



MS Security Council - "Mediterranean Refugee Crisis"

Numerous war-torn, politically unstable, climate-afflicted, unequal, and generally dangerous states in Northern Africa and the Middle East have produced an excessive amount of refugees over the past few decades. In the search for some semblance of a better life, these refugees have been making their way, largely, to Europe—particularly by crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Crossing borders through landlocked countries in Eastern Europe has proven more difficult than the previously mentioned method, so almost all of the migrant traffic into Europe is concentrated on the southern shores of Italy, due to its (relatively) relaxed policies on immigration. Migrants, upon entering Europe face dire conditions, like living without income in alleyways, being exploited for their bodies, and many times, being forced into detainment centers. However, they made the choice to leave their old homes behind because anything is better than where they came from. For example, in the dictatorship turned power vacuum of Libya, people are being taken prisoner without having committed crimes, and without any trial. They are subject to torture for seemingly no reason, and often die in prison. A Moroccan woman detained in Italy interviewed by VICE News said, “I would rather spend my whole life in prison than return to Morocco.” She was forced, in her home country, into a marriage with a man who

beat her so badly she lost her unborn child. It is increasingly dangerous to be black in Tunisia, as violent acts against them have been on the rise. Many other Mediterranean migrants come from Syria, a country plagued with radical terrorism and constant war.

A particular “gateway” into Europe for these migrants is the coast of Libya. This is a country currently coming out of total civil war, and another source of emigration. Refugees from all over the neighboring regions come here in multitudes, and their methods of crossing the Mediterranean, while being their only hope, are horribly unsafe. Migrants will typically coordinate means to cross the sea beforehand, by paying what is, for them, a large sum of money. They pay smugglers to tell them where and when they need to go, and are often misled greatly. Smugglers make promises that their vessels will be spacious and tough, able to withstand the rough seas towards Italy. However, the ships are essentially always overcrowded, deteriorated, and the distance they are to cross is much greater than they are told. The boats often break down hardly a third of the way through their journey, either capsizing or sitting idly while the occupants die from dehydration or exhaustion. NGOs such as Italy’s RESQ and Germany’s Sea Watch consist of volunteers who ride out into the Mediterranean in search of refugee vessels in need of rescue. Italy’s government had once funded Mare Nostrum for a year, but as they tightened their policies on immigration, they cut funding to the organization.

Thousands of refugees who attempt to cross the Mediterranean to get to Europe die in their efforts. The lucky few who do make it enter the less of two dire worlds. They live in complete poverty, many with zero income or shelter, fall victim to violent crime, have zero credentials and cannot make use of social safety nets, may be put into detainment camps for indefinite periods, and are just as often deported right back to where they came from. The countries receiving these migrants do not currently have safety nets in place for refugees, so the

situation is largely at a standstill as more and more refugees accumulate in Europe. Greece sees a plurality of refugees from Syria, while Italy sees almost all of its refugees from Africa.

European countries like France, Italy and Germany have seen a rise in right-wing opposition to the influx of refugees. Dubbed “Save Europe”, there exists an idea among European nationalists that as more migrants from islamic countries come in, European cultures will begin to wash away and be replaced with islamic ways of life—particularly sharia law. As islamic terrorist attacks have hit Europe in the past two decades, there has been a rise in harassment and violent crime on muslims in Europe. European nationalists, some being elected officials like Hungary’s PM Viktor Orban, and France’s president Emannuel Macron, really, do fear that immigration by muslims will destroy European culture. Many people see NGOs that go out of their way to rescue migrants stranded in the sea as a pull force, something that brings migrants into a country. Others say that these refugees will strive for a better life regardless of the presence of help in the form of NGO vessels.

Italy is currently understood as the European country most suited for taking in migrants, as they possess the island of Lampedusa, relatively close to Libya. Not only is it proximity to Africa that draws migrants to Italy, but their policies on immigration.

Countries seeing their people leave in search of a better life in Europe are happy to reclaim them when they are deported from their destinations. Those leaving contribute to brain drain, which is the loss of able-bodied, young people capable of working and contributing to society and the economy. Governments vying for the control of Libya imprison people for their own reasons, and allowing people to leave is in a sense a loss of control over their country. Tourism contributes largely to the economy of Morocco, and as the world catches wind of the droves of people leaving the country due to civil unrest, their economy takes a hit. Turkey sees

the largest amount of Syrian refugees worldwide, however, they are directly bordered with Syria, so the Mediterranean Sea does not necessarily play the same role with Syrian refugees in Turkey. The United Nations Human Commissioner for Refugees have 50,000 refugees registered, however the agency is not allowed access to disembarkation points. The United Nations has urged for more regular migration channels, decriminalized rescues, and cooperation as this crisis impells.

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