions. The International Organisation for Migration has noted that safer pathways need to be established to reduce such tragedies. Despite a reduction in arrivals in Italy, casualties continue to rise amid incidents across the Mediterranean routes.

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africans have been vocal about the apparent strain immigrants are having on healthcare, education, housing, and jobs, expressing concerns that “millions” of undocumented migrants have stretched already limited resources. Multiple sources, however, have debunked these exaggerated figures. The President of South Africa has condemned these acts, stating that South Africans must not resort to vigilante actions, which he described as “un-South African”.



The Immigration Amendment Bill, introduced in 2024, aimed to protect immigrants and safeguard their rights, and requires detained individuals to appear in court within 48 hours. A visa

reprieve allows legally admitted foreign nationals with pending applications to remain in the country until finalisation, while Zimbabwean and Lesotho nationals have received an 18-month permit extension.

UGANDA

12 deportees from the United States arrived in Uganda under a new “third-country” agreement. The policy allows migrants denied asylum to be sent to countries with no prior ties, raising human rights concerns. U.S. officials say transfers are coordinated with Ugandan authorities, following a deal announced in August to accept individuals unwilling to return to their home countries.



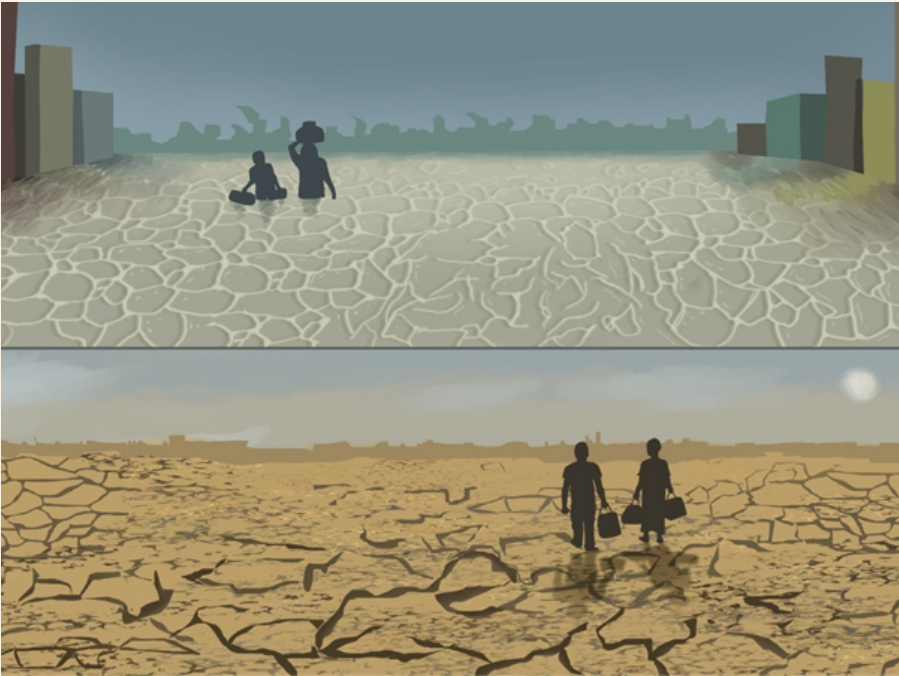
GHANA

Ghana becomes the first African country in 2026 to grant visa-free access to all African travelers, announced by President John Dramani Mahama. Effective May 25, Africa Day, the policy introduces free e-visas while maintaining security screening through an advanced digital



system. Rooted in Pan-African ideals and Kwame Nkrumah’s vision, it aims to boost mobility, tourism, and continental integration. It is also designed to ensure strict safeguards.

From our Writers



Why African Climate Migrants Need Legal Protection



Isah Madachi

From the worsening climate change effects in the Sahelian G5 to extreme weather events such as the South Sudan floods, record-breaking heatwaves in Kenya, as well as extreme water shortages in Ethiopia and Chad, climate-induced disasters have, over the past 10 years, caused about 250 million internal displacements,

averaging about 70,000 displacements every single day. Globally, about 40% of land has been degraded, impacting nearly half of the global population and putting biodiversity, access to water for drinking and irrigation, food security, and livelihoods at serious risk. This has contributed to the displacement of over 3 million people and left about 11 million people, most of whom are in Africa, in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

Nowhere is this crisis more critical than in the lives of the youngest victims, as it is estimated that nearly half of the world's children—about 40%—are at risk of the impacts of climate-induced disasters. In Ethiopia alone, the 2022 drought forced more than 320,000 children to be displaced across the country. However, as the number of countries facing extreme climate change hazards is projected to rise from 3 to 65, the lingering concern that remains largely

unaddressed is the absence of a legal asylum category for the millions of people, especially Africans, displaced solely by climate-induced incidents.

The Legal Vacuum Facing Climate Migrants

Both “climate refugees” and “environmental refugees” are ubiquitous terms that have been used in international migration discourse for decades but are not tied to any legal obligations. With the ongoing climate-induced polycrisis in Africa, migration is increasingly becoming an adaptation and survival strategy. However, climate migrants lack legal protection because they are not categorised as “refugees” and therefore do not qualify for asylum under traditional refugee definitions.

The primary obstacle to protecting climate migrants is the rigid 75-year-old definition of a refugee under

the 1951 Refugee Convention, which requires an individual to prove a “well-founded fear of persecution” by a human actor based on race, religion, nationality, or political opinion. Because “nature,” which causes mass displacement and migration, cannot be a persecutor under current international law, millions of Africans fleeing uninhabitable lands are left in legal limbo, often classified as economic migrants and denied the right to asylum.

What this gap reveals is that the millions of Africans projected to be on the move by 2050 already exist in a grey zone. They are moving but remain legally invisible. There is no recognised category for climate-induced displacement, so people whose farms have failed, whose lands and shelters have been destroyed, or for whom heatwaves and droughts have become unbearable are only pushed into the category of economic migrants. This

label denies them protection, excludes them from global climate discussions, and exposes them to restrictive immigration regimes in the U.S. and Europe. What we are witnessing is not just a migration challenge, but a legal erasure of people displaced by forces beyond their control.

Climate Change as a Driver of Forced Mobility in Africa

While conflict unarguably remains the primary cause of long-term displacement across the African continent, environmental disasters have taken the stage as the fastest-growing cause of new human mobility. In Sub-Saharan Africa, about 2.6 million people were forced into displacement in 2021. Research has indicated, for instance, that prolonged droughts in East Africa have resulted in widespread crop failure, loss of livestock, and severe food shortages, pushing many people to leave their homes and

migrate in search of food and water. The drying up of Lake Chad alone caused about 2.3 million displacements around Nigeria, Chad, and Niger. This is also evident in the over 1 million displacements of people due to extreme droughts in Somalia.

By 2024, it was reported that approximately 7 million people were affected across West and Central Africa due to flooding, resulting in the internal displacement of over 1 million people across 11 of the 16 affected countries. The G5 Sahel countries—Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania—are currently experiencing an extreme climate change polycrisis, characterised by prolonged heatwaves, persistent droughts, soil degradation, high temperatures, frequent flooding, and reduced agricultural productivity.

Environmental degradation is not peculiar to the Sahel, as about 75% of Africa's land area in its entirety is

deteriorating, thereby causing climate-related displacement. With over 70% of the African population dependent on climate-sensitive activities such as agriculture for their livelihoods, climate variability and extreme weather events undermine agricultural productivity and food security, resulting in further displacement and heightened vulnerability among farming communities. More worrying is that these current displacements are only the prologue to a much larger demographic shift, as the World Bank projects that climate change could displace as many as 86 million Africans by 2050.

The length of this story has been reduced for this magazine. You can read the full story on the [Diaspora Africa website](#).

**African Migration News
In Your Pocket Biweekly**

**Compiled By Migrants
For Migrants**



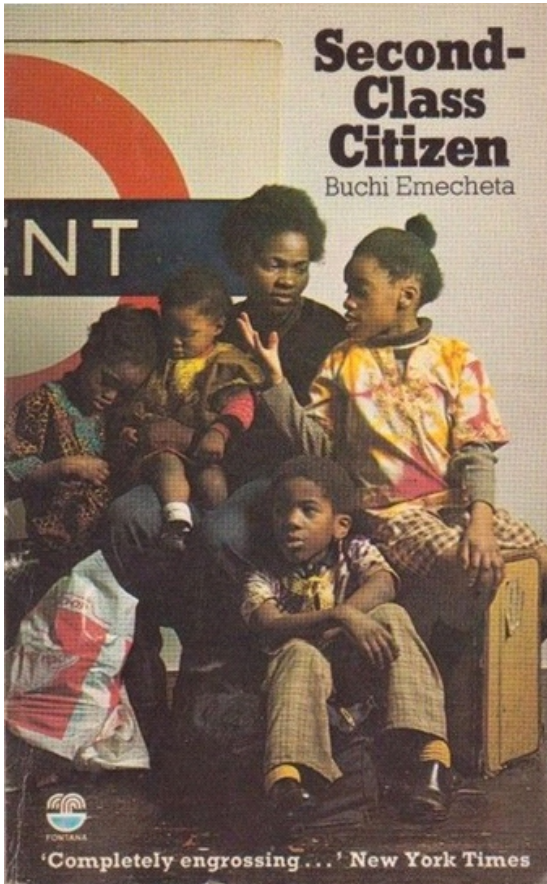
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If you need to send us questions or feedback about this magazine, write to us at info@diasporafrica.org

What to Read Now



Second Class Citizen follows the story of Adah, a strong-willed young Nigerian woman who dreams of migrating to the United Kingdom. From an early age, she sees the United Kingdom as a land of opportunity, but something so far outside her reach, as the people around her describe it to be.

Against all odds within her family, and with the right persuasion, Adah enters this new world. However, much to her dismay, she finds it extremely difficult to adapt, as she struggles with racism, economic

hardship, and gender inequality, all while single-handedly running her household financially and pursuing her dream of becoming a published author in a country that only recognises stories such as Thomas and Harold's. The novel explores migration not only in a physical sense but also as a difficult process of adjustment to a new world.

Resources



AFRICAN COMMUNITIES TOGETHER



African Communities Together helps African immigrants find free or low-cost assistance with immigration, jobs, and other needs. Each year, ACT helps hundreds of African immigrants with free, high-quality immigration legal services. They also provide free referrals to trustworthy nonprofit and government agency partners. The staff and volunteers at ACT speak multiple languages and actively outreach to underserved African communities.

www.africans.us

In Numbers

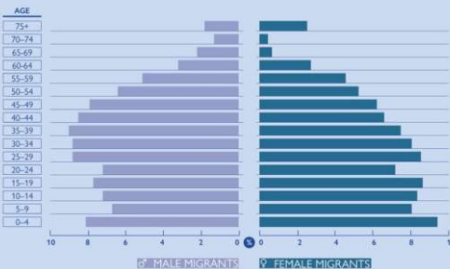
MIGRATION TO NORTHERN AFRICA*



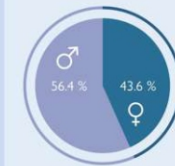
TOP 3 DESTINATION COUNTRIES



MIGRANTS IN NORTHERN AFRICA AT MID-YEAR 2020, BY AGE AND SEX



PERCENTAGES OF MIGRANTS AT MID-YEAR 2020, BY SEX



*Geographical region based on the United Nations Statistics Division's classification.

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020). International Migrant Stock 2020.

By mid-2020, the sub-region hosted about 3.2 million migrants, 6 of whom were from Africa. Refugees and asylum seekers made up 49%. Globally, 12.3 million migrants came from Northern Africa, mainly residing in Europe and Western Asia.

Source: Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The Mobility Gaze



The Qalawun Complex, 2019
Photo: Mohamed Mohamud

The Qalawun Complex in Cairo, built 1284-1285, represents the multicultural reality of 13th-century Cairo. Built by the Mongol prisoners of war, who were imprisoned during the Mamluk conflicts in the Levant. It served as an international

metropolis populated by Mamluks from the Caucasus and Turkey, and was a hub for refugees and individuals drawn to the sultan's patronage. The complex features artistic styles from Europe, Sicily, and the Islamic world, incorporating foreign elements such as Gothic-style windows (reminiscent of the Crusades) and decorative elements reminiscent of Sicilian art.

**Are you a traveller or just someone who is on the move?
Share with us intriguing photographs of your travels. Send us
a message on WhatsApp +44 7986 983956**

The Community Corner



Name: Adunola T.
Location: United Kingdom

What is that one significant experience as a migrant?

One of the worst feelings I have experienced was realising that a country I had never visited, that had never seen me, had the power to decide the trajectory of my dreams. My aspirations, studying, exploring new spaces, and connecting with knowledge, were held hostage by a system that does not know me. I cannot overstate the psychological weight of that. It is one thing to be denied a service; it is another to have your right to exist, to learn, and to grow while being judged by strangers. No country should hold the right to define the worth of another human being. Borders can be protected without humiliation. That protection should never perpetuate bias, stereotype, or the quiet erasure of dignity.

Got a migration experience to share or want to be featured? Send us a message on WhatsApp at [+44 7986 983956](https://www.whatsapp.com/business/profile/447986983956), and we will chat with you!

Join our community on WhatsApp, message us "Hi" [+44 7986 983956](https://www.whatsapp.com/business/profile/447986983956), and we will allow you into the large room!

When you JOIN THE COMMUNITY, you get free access to:

- The biweekly migration magazine
- Verified global migration updates
- Resources and opportunities
- Policy and data on migration explained simply
- Help decide what you want us to talk about in our next issue

We are building a newsroom & community that counters misinformation and bias in global mainstream news about African migration. We are working with local and cross-border journalists to challenge biased global reporting frameworks that shape migration. We want to disrupt extractive storytelling practices & expand the range of perspectives represented in international media discourse surrounding migration.

The magazine is independently funded by the Diaspora Africa team. Many updates featured in this publication are sourced from our Migration Monitor database, which tracks migration trends affecting African migrants and diasporic communities globally.

monitor.diasporafrica.org

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