

Sub-Saharan Refugees in North Africa

Victims, not Criminals

Presented by Rekaya Hafi...

**...a fearless humanitarian activist
& entrepreneur dedicated to justice,
equality and intercultural solidarity**



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INTRODUCTION

"On this journey, no one cares if you live or die."



Deaths Along Migration Route

(2021- May 2024)

Mediterranean Sea

8,381

Sahara

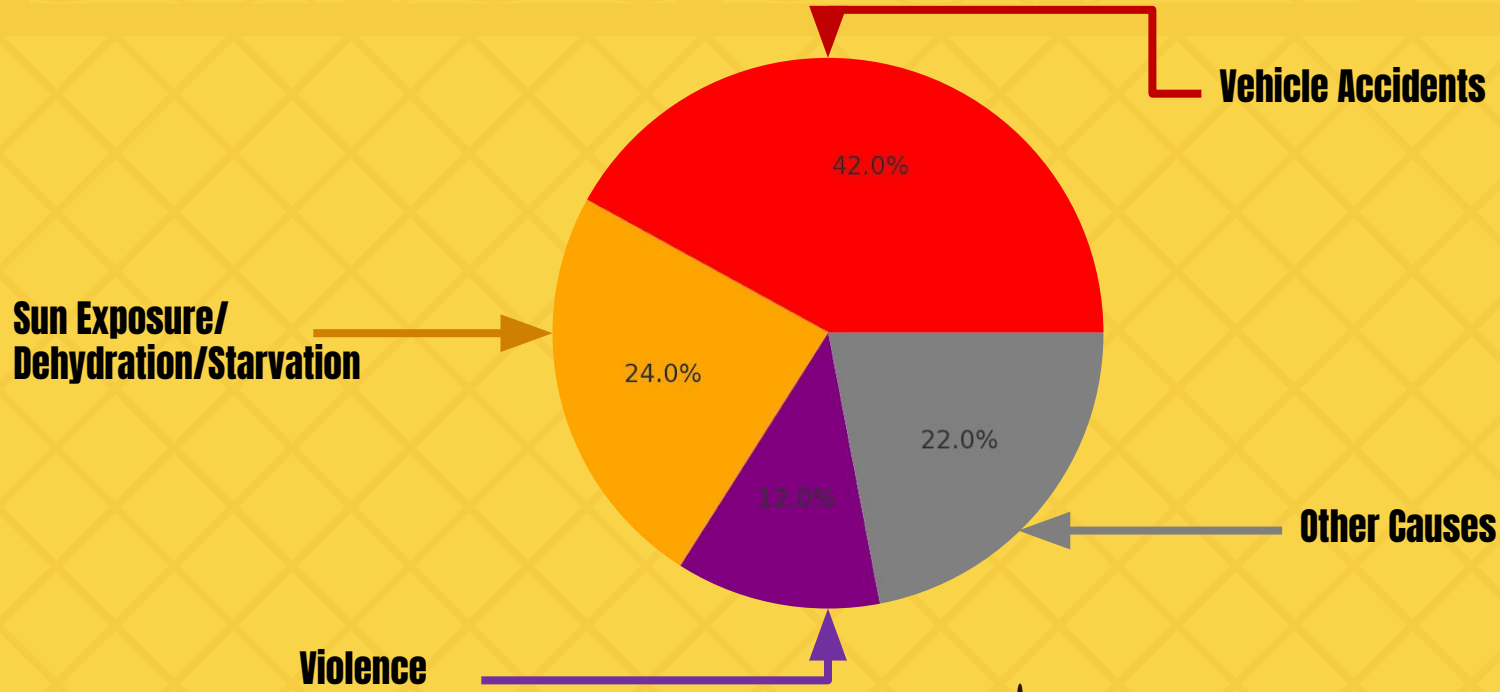
1,031

UNDER-REPORTED!

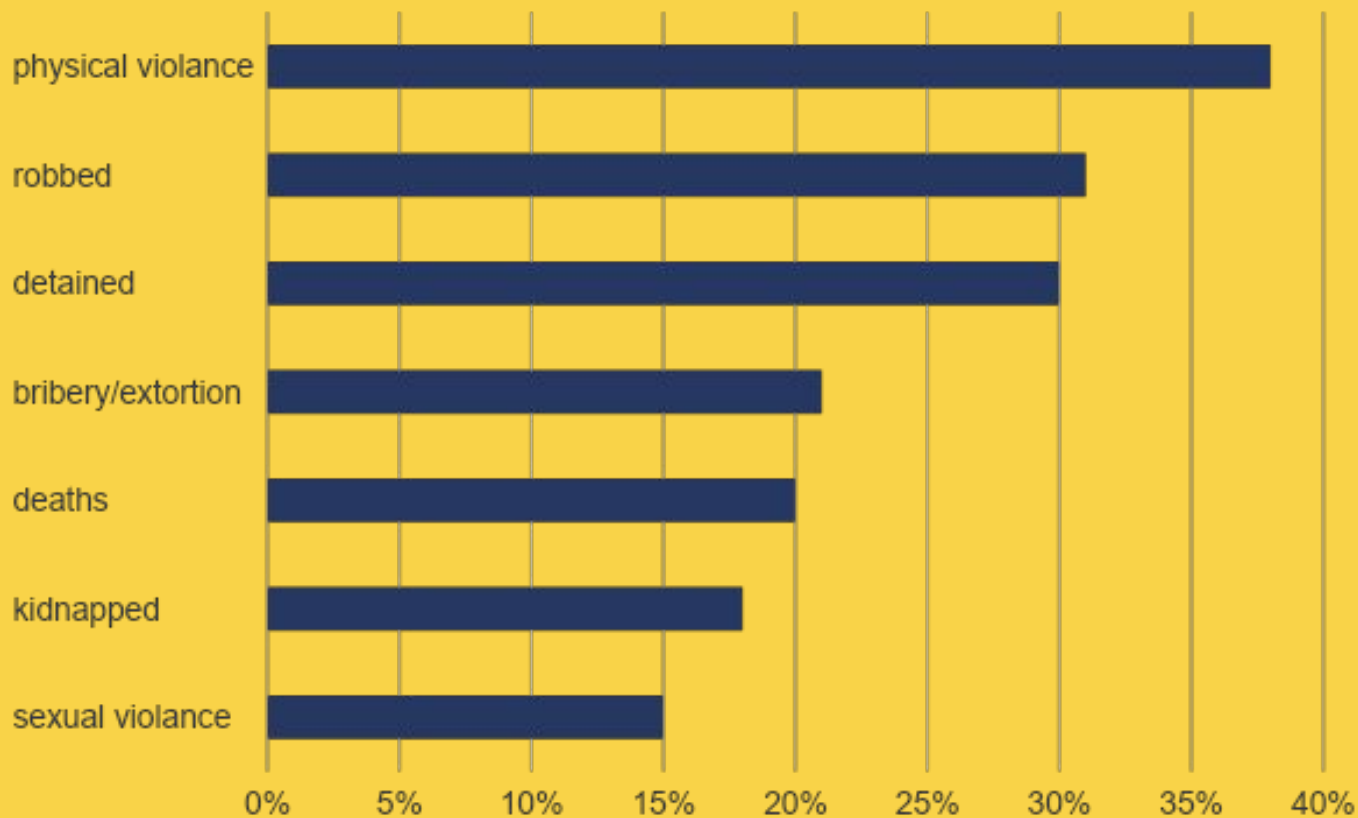


The Sahara is a graveyard , but there's little humanitarian intervention.

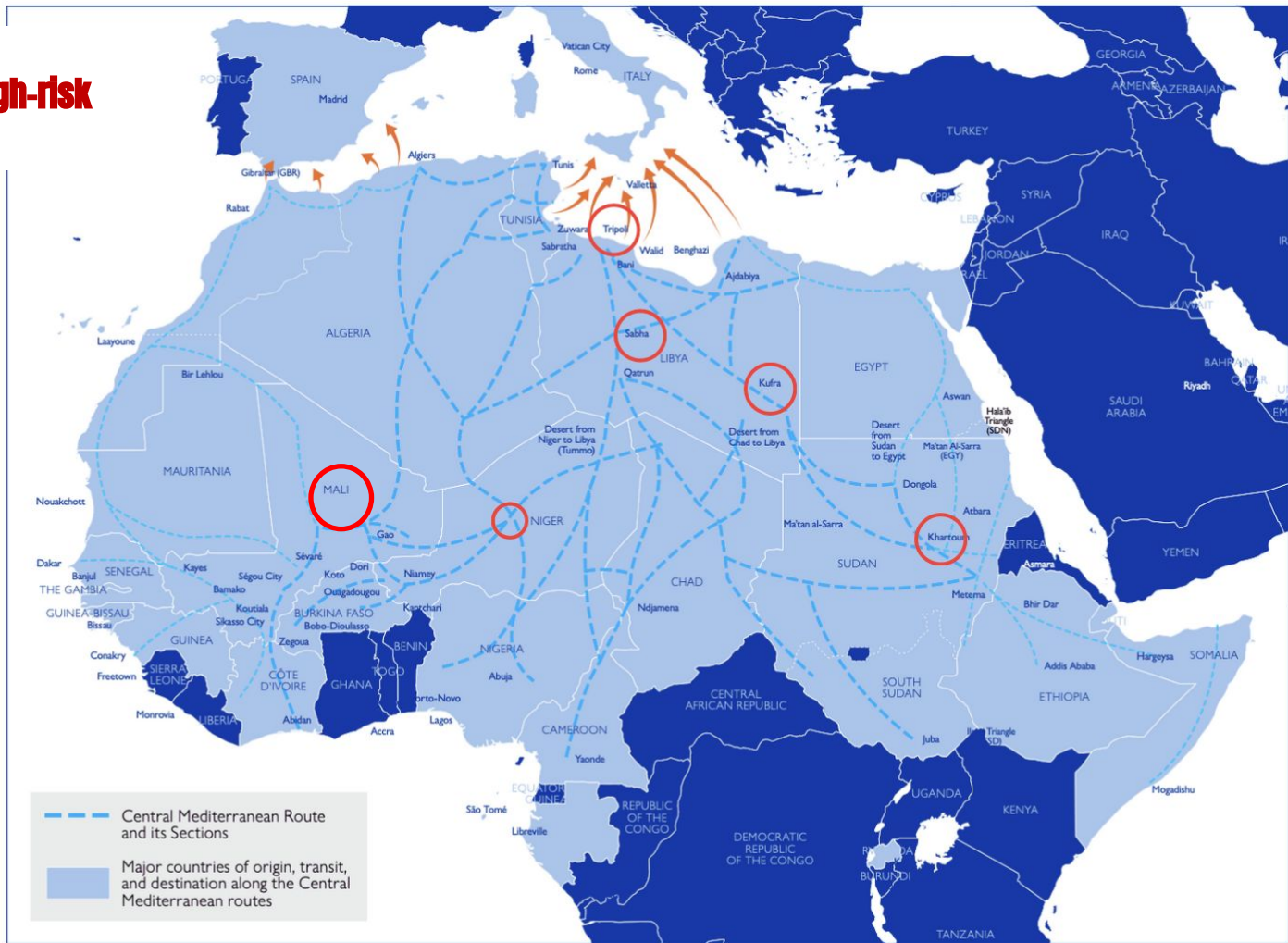
CAUSES OF DEATHS IN THE SAHARA DESERT



Reported Abuse Against Sub-Saharan Migrants (2020-2023)



Migration route map highlighting high-risk zones



Source: UNHCR Geneva, 2023.



Libya, the Sahara Desert, and Mali are among the most **dangerous locations for Sub-Saharan migrants .**

WHY DOES THIS ISSUE MATTER?



Refugees are criminalized instead of protected.





**Many face detention , deportation , or
abandonment in the desert instead of
receiving asylum.**



**North African countries often treat migrants
as **criminals** , not as people seeking **survival** .**

The world is turning a blind eye.





Media focuses on **Mediterranean crossings,
but the real crisis happens before they even
reach the sea.**

Main Argument

Sub-Saharan Migrants are victims of systemic failures—not criminals.

The image is a complex composition. On the left, a group of people, including children and adults, are on a boat, some wearing life jackets. In the center, a large, semi-transparent blue globe is superimposed over the scene. On the right, a silhouette of a person riding a bicycle is visible against a sunset background with clouds. The overall color palette is dominated by warm tones from the sunset and the blue of the globe and water.

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01

WHY DO SUB-SAHARAN AFRICANS MIGRATE ?



Extreme poverty & Unemployment



Poverty in Africa : I.E.S. Valle Del Sol, n.d.

Colonial Legacies & Foreign Exploitation



By Adem Kılıç in (United World International, 2021)*

Corruption & Political Mismanagement



Namakula (2021)



Photo: Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, 2024

Climate Change & Environmental Disasters

02

THE HARSH REALITY IN TRANSIT

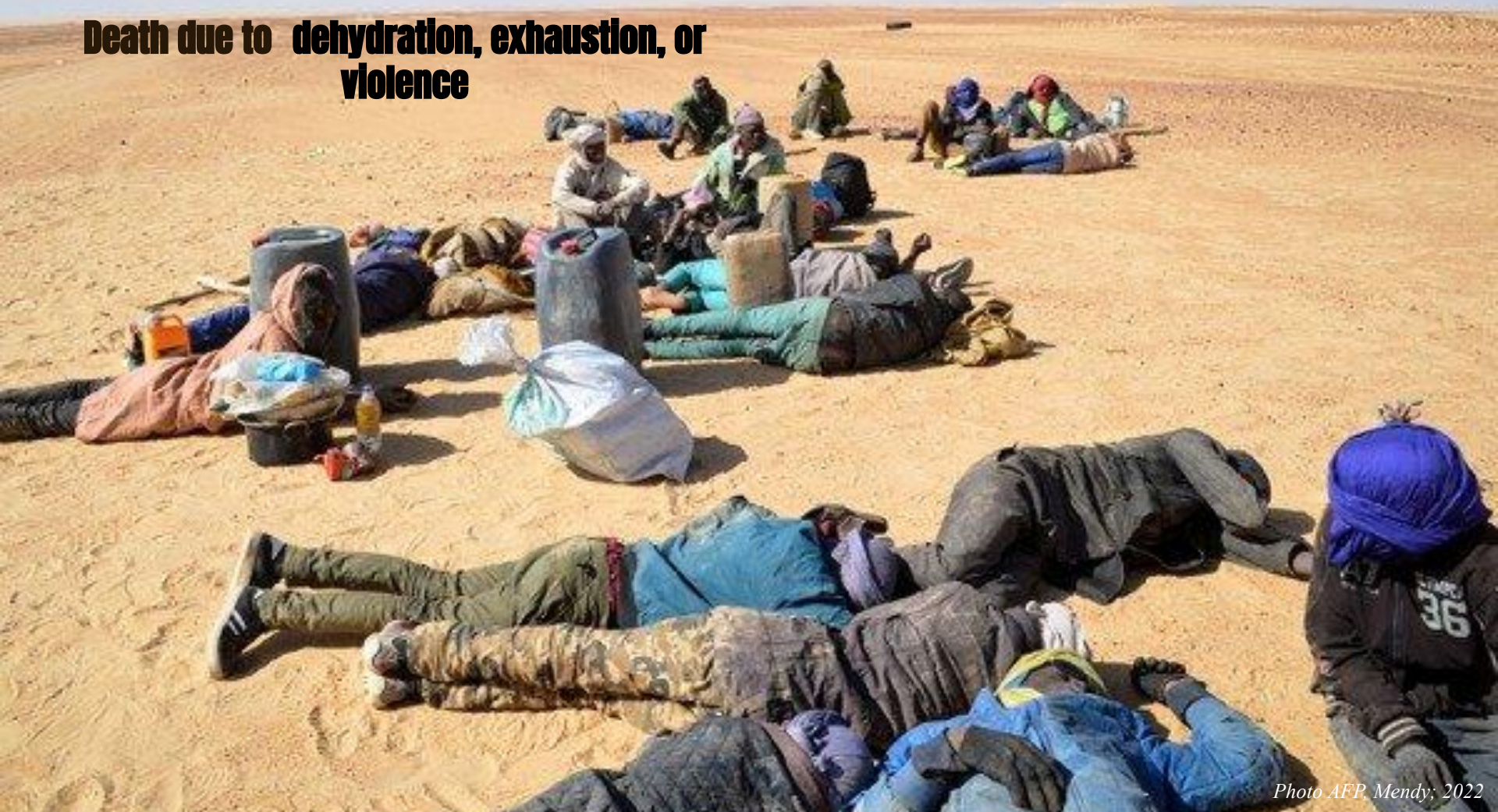


A group of migrants, including men, women, and children, are gathered in a desert camp. They are sitting on the sand, some under makeshift shelters made of cardboard boxes and blankets. The scene is arid and desolate, with a clear blue sky and a flat horizon. The migrants are wearing simple, worn clothing, and some are using blankets for shade. The overall atmosphere is one of hardship and displacement.

Deadly Migration Route

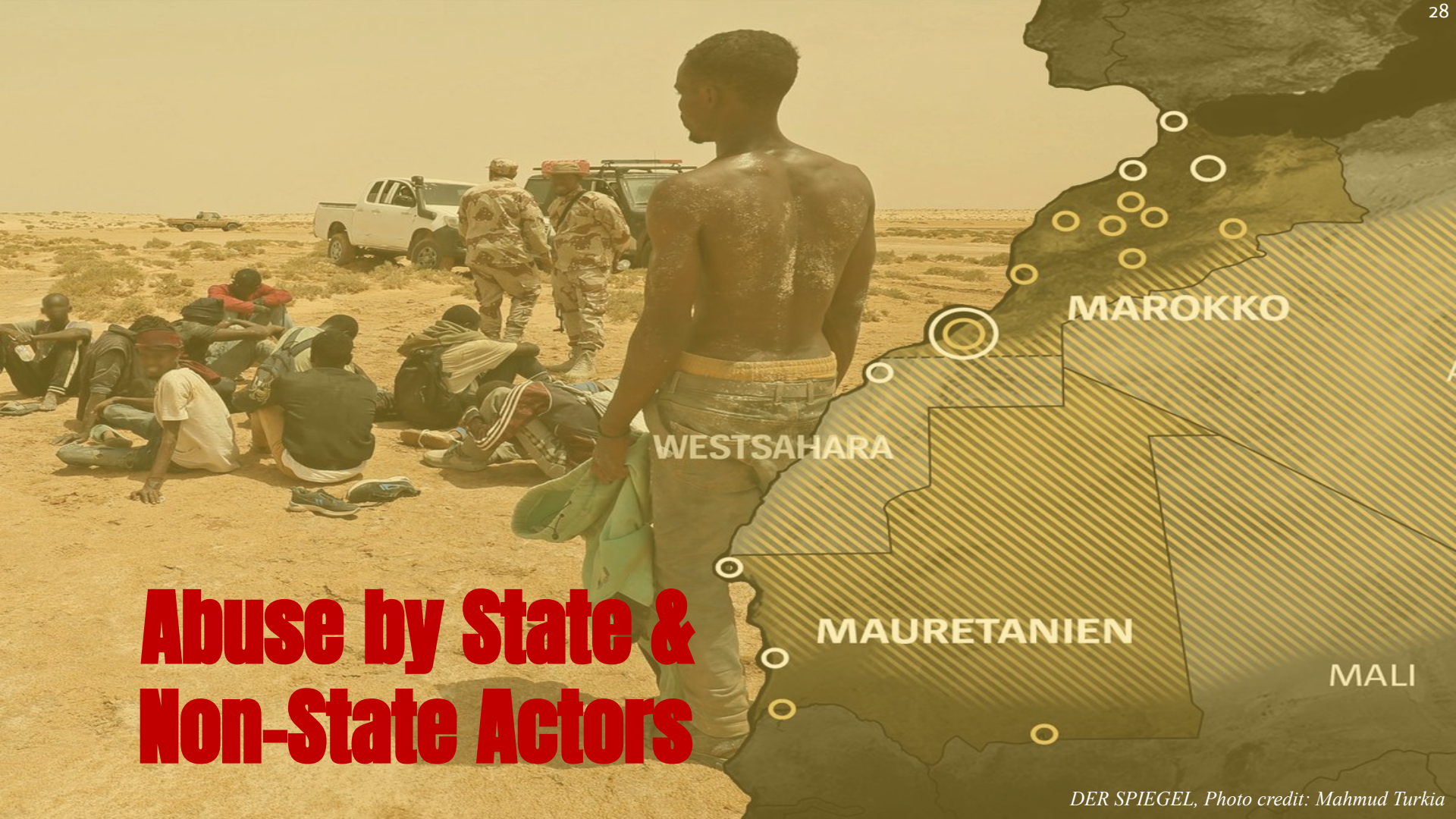
Photo credit: Mahmud turkia; InfoMigrants, 2024

Death due to dehydration, exhaustion, or violence



Abandoned migrants in the desert





Abuse by State & Non-State Actors

The background is a solid yellow color with a repeating pattern of barbed wire. There are white cloud shapes in the top left and top right corners. At the bottom, there are black silhouettes of rocks and small plants.

Migrants are commonly targeted by both **state and non-state actors (security forces, traffickers, and armed groups).**



Many migrants from West Africa cross the Sahara on their way to the Mediterranean coast. Often, they fall into the hands of human traffickers

Traffickers in Libya are accused of keeping migrants under inhumane conditions to extort their families for money

A Libyan border guard stands near migrants from sub-Saharan African countries who claim to have been abandoned in the desert



**Sub-Saharan African migrants gather
in a field where they live, in
Jebiniana, Tunisia September 4,
2023.**

**More poverty and
difficult living conditions**

African migrants are seen living in makeshift tents, set in a field, after their arrival in Sfax to reach Europe via Mediterranean Sea in the hope of a better life conditions.



Sfax, Tunisia on 31 January, 2024 [Yassine Gaidi/Anadolu Agency]

A post in a Facebook group created by some people in North Africa: A campaign against the settlement of African Sub-Saharan in both Tunisia and Morocco.



Racism & Xenophobia



OUTCOME

COMMITTED **CRIMES** BY SOME MIGRANTS IN NORTH AFRICA, DUE TO MISTREATMENT AND HARSH CONDITIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BROUGHT BACK FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA.



THE LEGAL & POLITICAL FAILURES

Why are refugees treated as criminals instead of victims?

No Legal Protections

North African countries (except Morocco) **do not have strong asylum systems** .

Refugees are **criminalized** , **detained** , or **deported** **instead of protected** .

The EU's Role in the Crisis

Europe **Funds North African governments** to stop migration at all costs.

Instead of helping, **Western policies worsen the suffering** of migrants.

"Criminality is the consequence of violence, exploitation, and systemic neglect—not the choice of migrants."



03

WHAT CAN BE DONE ?



Short-Term Solutions

Ensure Legal Protection

(Stop criminalizing refugees,
allow asylum)



End Detentions & Mass Expulsions

(Close illegal centers, stop desert
expulsions)



Increase Humanitarian Aid

(Shelters, food, medical
assistance)

Stop Western Complicity

(End EU's funding of violent border
controls)

Providing healthcare to detained refugees and migrants



Long-Term Solutions

Economic Fairness
(Fairer trade, stop foreign
resource exploitation)



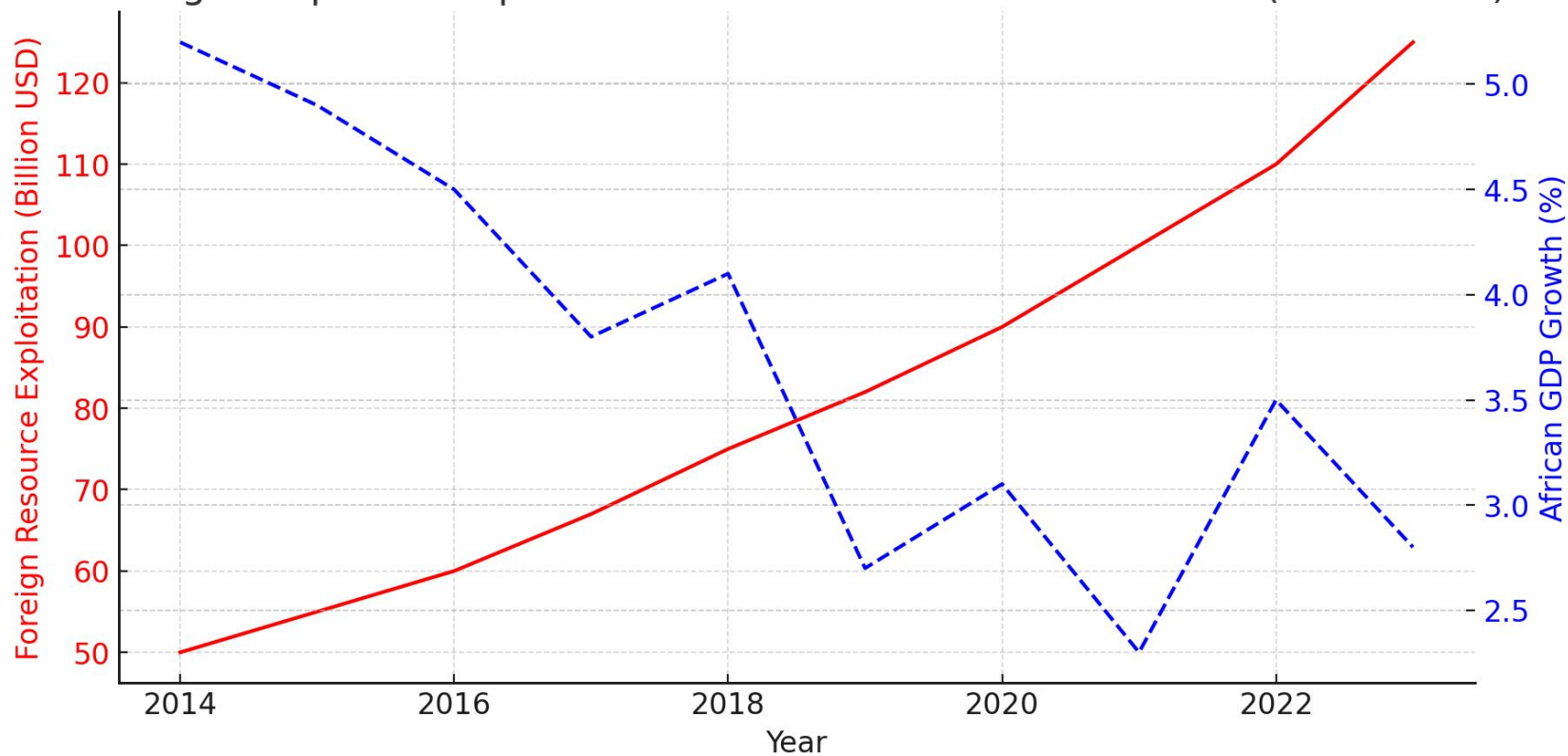
Good Governance
(Support African-led
democratic reforms)

Climate Justice
(Help Africa adapt to
desertification &
droughts)



Change the Narrative
(End racist policies & media
misinformation)

Foreign Corporate Exploitation vs. African Economic Growth (2014-2023)





**EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY: FROM
AWARENESS TO ACTION**

PUBLIC AWARENESS & SOLIDARITY

- EDUCATION & MEDIA CAMPAIGNS
- CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT
- POLICY PRESSURE & ACTIVISM

📌 **Example: In Germany & France** , civil groups mobilize mass protests & community sponsorship programs for refugees.

NGO & GRASSROOTS RESPONSE

- **SUPPORT NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES** IN ASSISTANCE OF SUB SAHARAN REFUGEES.
- **SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT** IN SUB SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES (VOLUNTEERING)
- **MEDICAL & TRAUMA SUPPORT**
- **BUILD A DIALOGUE BRIDGE**

THE NEED FOR AN EU-LED RESCUE PROGRAM

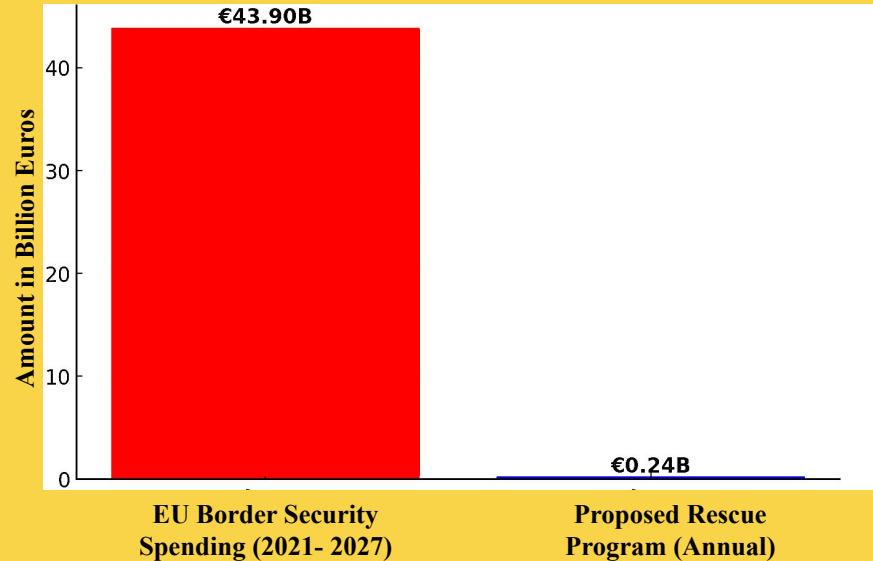
- **20,750+ DEATHS SINCE MARE NOSTRUM ENDED (2014-2024)**
- **MARE SOLIDALE PROPOSAL: A NEW EU HUMANITARIAN RESCUE PROGRAM**

✓ **Border security spending is 183x higher than what's needed for a rescue program.**

✓ **Mare Solidale (or similar initiatives) would cost a fraction of the EU's current budget.**

✓ **This spending disparity raises ethical and policy questions—is the EU prioritizing border militarization over humanitarian solutions?**

EU Border Security Spending vs. Proposed Rescue Program



04

Call for Action



**"The crisis is not migration
itself—the crisis is our failure to
protect those fleeing for their lives.
A human-rights based approach is
the only path forward."**



A dramatic photograph showing a person in a dark jacket and orange life vest climbing over the side of a boat. The sun is high in the sky, creating a strong lens flare and silhouetting the person. In the background, several other people are visible, also wearing orange life vests, looking towards the sea. The overall mood is one of urgency and risk.

**Governments,
international
organizations, and
civil society must
act now—before more
lives are lost.**



Co-funded by
the European Union

**THANK
YOU!**

Q&A

Please register your attendance below :)



Please also fill out this evaluation form!



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