Nadine Sika

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Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria

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Introduction

Irregular Migration is an important aspect of international debates today. According to UN estimates, more than one third of the world’s migrant population is irregular. However, the ILO estimates that irregular migrants amount to 2.8 - 6 million, between 11 and 23 percent of the total world migration stock (ILO 2009, 3). Irregular migration is migration that “…occurs outside of the rules and procedures guiding the orderly international movement of people” (IOM 2009). Irregular migrants vary from individuals who have been trafficked, or smuggled, to workers who enter the country of destination with a valid visa but become irregular after their visa ends. Refugees and asylum seekers are also under the umbrella of irregular migration. The sending country regards a migrant as irregular when the migrant travels without a valid travel document or does not fulfill the administrative requirements that pertain to leaving the country of origin (IOM 2009).

Migrants find themselves in irregular situations in a number of ways. The person who leaves his country of origin with an intention to enter another country illegally is an irregular migrant (Samy 2008, 3). The pattern of irregularity may change from one country to the next, and within one country. For example, a person may be a regular migrant in one country, whereas in the same situation in another country he would be irregular. A person may enter a country with a valid visa and become irregular after their visa expires (Fargues 2009, 12). An important aspect of irregular migration is its close association with regular migration. Irregular migration is normally preceded by a regular stay in a specific country, and many regular migrants were irregular at some point in time (Allasino et al 2004; School et al 2000; De Haas 2007). An irregular migrant may overstay his/her visa, and work illegally. However, this status can become regularized after obtaining a work permit or becoming a resident through marriage. In cases where

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migrants cross many borders to arrive at their desired destination, an individual’s status will often change from regular to irregular many times. Countries vary in their legislation and in the way they perceive illegal migration. Citizens who belong to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are able to travel freely between member states. However, when these individuals migrate to other destinations, they risk their legal status, changing it from regular to irregular. Throughout this study it is important to note that irregularity is migration or residency that is in direct conflict with the existing legislation of the receiving country. In many instances governments tolerate irregularity as a means to meet labor demands in their country (Adepoju 2005; De Haas 2007).

Irregular migration has economic, political and social consequences in all countries involved. This phenomenon changes the pattern and the status of the countries involved in the process; especially ‘transit’ countries geographically situated at the crossroads between popular sending and receiving countries. Migrants who fail to reach their ultimate destination will often remain in a transit country. The fact that transit countries are often themselves also sending countries further complicates the issue. Algeria and Tunisia have long been sending countries, with their migrants generally traveling to Southern Europe and especially to France. However, in the 1990s, the increasing flow of sub-Saharan migration in the region altered Algeria and Tunisia’s status to receiving and transit countries as well.

According to Fargues (2009, 2), there are 5.6 million migrants in the Southern Mediterranean region, of whom 3.6 million are irregular. This phenomenon is growing systematically in North Africa, with the highest numbers of irregulars in Libya. Tunisia and Algeria have irregular migrants at a lower rate, but the phenomenon has been increasing at a fast pace for the last decade. This study attempts to shed light on the complexity of the situation in North Africa and the reasons for the growing number of migrants in Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria. The study will also investigate the policies enacted by North African countries with their Northern neighbors and the effect of these policies on irregular migration in the Mediterranean Basin.
North African Countries as Main Transit Routes of Migration

The concept of transit migration routes emerged recently in the literature and needs to be defined for the purposes of this study. Transit migration is basically “…a temporary stay by an individual in one foreign country with a view to moving on to another” (De Tappia 2004, 113). From a legal perspective, transit migrants are temporary and the demands they place on the transit country are limited. However, in reality transit migrants may remain in the transit country from a few days to a few years.

There is a dramatic increase in migration from sub-Saharan countries to Northern Africa and Europe as a result of conflicts and wars in the region. The economies in these countries have experienced dramatic reverse trends, which increase already high levels of poverty and contribute to insecurity among populations. This increased the push factors from Sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa. In addition, demographic growth in Africa has skyrocketed since the 1950s. The African population was 227 million in 1950, and will reach almost 1033 million in 2010 (UN Population Division 2008). Thus demographic factors, amalgamated with high poverty levels and armed conflicts, are the main reasons for African population mobility (Lahlou 2006; DeHaas 2007, 43). Migrants aim to travel to both richer and more stable countries. For example, citizens from Niger, Mali, and Chad migrate to Algeria and Libya, where they find jobs in the oil wells and mines. The increase in oil wealth in Algeria has made it a hub for sub-Saharan Africans searching for a better standard of living, and the employment opportunities offered to these migrants are un-attractive to local citizens, who are generally more educated and seek better job opportunities (Pliez 2004; Spiga 2005; De Haas 2007, 16). According to Pliez (2004) better-educated North Africans would rather migrate to places like the Gulf and Europe where they can find better, higher-status work. As a result many sub-Saharan African migrants remain in North Africa.

Studies estimate that there are between 65,000 to 120,000 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa who migrate to North Africa per year, of whom only several thousand try to cross the Mediterranean (DeHaas 2006a, 484). In the 1990s an increasing number of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa entered these countries in an attempt to travel to
Europe and America. The growing demands for labor in southern Europe, which give better salaries and living standards to migrants than North African countries in addition to the already existing networks of smuggler communities in North Africa, prompted the migration of these individuals to shift their migration from North African countries to Europe (De Haas 2007).

The reported number of irregular migrants varies from one study to the other. According to de Haas (2006b), there are between 65,000 to 120,000 irregular migrants from sub-Saharan Africa who enter North Africa, mainly Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Libya each year with the intention of reaching Europe. Seventy to 80 percent are believed to migrate through Libya, while 20 percent to 30 percent migrate through Algeria and Morocco. The growing numbers of irregular migrants in North Africa join their country of origin’s immigrant communities, changing the social entourage of the cities they reside in (De Haas 2006b). Major North African cities like Algiers, Oran and Tunis have become places where sub-Saharan migrant communities have had a major impact (Boubaki 2004; Bredeveld and Pliez 2005). Migrants mostly reside in specific neighborhoods (Alioua 2005; Oumar Ba and Choplin 2005). Even though they have limited access to legal rights, sub-Saharan migrants in North Africa generally find jobs in the informal sector: domestic work, construction, petty trade, and small manufacturing like shoemaking, agriculture and fishery (Alioua 2005; Boubakri 2004). Some migrants try to study in universities, in an attempt to gain legal status through residency rights (Alioua 2005).

Table 1: Regular and irregular immigrants in Libya, Algeria and Tunisia (early 2000s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Regular immigrants (1)</th>
<th>Irregular immigrants (minimum)</th>
<th>Ratio irregular / regular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>80,238</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>449,065</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>35,192</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>564,495</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,020,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The numbers are based on CARIM, 2009/02 Analytic and Synthetic Notes

Irregular Migration in Libya

Libya is currently believed to be the main transit country in North Africa. By the year 2003, almost 80% of all irregular migrants who tried to travel from the Southern to the Northern Mediterranean region passed through Libya and the channel of Sicily (ICMPD 2004). The estimates of irregular migrants therein are between 1 million to 1.2 million (Lahlou 2006; DeHaas 2007, 43). Labor migration in Libya is mainly from Arab and sub-Saharan countries like Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia, Chad, and Niger. In the beginning of the 1990s, an official opening of the Nigerian-Libyan border occurred, resulting in the increase of African migrants who pass through Niger and attempt to reach Libya. This was in accordance with the pan-African immigration policy the Libyan government pursued (De Haas 2006). The air and arms embargo enacted by the UN Security Council against Libya from 1992-2000 had “an unintended but decisive role in an unprecedented increase in trans-Saharan migration and the consolidation of migration routes and networks” (De Haas 2006, 484). Moreover, growing instability and civil wars, especially in Cote D’Ivoire, created increased economic decline in some sub-Saharan countries, resulting in the increase of migration to Libya. Until 1999 Cote D’Ivoire was the main destination country for sub-Saharan migration, but as a result of increased xenophobia and a civil war, hundreds of thousands of migrants left Cote D’Ivoire and headed to
Libya, which was believed to be a safe haven (Black et al. 2004; Kress 2006; De Haas 2008).

Many migrants have also been traveling through Agadez in Niger to Fezzan in Libya. This has become an important transit route in the Sahara, in which networks of organizations specialized in transporting migrants have emerged (Defoort 2008). The change in migration policies from supporting “pan-Arabism” to supporting “pan-Africanism” changed Libya from being a major host of Arabs to a major host of African immigrants. African migrants were mainly employed in sectors like construction and agriculture. However, strong anti-immigrant sentiment increased in Libya with the emergence of the new millennium, resulting in clashes between Libyans and African workers in 2000, leading to the death of dozens of African migrants (De Haas 2007, 15). As a consequence, Libyan authorities have instituted a number of restrictive and repressive measures against migration. These measures included more regulations for immigration, arbitrary detention of migrants in poor conditions such as prisons and camps, and forced repatriations of irregular migrants. Between 2003 and 2005, the Libyan authorities deported almost 150,000 irregular migrants, who are mainly from sub-Saharan African countries (De Haas 2007, 15). Moreover, work permits decreased and visas were required for Arab and African migrants. As a result of these measures many formerly legal immigrants are now irregular. Libya has a long history of deportations for irregular migrants. In 2005-2006, numerous irregular migrants were expelled to their countries of origin, mainly sub-Saharan African countries (Fargues 2009; HRW; Hamood 2006; USCRI 2007).

Until the 1990s, migrants had mainly considered Libya a destination country, due to its oil wealth. However, mounting pressures and legislation enacted by the authorities resulted in Libya becoming a transit country. Hammoud (2006) argues that by the year 2000, the Libyan economy no longer required the unskilled labor most African migrants were performing. In addition, economic decline, worsening living conditions, and a lack of state protection for migrants made Libya a less attractive destination. Migrants already in Libya began to consider moving on to Europe in pursuit of better employment opportunities and social security. Libya’s proximity to Italy means that Libya remains
attractive to migrants, but as a stepping-stone in the path to Europe. Some studies have estimated the number of migrants from Libya and Tunisia to Italy and Malta to be 80,000 (ICMPD 2004, 12; Hammoud 2006, 18).

Irregular Migration in Tunisia

Throughout the twentieth century, Tunisia was mainly a sending country. A survey study showed that Tunisian citizens were interested in migrating to European countries, specifically France and Italy. Migrants to Europe accounted for 63-67 percent of all Tunisian migrants. Until the end of the 1990s, migration from Tunisia to Europe was predominantly regular. Now 80 percent of Tunisians residing in France and Italy are believed to be irregular. On the other hand, almost 10 percent of Tunisian migrants go to Libya (Boubarki 2004, 89).

As a result of the 1992 civil war in Algeria, Tunisia became an important destination for Algerian migrants. The number of Algerians entering Tunisia amounted to 35,000 during this period. This was due to lenient Tunisian laws, which allow citizens from North African countries and a majority of sub-Saharan countries to enter the country without a visa if they intend to visit as tourists. However, these nationals have often outstayed their visas to either pursue a career in Tunisia, or to save some money and then travel to Europe. The first scenario mostly applies to North African migrants, mainly Algerian migrants; while the second applies to the sub-Saharan African migrants. Also worth noting are foreign students who enroll in Tunisian universities or athletes who sign contracts with Tunisian sports clubs. However, the Tunisian government introduced tougher measures at its borders, making the number of entrants drop to only seven hundred in the year 2000 (Boubakri 2004, 92).

Tunisia, like other North African countries, has coastal towns that attract transit migrants. The main routes from Tunisia to Europe begin in the Eastern ports. Inhabitants of these port towns organize migrants and facilitate their departure to Europe. The governorates of Sfax and Medenis are situated on the border of Libya and have created
networks with Tripolitana, a Libyan port, which is generally used to organize the illegal smuggling of people (Delicato 2004). The most common form of illegal migration is boat travel to Europe.

The case of irregular migration in Tunisia is less complex than in Libya, because the number of irregular migrants is far fewer. Irregular migration in this country is part of the global trend of migration, and the sub-Saharan trend of migration North. The internal socio-economic and political dynamics within the country have not changed dramatically in the past two decades, and thus irregular migration could be perceived as more of an external affair. This phenomenon is bound to increase in the coming years as a result of measures by Libya against sub-Saharan migrants, and the declining economic and political development in these countries. Thus the “push” factors from other countries consequently increase the “pull” factors for Tunisia, due to its geographical proximity to Europe.

Irregular Migration in Algeria

Migration from Algeria to Europe, especially France, increased dramatically after 1991, as a result of the escalation of the crisis between the Islamic Front Party (FIS) and the Algerian government, which led to civil war from 1992-1999. Migration during the 1990s became migration for asylum rather than labor migration (Collyer 2008). The rise in the number of asylum seekers led France to increase its restrictions on the issuing of visas for Algerians. However, this measure increased the demand for fraudulent (US Department of State 2001; Collyer 2008). The problem of outbound migration also escalated during the past decade as a result of the increase in the unemployment rate, which hovers at 20-30% (Collyer 2007, 673).

The increasing discoveries of oil and gas in Algeria made the country a destination for migrants. After the civil war, it received an increasing number of sub-Saharan from Mali, Niger and Chad, who settles in areas where farms and mines are prevalent, especially in the South, where there are labor shortages (Spiga 2005). Algeria became even more attractive after Libya began to discourage African migrants. The
forced expulsions from Libya presumably led to a westward shift of trans-Saharan migrants from Libya to other North African countries like Algeria, Libya and Morocco (Hammoud 2006; Pliez 2004; Schuster 2005; Barros 2002). It is estimated that in 2005, almost 60,000 sub-Saharan migrants resided in Algeria (Spiga 2005). Irregular migrants move from Tamanrasset in Algeria to Moroccan coastal cities. The Algerian towns of Tamanrasset and Adrar have received a growing number of migrants who settle and trade with their home countries, forming a community that increased from 3000 people in 1966 to 65,000 in 1998. More than half of this population is believed to be of sub-Saharan origin (Siga 2005; De Haas 2007, 12).

Even though the land border between Algeria and Morocco has been officially shut since 1994, many cross at night with the assistance of smugglers (Barros et al 2002; De Haas 2007). From Morocco, migrants either cross the Mediterranean or fly out of the country from Rabat (De Haas 2007).

Unlike Libya and Tunisia, Algeria experienced massive outbound migration of citizens in the 1990s as a result of its civil war. However, after the end of the civil war and the increase in oil and gas wealth, the country became a destination as well. Like Tunisia, Algeria owes its status as a transit country to its proximity to Europe. Migration networks connecting Morocco and Algeria along the Mediterranean coast contribute to the use of the country by transit migrants.

Policies to Combat Irregular Migration in North Africa

Due to the increasing number of irregular migrants from the South to the North of the Mediterranean, European countries started to pressure North African governments to control irregular migration with tougher immigration laws. North African countries were also asked to participate in the repatriation of sub-Saharan migrants whom Europe hoped to expel (Boubakri 2006; Lutterbeck 2006; Lahlou 2005). However, only Morocco and Tunisia developed legislation to address the entry, residence, and exit of foreign nationals (Fargues 2006). This legislation introduces severe penalties for trafficking networks and illegal migrants.
There is an increased use of sea routes from North African countries to South European countries, and smuggling methods are becoming ever more professional. Smugglers now use larger and faster boats to reach their destinations rather than the fishing boats used before. The most recent debate is moving towards policies concerning maritime migration. Even though the number of migrants arriving in Europe by sea is relatively small, North Mediterranean countries regard policing this activity to be important in border control. Most media attention has also focused on maritime migration. However, according to Spanish authorities maritime migrants accounted for only 5 percent of irregular migrants in Spain by 2006. 80 percent of illegal migrants arrived in Madrid and Barcelona airports (Collyer 2008, 3).

Thus policy-makers’ attention has been devoted to border control of Mediterranean coastal cities. Initiatives among countries on both sides of the Mediterranean resulted in the FRONTEX agency, which patrols the coastlines of the Northern Mediterranean (Edwards-Baldwin 2005; Collyer 2008). However, FRONTEX and other similar policy applications have a very high cost, especially considering the relatively low number of migrants attempting to enter Europe by sea. In 2008, FRONTEX reported that almost 17,000 illegal migrants were denied entry. However, the vast majority of undocumented migrants in that year arrived legally and overstayed their visas (Collyer 2008, 3).

General policy since the year 2000 has been to return irregular migrants to the country from which they arrived. The increasing number of migrants who arriving via transit countries, however, means that in many cases the individual concerned is not a citizen of the country to which they are being returned (Baldwin-Edwards 2005). Currently nearly one in three decisions to return an irregular immigrant is implemented, especially in Italy, Greece, and Spain (EC 2005 MEMO/05/288). Expelling countries rely on forced returns, except in the cases where there is a request for political asylum. Nationals from North Africa constitute the highest numbers of return migrants (Baldwin-Edwards 2005).
In recent years there has been a shift in policies from multilateral agreements to bilateral agreements between the sending, transit and receiving countries. However, the capacity to control illegal migrants who travel through the Mediterranean is very limited. EU countries signed readmission agreements with many African and North African countries, but expulsions of illegal migrants are difficult to enforce. These policies have very limited deterrence, as many expelled migrants simply migrate again. Therefore, some EU countries have proposed the creation of centers for processing migrants from North Africa, and have attempted to deploy ships from their own navies to patrol the North African coast. Many North African countries oppose these initiatives because they represent a threat to their national sovereignty rights. Furthermore, they fear that these measures might encourage irregular migrants to remain in North Africa. Moreover, North African countries try to maintain good diplomatic relationships with their sub-Saharan counterparts, due to their strategic geopolitical and economic interests with them. Mass expulsions of African migrants could easily jeopardize political relationships between North African and sub-Saharan countries (De Haas 2007). North African countries are in general reluctant to re-admit large numbers of irregular migrants whose country of origin is in Sub-Saharan Africa. North African countries are also hesitant to establish centers for immigrants and asylum seekers to the North, because this encourages more settlements on their own territory and re-enforces their status as destination countries (Collyer 2007).

North African countries have enacted their own measures to manage migration. In 2001 Morocco attempted to instate a policy for the management of migration flows from Morocco to Spain (Sorensen 2004). Tunisia had enacted a similar initiative in 1988, when it created an Office for Tunisians Abroad (IOM 2003). Egypt created a labor migration section in the Labor Ministry in 2001 (Fergany 2001). These attempts are in accordance with European policies and are believed to be “a symbolic response to mounting internal xenophobia and a stubborn reluctance by North African states to accept the idea of being destination countries” (Collier 2008, 5).
European countries are also seeking to control migration through the deployment of aid and development programs implemented through European Neighborhood Policies. All North African countries except Libya have signed an agreement to establish free trade zones within the coming decade. Many funds have been allocated through the European Mediterranean Association Agreements program to allocate funds which target the combating of irregular migration flows (De Haas 2005; De Haas 2007; Hoebink 2005).

Policies enacted by Libya to Combat Irregular Migration

As a response to mounting pressure from Italy to curb irregular migration, Libya has collaborated more closely in recent years with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the EU. Libya’s efforts to control its borders are among the highest of the North African countries. An agreement was signed in 2003 between Libya and Italy for more cooperation on joint measures to stop irregular migration and human smuggling. The Italian government financed 50 charter flights from Italy to Libya to return almost 6000 irregular migrants to their country of origin (De Haas 2006b, 76). In addition it also financed the creation of detention camps in Libya for irregular migrants who use Libya as a transit route (Baldwin-Edwards 2005). Libya agreed to deport sub-Saharan migrants who cross Libyan territories to their country of origin. Libya also participated in the exchange of liaison officers specialized in combating illegal migration. These officers have given Libyan border police training courses to increase their effectiveness in combating human trafficking (Lutterbeck 2006). The IOM implemented projects in Libya to offer irregular migrants voluntary and assisted return options from coastal European cities like Sicily and Lampedusa to Libya. According to Schutzer (2009, 10), more than 3000 migrants returned to Libya with this assistance in 2008. The Tripoli Process is a recent collaboration between Libya and the EU (Collyer 2008). This 2008 declaration includes nine sections defining the challenges of managing irregular migration.
Training programs like “Across Sahara” are funded by Italy and the EC and are managed by the IOM to train police officers in Libya and Niger to patrol border crossings. Other programs like “Irregular Migration Management in Libya” also funded by Italy and the EC, train Libyan policymakers and authorities in how to manage migration and how to provide assistance in reintegration policies to migrants who are stuck in Libya (De Haas 2007).

In turn, Libya has attempted to collaborate with its Southern neighbors. In 2009 the Libyan interior minister met with his Nigerian counterpart to begin closer cooperation between both countries to patrol their common border to reduce risks to Libyan national security (Magharebia 2009).

As a result of policies to combat irregular migration, Libyan authorities claim that the number of migrants escaping to Italy from within its borders has fallen from 54,000 in 2004 to 40,000 (De Haas 2007, 53). However, Libya is still believed to harbor a large number of irregular migrants. According to Libyan authorities’ estimates, the country hosts almost 600,000 legal workers, and between 750,000 and 1.2 million irregulars (Bredeloup and Pliez 2005; EC 2004; De Haas 2007, 53).

Policies enacted by Tunisia to Combat Irregular Migration

Tunisian migration policies are almost non-existent, and are mainly confined to the emigration and remittances of regular migrants. The Tunisian justice system is easily accessed by Tunisians who live abroad, but is used to settle family disputes rather than questions of migrants’ rights (Boubakri 2004). New policies offer incentives to Tunisians who return home, especially those who are highly skilled (ETF 2007). Tunisians abroad are also exempt from duty taxes should they invest in business. The Tunisian Agence for Technical Cooperation (L’Agence Tunisienne de Cooperation Technique), created in 1988, is responsible for the creation and implementation of migration policies and provides statistics to the government.
A law was passed recently imposing criminal penalties for illegal crossing of Tunisian borders. This is believed to be a response to European pressure. Tunisia has also signed an agreement with the Italian government for the surveillance of its borders and for the readmission of illegal migrants who arrive to European shores via Tunisia, even if these migrants do not hold Tunisian citizenship (Samy 2009; Boubakri 2004). According to the Interior Ministry, Tunisian authorities stopped almost 45,000 people who were attempting to cross from Tunisia to Europe during the period of 1998-2004. This figure includes at least 10,000 non-Tunisians, who are mainly from sub-Saharan Africa. The Interior Ministry also claims to have broken up almost 1500 smuggling and trafficking networks in the same period (Lems and Moderbacher 2007). Reports indicate that military facilities in the Tunisian desert detain many refugees caught attempting to enter Europe from Tunisia (Lems and Moderbacher 2007).

Migration management is also negotiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and countries like France, Greece and Italy. Tunisia enacted a law in 2004 that provides for the surveillance of vessels leaving its ports. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tunisia, the net rate of Tunisian irregular migration decreased from 0.7% in 2000 to 0.5% in 2005 (Fargues 2005).

**Policies enacted by Algeria to combat illegal migration**

Algeria has thus far taken an open approach to migration as a result of its growing need for labor in underdeveloped oil fields and mines (De Haas 2005). Like Tunisia, it is mainly concerned with policies to secure remittances and to stimulate the investment of Algerian migrants who reside outside the country (Fargues 2004). Its policies revolve around organizing the return of Algerian migrants from both Europe and neighboring Tunisia. A 2005 law awards Algerian citizenship to any child born to an Algerian citizen, not just to those born of an Algerian father as formerly. Second-generation emigrants also retain their political rights, being permitted to both run and vote in elections (Hammouda 2006).
Only in recent years has Algeria begun to seek cooperation with European countries to combat illegal border crossing. Although these policies are still less numerous and less stringent than those of other North African countries, Algerian authorities imprisoned more than 9000 illegal migrants between 2000 and 2006 (Carling 2007). In 2005 alone, almost 3500 irregular migrants were arrested due to their illegal residency (CARIM 2006/07). Furthermore, during the year 2005, almost 2500 illegal migrants were deported and/or imprisoned by Algerian authorities (CARIM 2006/07). However, on a general scale, Algerian authorities are lenient and tolerant with respect to the presence of certain migrants within its territory and on migrants who intend to move on. A factor in this may be revenue from money transfers made in Algeria, which exceeded one billion dollars in 2003 (CARIM).

Are these policies successful in combating irregular migration in the Mediterranean?

The above-mentioned policies have had very little real success. Repressive measures such as forced deportations of migrants and the creation of detention camps have not contributed to the minimization of irregular migrants pursuing residency in either North Africa or Europe. In addition, the coastline of Northern Africa is simply too long and remote to be patrolled without EU assistance. Crack-downs on smuggling simply encourage smugglers to move elsewhere, distributing the problem to other regions (Carling 2007; De Haas 2007).

New ideas combating irregular migration through development and trade liberalization are believed to only be short-term solutions to the mounting migration problem. According to De Haas “…human development tends to coincide with an increase rather than a decrease in migration…It is more likely to spur migration in the short to medium term, as development will increase people’s capabilities and aspirations to migrate (2007, 67).”

Conclusion
This study has shown that irregular migration is increasing at high rates in North Africa. Migrants see the region as variously their final destination and transit destination. Only a small proportion of the thousands of migrants who wish to continue to Europe do. Meanwhile these migrants remain in North African countries, and are able to find employment in the informal sector. Policies of combating irregular migration have contributed to the shift of migration routes and patterns to other countries, distributing the problem rather than solving it. Some countries, such as Algeria, have begun to use this dynamic to their benefit: by maintaining lax migration laws, Algeria profits from the remittances of its citizens abroad as well as the labor of sub-Saharan migrants who cheaply fill the gaps in the labor sector.

This strategy helps to absorb the socio-economic and political problems common as a result of migration. Similar moderate policies could be adopted in other countries, to facilitate residency for migrants who contribute to the economy. These policies can also benefit the economies of the sending countries through remittances. Such policies in addition to developmental aid projects to North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa can help in alleviating the problems of irregular migration. Even though studies show that development projects initially contribute to migration (DeHaas 2007), it can be argued that in the long run they provide incentive to returning nationals. If the country of origin is more economically and politically developed, the chances that a migrant will return there are much higher than if it is underdeveloped. Empirical studies have found that a large number of emigrants have “home bias”. That is, they are willing to return to their country of origin if they perceive that there are prospects for economic and political development, even if wages are considerably lower at home than abroad. (Faini and Venturini 1993). Thus the easing of migration policy in addition to developmental aid projects encourages circular mobility rather than irregular migration.
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