

THE NEWSCAST

IN A NEW STUDY: EGYPT IS A SIGNIFICANT PARTNER WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE ISSUE OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION

The Egyptian Center for Strategic Studies stated that Egypt plays a crucial role in managing the issue of illegal migration with the European Union. Egypt is seen as a significant partner relied upon heavily to curb and combat this phenomenon, highlighting the necessity for a strategic cooperation agenda between the European Union and Egypt.

According to a study released by the center, the European Union acknowledges Egypt facing significant migration pressures due to its geographical location and borders, both eastern and western, which are adjacent to neighboring crisis-stricken countries. It noted that the issue of immigration and asylum policies dominated discussions and agendas of European Union meetings in 2023. By the end of 2023, European Union member states and the European Parliament agreed on extensive reform of immigration and asylum policy in response to unprecedented migration pressures and increasing waves of refugees reaching its borders.

The study emphasized that the European Union's attention has turned to Egypt as a crucial regional and strategic partner, especially after more than 36,000 migrants arrived in the Mediterranean region of Europe from January to March 2023. It highlighted cooperation between the European Union and Egypt in the field of immigration and border management since 2014.

The study also discussed Egypt's notable efforts at both domestic and international levels in combating illegal migration, international agreements signed since 2014, subsequent domestic measures and decisions, internal projects launched by the Egyptian government to combat the phenomenon, as well as laws enacted and the launch of the National Strategy to Combat Illegal Migration (2016-2026) and presidential initiatives, including the "Rescue Boats" initiative.



DUE TO DRIVING WITH A SUSPENDED LICENSE, THE DISPUTE OVER "UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS" IN FLORIDA, USA, HAS REIGNITED

The case of an immigrant killing a motorcyclist in Florida has reignited the dispute between Congress and representatives of US states regarding illegal immigration and the non-deportation of convicts to their countries of origin.

The incident dates back to February 20th when Byron Pinda, an undocumented immigrant, altered lanes for a 21-year-old motorcycle rider, resulting in his death after changing the trajectory of his leg. Pinda was subsequently arrested for driving with a suspended or revoked license and is awaiting trial in May on charges of driving with a suspended license resulting in the death of a motorcyclist.

Northwest Florida Representative Matt Gaetz stated that federal officials are evading his questions regarding the undocumented immigrant involved in the accident leading to the death of a man from Pensacola. Gaetz continued to inquire about how Pinda, an undocumented immigrant, entered the country and why he was allowed to stay. He also asked about Pinda's criminal record and the speed of his deportation if convicted in Florida.

However, the Department of Homeland Security declined to answer the questions citing privacy laws, stating that Pinda would need to sign off on the release of such information.

Gaetz expressed disappointment with the Department of Homeland Security for not being forthcoming regarding Pinda or the numerous questions related to arrests that have occurred at the southern border. He emphasized the lack of an effective extradition process for deporting undocumented immigrants, leaving issues to local governments, with law enforcement witnessing an influx of undocumented immigrants into local jails. Gaetz highlighted that Pinda's case is just one among countless criminal charges in Florida, directly fueled by the border crisis.

In a related context, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed bills increasing prison sentences for immigrants living illegally in the United States if convicted of driving without a license or committing felonies. DeSantis stated, "We do not tolerate illegal immigration, let alone law-breaking by illegal aliens who should not be here in the first place." He emphasized that the bills enhance Florida's ability to uphold the law.



THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT HAS REJECTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TEXAS' NEW BORDER SECURITY LAW.



The United States Supreme Court has ruled to prevent the implementation of Texas' new border security law, which was scheduled for March 5th of the past year. The law, approved by the Texas Senate, prohibits any foreign national from entering the United States illegally between ports of entry and allows state judges to issue deportation orders for anyone accused or convicted of violating the new law.

However, several opponents of the law, including the U.S. Department of Justice, filed a lawsuit before the U.S. Federal Court. Initially, a federal district judge issued the first order in the case, preventing Texas from implementing its law on March 5th. However, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reopened the case, allowing Texas to enforce its new law. This prompted the federal government to appeal the matter to the United States Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court had previously rejected a similar law to Texas' in 2012, enacted by the state of Arizona to regulate the entry of foreign nationals into the country. The decision was made by a majority of 5 votes to 3, specifying that the federal immigration law preempts the powers of the state.

Oklahoma enacts a law prohibiting the education of undocumented immigrants.



The Oklahoma House of Representatives approved a bill last Thursday aimed at reducing the number of individuals entering the state illegally.

Representative Neil Hayes, a Republican from Chickasha, authored House Bill 3071, which prohibits the use of state funds to provide benefits to undocumented immigrants unless the expenses are related to education, incarceration, or transferring an undocumented immigrant out of the state.

Hayes stated, "With porous borders and ineffective federal policies, every state in the United States is, in fact, a border state, and the proposed legislation would serve as a preventative measure to deter people from entering Oklahoma unlawfully."

He further clarified that the legislation does not prohibit the provision of services to undocumented individuals; however, if someone provides these services knowingly, they would not be eligible for state tax allocations.

The bill was approved by the House of Representatives with a majority of 71 votes to 17, and it will now move to the Senate for consideration.

SPAIN UNVEILS A GANG TRAFFICKING IN "BODIES OF DROWNED MIGRANTS" ON CHARGES OF VIOLATING THE SANCTITY OF THE DECEASED.

"BODIES FOR MONEY" IS THE SLOGAN RAISED BY A GANG LED BY A MOROCCAN TO REPATRIATE VICTIMS OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION TO THEIR FAMILIES IN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA.

The Spanish Civil Guard has announced the dismantling of a criminal network consisting of 14 members, led by an individual of Moroccan origin, specialized in scamming and defrauding relatives of victims of irregular migration who drowned while attempting to reach Spain.

Spanish investigations revealed that the network members created fake accounts on social media to communicate with the families of the missing individuals residing in Morocco and Algeria, offering false information about the whereabouts of their loved ones in exchange for money.

The investigations also uncovered the involvement of some employees of certain public institutions related to the identification process, such as the Forensic Medicine Institute, who facilitated the network members in obtaining illegal contracts to repatriate the bodies of migrants who died at sea.

According to the investigations, the network coerced their victims into signing power of attorney documents to handle repatriation procedures, as well as filing complaints and providing DNA samples for identifying the bodies or translation services, all with the precondition of upfront payment, claiming it was the only way to proceed in Spain to identify the bodies and repatriate them to their homeland.

The operation resulted in the arrest of 14 individuals and the questioning of another person, along with the seizure of €70,000 in cash and several vehicles and documents in 13 searched houses in the provinces of Murcia, Almería, and Jaén.

The detainees are facing charges of "disclosure of secrets, violation of the sanctity of the deceased, fraud, membership in a criminal organization dedicated to illegally obtaining contracts for body repatriation, forgery of documents, bribery, and negligence in the duty to prosecute crimes."



SPAIN: ARREST OF 3 INDIVIDUALS ON CHARGES OF "DROWNING 5 MIGRANTS"

The Spanish police have arrested three individuals on charges related to the deaths of five migrants who drowned on November 29th last year after being forced to jump off a boat off the coast of Cadiz, southern Spain.

According to a statement from the police, among the arrested individuals are two men and one woman. It was explained that 37 migrants had traveled on board the boat and paid between €3,000 (approximately \$3,720) and €12,000 (approximately \$13,000) to secure a place on the boat.

Four bodies were recovered within hours, and the fifth was found days later. The identities of the migrant victims were determined with the assistance of DNA samples from their families.



MOROCCO: 40 ILLEGAL MIGRANTS DROWN IN TWO MONTHS



The Central Office record of the Northern Observatory for Human Rights has revealed the drowning of 40 Moroccan irregular migrants during January and February 2024 in the Mediterranean Sea while attempting to reach southern Spain or the cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

Furthermore, it disclosed that more than 700 Moroccan irregular migrants successfully reached only the city of Ceuta, with a daily average attempt rate reaching up to 100 attempts, taking place between Fnideq-Ceuta or Belionesh-Ceuta.

The observatory announced the drowning of 16 young men while attempting to swim to the shores of Ceuta and the loss of 15 others. Additionally, 9 individuals drowned when a boat capsized off the shores of Nador-El Hoceima. Most of them were between the ages of 16 and 30.

The observatory noted an increase in unaccompanied minor migration attempts towards the shores of Ceuta, starting from the beaches of Fnideq, with a swimming rate of more than 10 kilometers, taking between 10 to 15 hours for the Fnideq-Ceuta maritime section, or Belionesh-Ceuta, which takes two hours on average, facing strong and cold marine currents, with increased danger due to the rocky nature of its shores.

The observatory emphasized that the rising rates of irregular migration among Moroccan youth are due to the deterioration of economic and social conditions, as well as the absence of social institutions, notably schools.

Over the course of 10 years, Egyptian efforts to combat illegal migration have intensified.

The European Union has turned its attention to Egypt as a significant regional partner in combating illegal migration and preventing daily boat flows to its shores, especially given Egypt's long history of cooperation in combating illegal migration and managing its borders with its neighbors.

Egypt has been a significant destination and transit point for Europe since the late 1980s, in addition to being a source of migrants. Cooperation between the European Union and Egypt in the field of migration and border management is not new. However, since 2014, there has been a significant increase in communications, meetings, and consultations.

Regarding Egypt's prominent efforts to combat illegal migration internationally:

- Egypt participated in the Rome Declaration on the "EU-Africa Migration Initiative," named the "Khartoum Process," in November 2014. It also actively participated in the preparation and formulation process at the "Valletta Summit" in Malta on illegal migration in November 2015.
- In October 2018, Egypt signed an agreement with the European Union to combat illegal migration and human trafficking, including 7 projects in 15 provinces worth 60 million euros, to address the root causes of illegal migration.
- In February 2019, Egypt hosted the first Arab-European summit between the Arab League and the European Union to discuss migration issues.
- Egypt and Italy signed a protocol on combating crime and illegal migration in 2018, renewed in 2020, reflecting the confidence of Italian and European security agencies in the expertise and training capabilities of Egyptian agencies.

On a regional level:

- Egypt hosted the second regional conference of the African Union and the African Century Initiative in Sharm El-Sheikh in September 2015, presenting a range of African development projects and ideas to address the root causes of illegal migration.
- Egypt chaired and hosted the second ministerial meeting of the African Union and the African Century Initiative on human trafficking and migrant smuggling in June 2016.
- Egypt hosted the first-of-its-kind conference in Luxor in November 2017, focusing on combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking, with a focus on unaccompanied minors.
- Egypt hosted the first regional forum for national coordinating bodies to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling in Africa in November 2019.
- In July 2020, Egypt launched its component of the project to dismantle human trafficking networks and migrant smuggling in North Africa, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

At the local level:

- The National Strategy to Combat Illegal Migration "2016-2026" was launched, targeting the most vulnerable groups susceptible to exploitation by smugglers, including youth aged 18-35, children, their families, and those arriving in Egypt illegally.
- The "National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking" was established.



YEMEN: ARRIVAL OF 97,000 IRREGULAR MIGRANTS DURING 2023

The Yemeni government announced that more than 97,000 migrants arrived in the country during 2023, a significantly higher number than the recorded figure in 2022, which was around 70,000.

Yemeni Health Minister Qasim Buhaibeh stated that over 97,000 migrants arrived in the country the previous year.

During his meeting in Aden, he called on Darweesh Diyar, the medical coordinator of Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) in Belgium, to implement interventions regarding migrants, emphasizing that the large number of migrants casts shadows on the host community and puts significant pressure on the healthcare facilities and services provided therein.

Yemen serves as a destination for migrants from countries in the Horn of Africa, especially Ethiopia and Somalia, with many aiming to transit through it on a difficult journey to the Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia.

Despite the war affecting Yemen, it faces the harsh reality of displacement, as per another report by the International Organization for Migration, which mentioned that in 2023 there was a decrease in the number of internally displaced persons. The displacement tracking matrix recorded more than 21,066 individuals who were forced to flee their homes in search of safety and shelter elsewhere during the first six months of the same year.



PRESIDENT ABDEL FATTAH EL-SISI: EGYPT REAFFIRMS ITS COMMITMENT TO COMBATING ILLEGAL MIGRATION

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi stated that discussions with European Union leaders addressed the importance of continuing to confront common challenges, foremost among them being illegal migration. This came during a joint press conference with the President of the European Commission, the current President of the European Council, and the heads of state and government of Cyprus, Italy, Greece, and Austria at the Presidential Palace last Sunday.

President Sisi added that Egypt has reaffirmed its commitment to combating this phenomenon within the framework of existing cooperation and enhancing legal migration routes. He also highlighted the agreement on the necessity of supporting Egypt's efforts, which succeeded in halting migration flows from Egyptian shores since 2016, as well as hosting 9 million foreigners in Egypt who enjoy social and health services similar to Egyptians.

Cairo is hosting an Egyptian-European summit aimed at elevating relations between Egypt and the European Union to the level of strategic and comprehensive partnership, with the goal of achieving a qualitative leap in cooperation and coordination between the two sides to achieve common interests.

President Sisi welcomed the President of the European Commission, the current President of the European Council, and the heads of state and government of Cyprus, Italy, Greece, and Austria at the Presidential Palace, and held bilateral meetings with Egypt's European guests to discuss ways to enhance bilateral relations.



GREEK PRIME MINISTER: GAZA CRISIS EXACERBATED ECONOMIC SITUATION IN EGYPT AND CONFIRMS: PROVIDING AID OF \$8.06 BILLION TO SUPPORT THE EGYPTIAN ECONOMY



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis stated that there are more ambitious new projects within the framework of cooperation between Egypt and Greece, such as in the field of gas, explaining that cooperation is also underway in the field of illegal migration. He added during the Egyptian-European summit to elevate relations between Egypt and the European Union to the level of a strategic and comprehensive partnership that if Egypt prospers, it will assist other unstable countries like Sudan and Libya, continuing: "We call on the innocent who feel desperate not to open new paths."

He further stated, "We are working closely with Egypt, and we welcome working with Egypt over the decades," noting that this partnership could serve as a model to be emulated.

The Greek government had announced an increase in the number of illegal migrants by up to 400% during February alone, with Palestinians ranking high in these flows, and Egyptians increasingly following suit.

The increase in migrant arrivals was accompanied by a European Union delegation led by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis to sign an aid package worth \$8 billion aimed at assisting migrants.

Migration and Asylum Minister Dimitris Keridis said: "There is no doubt that Egypt suffered the biggest repercussions of the Gaza crisis, as if the country and its economy had not been under enough pressure, the Gaza crisis and the influx of Palestinians exacerbated the situation," leading to a deterioration of the situation and prompting Egyptians to flee en masse.

Since the beginning of the year, the islands of Crete and Gavdos in southern Greece have been hit hardest by the daily influx of Egyptians landing on their shores in search of asylum to the west via Libya.

The European Commission has provided an aid package worth \$8.06 billion to support the Egyptian economy and help stop the wave of illegal migration. Under the planned agreement, the first installment of \$1 billion will be distributed immediately as emergency financial assistance, while the rest will be linked to economic reforms.

Greece has been a preferred gateway for migrants and refugees from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia to the European Union since 2015, when nearly a million people arrived on its shores, causing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Since then, thousands more have died at sea.

The migration crisis has led Greece to adopt a tough approach to deter illegal flows, leading to accusations of pushing migrants on rickety boats, endangering their lives, and subjecting them to torture upon arrival, although authorities usually deny these accusations.

Twenty-nine irregular migrants drowned in "two incidents" in Turkey on Friday.

Twenty-one irregular migrants drowned last Friday off the coast of the province of Canakkale, western Turkey, due to the sinking of their boat, including 5 children.

Authorities in the province stated that search and rescue operations were conducted by a plane, a drone, 18 boats, two helicopters, maritime police, the National Medical Rescue Unit, and the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD).

On the same day, the governor of Canakkale, İlhami Aktaş, announced the death of 8 people due to the sinking of a rubber boat off the coast of the district of Ayvacık, indicating that they are working to determine the number of migrants who were aboard the boat before the incident.

Turkey serves as a major transit point for migrants and refugees from Central Asia and countries in the Eastern Mediterranean, many of whom head towards Greece, which is considered the main gateway for migrants to Europe and the European Union.

