

THE NEWSCAST

DESPITE THE FAR-RIGHT PORTUGUESE CHEGA PARTY'S REJECTION OF IMMIGRATION, TWO OF ITS MEMBERS ARE ACCUSED OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Two members of the far-right Portuguese Chega party are facing charges related to illegal immigration. The seriousness of the charges lies in the party's program, which succeeded in electing 50 deputies in the recent elections on March 10th. The program outlines measures to control immigration, stating the need to combat the immigration file and aims to subject immigration to surveillance, asserting, "You can only stay in Portugal as an immigrant if you do not commit crimes, and if you commit crimes, you will be expelled."

The party proposes to establish annual quotas for foreigners entering Portugal based on "the qualifications of immigrants and the needs of the Portuguese economy," following an assessment of the sectors most in need of labor in Portugal.

The party issued a statement aiming to compel immigrants in the country to contribute for five years before receiving social support, those citizens who, in 2022, were responsible for earning more than 1600 million euros in social security.

The law also aims for asylum seekers to remain in "temporary support centers" until approval, in addition to "returning those who violate Portuguese criminal law to their homeland."

The accusations point to the deputies José Dias Fernandes and Marcus Santos. The right-wing deputy, José Dias Fernandes, worked and lived as an illegal immigrant in France for several years, migrating to France in the seventies, admitting to being "expelled twice" before obtaining a residence permit and working there.

Meanwhile, Deputy Marcus Santos, the fifth elected member in the Porto district, was arrested twice for immigration fraud in the state of Florida, USA, where he was apprehended at the age of 25, in December 2004 and February 2005.



BRITAIN LAUNCHES AN ONLINE CAMPAIGN AGAINST ILLEGAL MIGRATION IN VIETNAM

On March 25th, the British Home Office launched a campaign on social media in Vietnam to deter migrants from coming to the United Kingdom illegally, following similar successful campaigns in Albania, France, and Belgium.

The campaign in Vietnam marks the latest phase in the UK government's global efforts to warn migrants of the consequences of entering the UK illegally.

The UK will harness social media advertisements on platforms like Facebook and YouTube to target individuals who may be considering illegal migration, specifically in Vietnam, a Southeast Asian country known as a source of irregular migration to Britain.

The electronic advertisements include posts that emphasize the consequences of traveling to the UK illegally and the risks individuals may face, in addition to highlighting the dangers of indebtedness and exploitation by human trafficking gangs facilitating small boat crossings.

The campaign warns potential migrants about the realities of living illegally in the UK and the inability to access public services or financing.

The advertisements also feature testimonials from immigration enforcement officers and border forces within the Home Office, who often encounter illegal migrants sold into modern slavery or engaged in unlawful work by smugglers.

The social media campaign directs users to a new website containing additional video content from immigration enforcement officers and border forces describing some harrowing cases they have encountered and their experiences in rescuing migrants from small boat peril in the English Channel. British Home Secretary James Cleverly stated, "Expanding our campaign to include Vietnam, another key partner in our efforts to address illegal migration, will help us save more lives and weaken the business model of criminals who profit from this vile trade."

A meeting is scheduled for officials from both countries, Britain and Vietnam, in London on April 17th, where the British Home Office has observed an influx of migrants from Vietnam among the irregular migration flows brought by criminal gangs to Britain via the English Channel using small boats.

It's worth noting that during the period of 2022-2023 alone, up to 76,000 people arrived in England via the English Channel, and the number of deaths on this maritime crossing tripled in 2023 compared to the previous year. Illegal migrants are forced to live in inhumane, overcrowded, and dangerous conditions by criminal gangs, with no access to basic hygiene, healthcare, or legal work.



DISCOVERY OF A MASS GRAVE FOR IRREGULAR MIGRANTS IN LIBYA



The International Organization for Migration has called on Libyan authorities to conduct an urgent investigation into the discovery of at least 65 bodies of irregular migrants in a mass grave southwest of Libya. The organization urged Libyan authorities to cooperate with United Nations agencies to "ensure the dignified recovery of the deceased migrants, identify them, and deliver their remains to their families appropriately."

In a statement, the organization noted that the circumstances of the migrants' deaths and their nationalities are currently unknown, with their deaths likely occurring during smuggling operations across the desert.

The spokesperson for the International Organization for Migration stated, "The cost of inadequate measures is reflected in the increasing loss of human lives and the harsh conditions migrants find themselves in." He pointed out that every report of a missing migrant or loss of life represents a grieving family seeking answers about their loved ones or acknowledging the tragedy of loss.

According to the organization, at least 3,129 deaths and disappearances were recorded in 2023 along the Mediterranean Sea route, which it described as the deadliest migration route.

Tunisia: 11 migrants drown and 663 others rescued in a week



The Tunisian security authorities announced yesterday that their forces recovered two bodies and rescued 180 illegal migrants of various African nationalities in the Mediterranean Sea.

A statement from the Tunisian Ministry of Interior clarified that the migrants were intending to reach European shores before their boat broke down off the coast of the city of Sfax, south of Tunisia.

In a related context, the Tunisian National Guard announced that the coast guard retrieved the bodies of five migrants off the country's coast, bringing the number of fatalities during the week to 11 migrants.

They added that the coast guard rescued 663 migrants amidst a noticeable increase in the flow of migration boats from Tunisia and Libya towards Italian shores in the past few weeks due to improved weather conditions.

THE EUROPEAN UNION FUNDS TUNISIAN SECURITY WITH \$177 MILLION TO REDUCE MIGRATION

The European Union has announced that it will provide Tunisian security forces with \$177 million over three years to reduce illegal migration, in addition to €105 million provided by Brussels, aimed at combating illegal migration, announced last year.

The EU's announcement of its financing plan comes as a result of political pressures to reduce the number of arrivals to Europe, leading to increased funding for countries from which migrants originate.

The financing program has identified the security entities that will receive funding within the Tunisian security forces, including a training academy for the Tunisian National Guard. Additionally, EU funds will provide equipment such as radars and boats for the National Guard.

It's worth mentioning that the Tunisian security forces have intensified boat interception operations in the Mediterranean Sea since the increase in the number of migrants arriving in Italy in August last year. Approximately 81,000 people were intercepted during sea voyages in 2023, double the number in 2022.

Financial Times reported that the European Union and its member states are avoiding pressuring Tunisian authorities for fear of losing communication channels and are concerned about the possibility of a renewed increase in the number of migrants, which could cause political problems domestically. An Italian government official stated that it is important for Europe to communicate with Tunisian authorities to address security threats, adding, "We apply gentle pressure, but extortion is not effective."

The newspaper explained that the European Union will spend more on migration over the next three years, with about two-thirds of the expected amount, €278 million, allocated for security and border management. The remaining funds will finance schemes such as repatriating migrants to their home countries, combating human trafficking, and protecting refugees.



SPAIN: ARRIVAL OF 14,000 UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS DURING 3 MONTHS

The Spanish authorities announced the death of three individuals last Friday after a boat carrying a group of migrants encountered difficulties off the southeastern coast of the country, leading to partial sinking.

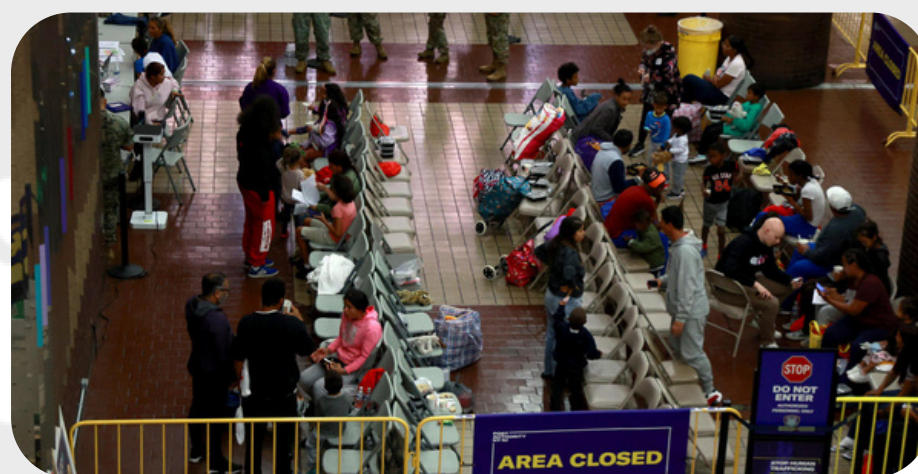
The Spanish maritime rescue service reported that two survivors and three bodies were found aboard a partially submerged boat off the coast near the town of Motril.

The survivors stated that the boat was carrying 12 people when it set sail from the African continent six days ago, leading authorities to suspect that seven others may have fallen into the sea.

The Ministry of Interior reported that 14,405 migrants arrived in Spain by boats during the period from January 1st to March 15th, compared to 3,528 in the same period last year. The majority of them arrived via the Canary Islands.



CHICAGO REAFFIRMS ITS CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS



The city of Chicago has announced the rehabilitation and reopening of five parks to the public after they were closed and used as temporary shelters for undocumented immigrants.

Chicago's mayor stated that the city is returning the parks to the public after their use to shelter undocumented immigrants, emphasizing the city's accommodation of undocumented immigrants and its openness in welcoming them.

Brandon Johnson, spokesperson for the mayor's office, mentioned that the city will "decompress" the temporary shelters from five facilities in the park area once all immigrants are transferred to another shelter. The city's park district will then begin the process of renovating the parks for public use. He noted that immigrants from Gage Park, Broadway Armory Park, Brands Park, Legion Park, and Piotrowski Park will be relocated to nearby shelters in the coming weeks to "minimize disruptions to education and work."

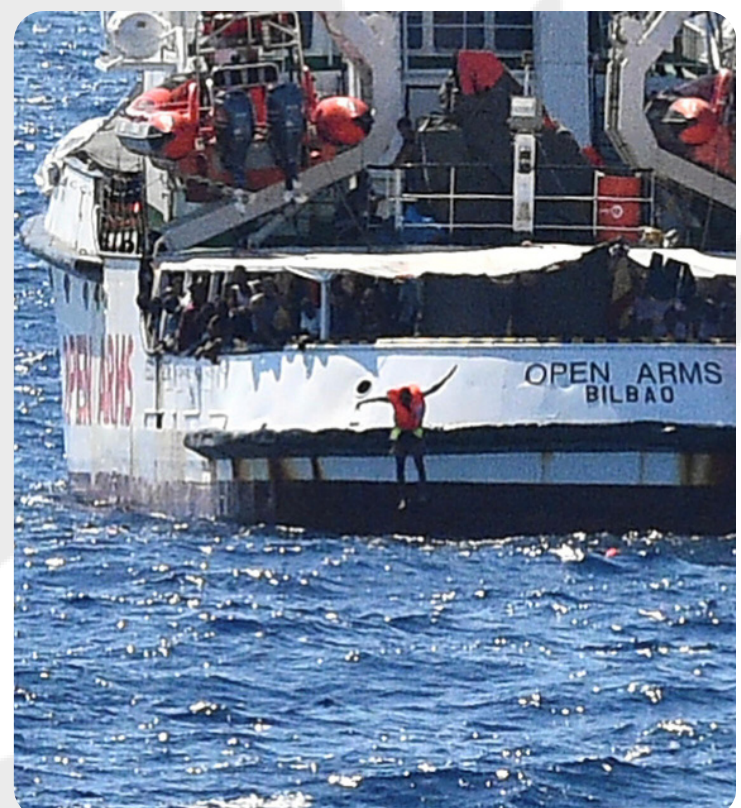
Johnson stated in a release, "We are grateful to local council members and communities that have embraced new neighbors with open arms, and we are pleased to see these park facilities returned to their intended purpose in time for summer programming."

The Intelligence Agency launches a national campaign to raise awareness about the risks of illegal migration

Dr. Diaa Rashwan, head of the General Intelligence Agency, announced the launch of a national campaign to raise awareness about the risks of illegal migration next April. The campaign aims to educate young people and their families about the dangers to their lives and finances associated with these adventures, as well as to introduce alternative opportunities inside and outside the country. This includes legal migration opportunities for skilled workers in foreign job markets, which the government regulates to ensure the safety and rights of Egyptian citizens in suitable work environments anywhere in the world. Additionally, the campaign promotes alternative opportunities within the country through small-scale projects supported and encouraged by the state.

Rashwan emphasized that the campaign aligns with the agency's mandate and role in implementing the main objectives of the National Strategy to Combat Illegal Migration (2016-2026). This strategy emphasizes the importance of raising public awareness about illegal migration by developing and intensifying media coverage of the issue and directly engaging with target groups in the provinces most affected by illegal migration to discuss risks and alternatives. The campaign also involves developing training programs for influential groups in these provinces and shaping societal perceptions about the value of work, especially among youth, through direct communication channels.

Dr. Ahmed Yahya, head of the Internal Media Sector at the General Intelligence Agency, stated that the campaign will be launched in all provinces and will utilize various forms of direct communication, including field visits, educational seminars, artistic performances, youth conferences, training courses, and mobile outreach efforts in villages and areas most affected by illegal migration, such as Alexandria. Additionally, social media platforms will be utilized. The campaign will be executed in collaboration with relevant government bodies, including local development authorities in the provinces, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Immigration, the National Council for Women, the National Council for Human Rights, as well as non-governmental organizations and associations in Egyptian society.



A JOURNALISTIC INVESTIGATION REVEALS AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF MIGRANTS FROM LEBANON TO CYPRUS

An investigative report by Independent Arabia revealed the submission of 11,617 new asylum applications in Cyprus, including 6,148 requests from Syrians who arrived by sea. Additionally, 1,713 undocumented migrants have arrived since the beginning of the year, including 1,134 Syrians who arrived by sea.

The investigation, titled "Illegal Migration in the Mediterranean from Lebanon... Poverty or Drowning," stated that hundreds of Syrians and Lebanese choose to embark on illegal migration journeys despite their dangers.

Regarding Cyprus's policy on migrant returns, the Cypriot Minister of Interior highlighted a decrease in arrivals and new applications, stating, "For the first time, we have a positive rate in comparison between the number of people leaving Cyprus and those arriving on the island. In 2023, the return rate compared to arrivals reached 116%, meaning the departure rate exceeded the arrival rate. Additionally, the return rate reached 138% in January 2024."

Currently, Cyprus seeks to reclassify Syria as a safe area to facilitate the return of migrants from there.

The investigation also highlighted the plight of those stranded at sea, with some of the survivors of drowning incidents recounting their ordeals. One such incident involved the sinking of an unauthorized boat carrying 85 Syrian passengers from Lebanon to Cyprus on December 12, 2023. The DNA of some of the passengers was found near the Tartous coast.



63,000 DEATHS AND DISAPPEARANCES ON THE ILLEGAL MIGRATION ROUTE IN 10 YEARS

A report released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has revealed alarming trends in migrant deaths and disappearances over the past decade, coinciding with the 10-year anniversary of the launch of the organization's Missing Migrants Project.

The report states that more than one-third of migrants who have died and whose countries of origin could be identified come from conflict-affected countries or those with large refugee populations.

Information on the identities of missing migrants is largely incomplete, with the report noting a significant increase in the number of unidentified deaths as a key finding.

Titled "A Decade of Documenting Migrant Fatalities," the report provides insights into the past ten years, during which over 63,000 deaths and disappearances during migration have been documented – with a higher number of deaths recorded in 2023 compared to any previous year.

Drowning remains a major cause of death, with nearly 60% of documented deaths during migration linked to drowning, including over 27,000 deaths in the Mediterranean Sea alone.

It is likely that the more than 63,000 recorded deaths and disappearances during migration over the past decade represent only a small fraction of the actual number of lives lost worldwide.

The report highlights the need to improve data collection efforts to accurately assess the scale of the problem and address broader challenges of unsafe migration. Over 37,000 deaths where gender or age information is not available were recorded, with the true number of women and children fatalities likely to be much higher.

Despite political commitments and media attention, migrant deaths are on the rise, with 2023 registering the highest annual death toll ever recorded: over 8,500 deaths. Trends in 2024 are raising similar concerns, with the number of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea nearly as high as the previous year, despite fewer arrivals.

The report notes that 5,500 women have died on migration routes over the past ten years, with approximately 3,500 children identified.



A PUBLIC OPINION POLL REVEALS THE FAILURE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF MIGRATION



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said that there are more ambitious new projects within the framework of cooperation between Egypt and Greece, such as in the field of gas, indicating that cooperation is also taking place in the field of illegal migration. Mitsotakis added during the Egyptian-European Summit to elevate the relations between Egypt and the European Union to the level of a strategic and comprehensive partnership, that if Egypt prospers, it will help other unstable countries like Sudan and Libya, stating, "We call on the innocents who feel desperate and not to open new paths."

He continued, "We are working closely with Egypt, and we welcome working with Egypt over the decades," noting that this partnership could be a model to follow.

The Greek government announced an increase in the number of illegal migrants, reaching 400% in February alone, with Palestinians ranking high in these flows, followed increasingly by Egyptians.

The influx of migrants was attended by a delegation from the European Union accompanied by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, to sign an aid package worth \$8 billion aimed at helping migrants.

Minister of Migration and Asylum Dimitris Keridis said, "There is no doubt that Egypt has suffered the greatest repercussions of the crisis in Gaza, as if the country and its economy did not face sufficient pressure, the Gaza crisis and the influx of Palestinians worsened the situation, leading to an exacerbation of the situation and prompting Egyptians to flee en masse."

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

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

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

The migration crisis has led Greece to take a strong approach to ward off illegal flows, prompting accusations that it is pushing migrants onto rickety boats, endangering their lives, and torturing them upon arrival, although authorities usually reject these accusations.

Kuala Lumpur: Arrest of 59 Illegal Migrants

The police in Kuala Lumpur have arrested 59 illegal migrants in the city of Kepong, who were residing in 22 housing units.

The Director of the Immigration Department in Kuala Lumpur stated that the migrants, comprising 37 men and 22 women, are from Myanmar, Indonesia, India, and Nepal. They were detained under the provisions of the Immigration Act 1959/63 for offenses related to overstaying and not possessing valid travel documents.

The police have issued 25 summonses to the owners of the buildings where the illegal migrants were residing, alleging that they were harboring and renting out the premises to foreigners.

