

ESODI / EXODI

Migratory Routes from Sub-Saharan Countries to Europe

DECEMBER 2016 MEDICI PER I DIRITTI UMANI

The web map told by migrants



La salute è un diritto di tutti.

Health is everyone's right.



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with the support of



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Acknowledgements:

Medu would like to thank all the women and men who, by sharing their migration stories, made EXODI possible.

Heartfelt thanks go to all the Medu's volunteers in Rome (Mobile Clinic and Psyché Centre) and in Sicily. A special thank to Cristina Marchetti, Marie Aude Tavofo, Amelia Trombetta, Sandra Aebi, Silvia Di Cesare, Laura Deotti, Antonio De Marco, Oscar Parolini, Emanuele Kiros, Abdoulaye Tourè.

The project "ON TO: Stopping the torture of refugees from Sub-Saharan countries along the migratory route to Northern Africa" is funded by the European Commission, the Open Society Foundations and Oxfam Italy. The project is implemented in Italy (Sicily and Rome) by Medu and in Israel it is implemented in partnership with Hotline for Refugees and Migrants (HRM) and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR-I). In particular, in 36 months such project is aimed at collecting testimonies of refugees and migrants surviving torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment disembarked in Italy. Furthermore, this project aims to build a wide-ranging awareness campaign to inform the public and competent authorities in Italy and Europe on the specific needs of victims of torture and how to ensure their early detection; promoting the rehabilitation of victims of torture by psychological - psychiatric assistance and direct training of health personnel in the territories concerned.

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Medici per i Diritti Umani - Doctors for Human Rights (Medu) is a humanitarian and international solidarity non-profit organisation, free of any political, union, religious and ethnic affiliation. Medu proposes to bring medical aid to vulnerable peoples in crisis situations in Italy and abroad, and to develop democratic and participative spaces within civil society for the promotion of the right to health and other basic human rights. The actions of Medici per i Diritti Umani are grounded in the militancy of civil society and on the professional and voluntary commitment of doctors and other health operators, as well as of citizens and professionals in other fields.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Medici per i Diritti Umani (Medu) and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

To all who died on the way

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PART I: General Information

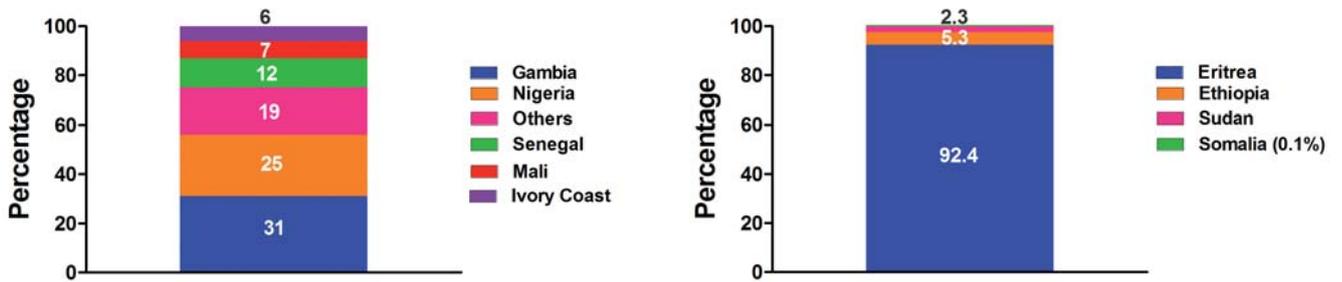
EXODI is an interactive web map built upon testimonies of 1,000 migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa that were collected in nearly three years of activity (2014-2016) by the operators and volunteers of Medici per i Diritti Umani/Doctors for Human Rights (Medu). These people are part of those 730 thousand men, women and children landed on Italian shores in the last 15 years, of which more than half in the last 32 months. The map describes clearly and in detail the migratory routes from Sub-Saharan Countries to Italy, and the difficulties, the violence, the tragedy and hopes encountered by the protagonists during their trip. The web map is addressed to all those who are willing to deepen the understanding of migration phenomena, a human experience that is marking our times. In this sense, EXODI is a map showing the stages and routes as well as a report with data and statistics, but above all, it is a testimony on migrants' life stories. Being interactive and in progress, the web map will be periodically updated with new testimonies gathered from all those who will share the story of their own journey. The information was collected **in Sicily** (in the Special Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers/CAS of Ragusa and in the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers/CARA of Mineo) and **in Rome** (in informal reception centres and at Medu Psychè Centre for rehabilitation of victims of torture). Testimonials were also collected in **Ventimiglia** and **Egypt**, specifically in Aswan and Cairo. In all these places Medu's work grants social and health support to migrants, first medical assistance and medical and psychological rehabilitation services for victims of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. Through updated data, EXODI aims also to describe the physical and mental consequences of the journey on the health of an entire generation of young Africans; a journey in which, as a witness said, "you are no longer considered as a human being".

Socio-demographic characteristics

The map is built upon the testimony of 1,000 migrants assisted and interviewed by Medu, of which 870 are men and 130 are women. The average age is 26 years, whereas 133 are minors that Medu has mainly met at informal settlements in Rome. All migrants interviewed in Sicily were asylum seekers hosted in institutional reception centres, while most of those met in Rome and in Ventimiglia were in transit towards other European countries. Conversely, testimonies collected in Egypt were from refugees and detained migrants.

Regarding the countries of origin, the majority of migrants interviewed in Sicily were coming from West Africa, while those met in Rome, Ventimiglia and Egypt were mainly coming from the Horn of Africa.

Countries of origin of migrants from West Africa (258 migrants, left) and from the Horn of Africa (742 migrants, right)

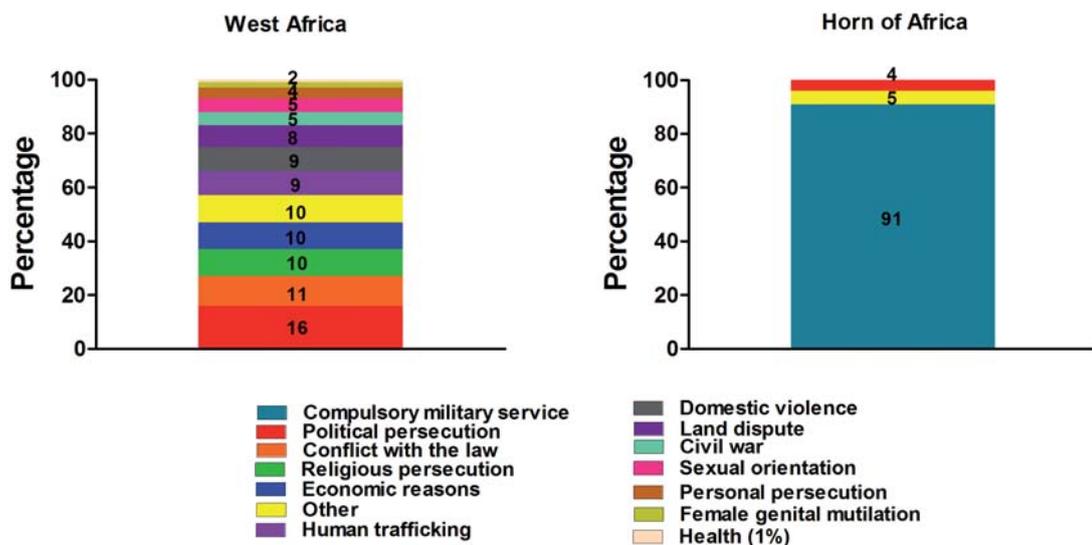


Push factors to migration

Among migrants coming from the Horn of Africa, the main push factor to migration is the forced indefinite conscription in the government army. The push factors reported by migrants coming from the Western Africa

countries are much more heterogeneous: political persecution is the main reason to escape, whereas the economic reason seems to be only valid for 10% of the migrants.

Push factors reported by migrants from West Africa and from the Horn of Africa



The duration and the cost of the journey

Interviews with migrants revealed five main migration routes from Sub-Saharan Africa to Italy.

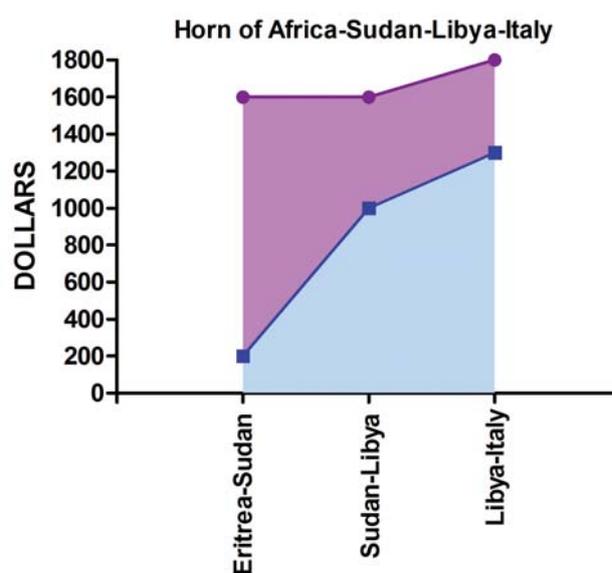
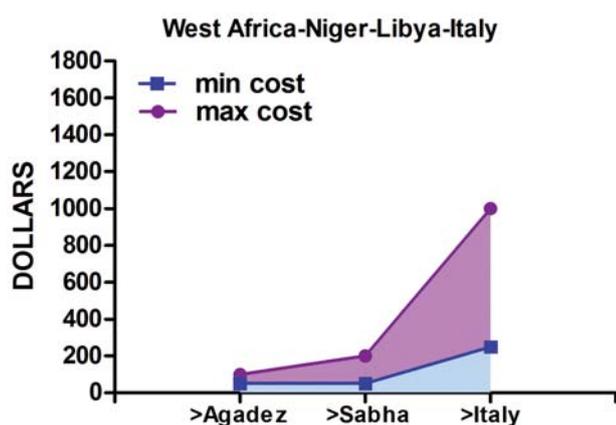
The main route from West Africa goes through Niger and Libya and reaches Italy via the Strait of Sicily. The average duration of the journey from the country of origin is 20 months, of which an average of 14 months is spent in Libya. For migrants from West Africa, Libya represents a place to live and work for a limited time, albeit in terrible conditions. Most of the migrants interviewed by Medu escaped from their country of origin without being aware of the destination.

The main route from the Horn of Africa through Sudan and Libya reaches Italy via the Strait of Sicily. The average duration of the journey from the country of origin is 15 months. The mean residence time in Libya for migrants from the Horn of Africa, which are mostly Eritreans, is 3 months. Ethiopia and Sudan are the countries where Eritrean migrants remain longer. After few days

from their arrival in the South of Italy, most of the Eritrean migrants reach Rome or Milan and stop for about a week before continuing the journey to their final destination: the North European Countries.

The graphs below indicate the cost of the fundamental stages of the two main routes going from West Africa and the Horn of Africa to Italy. These routes are operated by a diverse and complex set of smugglers and traffickers. The maximum and minimum costs are approximate, since there are many contingencies and variables that may affect the timing and the cost of the trip. For example, for people that travel through Libya, Niger and Sudan, the risk of being moved from a “transit house” (house or building where migrants are locked up in terrible humanitarian conditions, often subjected to violence and obliged to forced labour until they can pay for the sea crossing) to a place of kidnapping or to a prison is very high.

Costs: journey from West Africa (left) and the Horn of Africa (right) to Italy



Torture and other degrading treatments

According to the testimonies collected by Medu, more than 90% of surveyed migrants said they had been victims of extreme violence, torture or inhuman and degrading treatment in the country of origin and/or along the migration route, particularly in detention and kidnapping places in Libya. Deprivation of food and water, poor hygienic condition, frequent beatings and other forms of blunt trauma are the most common and widespread forms of ill-treatment. In addition, migrants report the following types of violence: beatings to the feet (falaka); torture for suspension and stress positions (handcuffing, standing position for an extended time, etc.); burnings; threats to themselves, or to their families; rapes and sexual outrages; religious insults and other forms of degrading treatment; denial of medical care. In most of the cases, migrants were forced to witness other people subjected to torture and cruelty. Nine out of ten migrants said they had seen someone dying, being killed, tortured or severely beaten.

Hidden wounds

Extreme traumas, like torture, are common experiences along the journey from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. In particular, in the reception centre of Mineo (Ragusa, Sicily) 82% of asylum seekers assisted by the Medu clinical team (162 patients) still showed physical signs consistent with the reported violence. In addition to physical signs, extreme traumas produce insidious and debilitating psychological and psychopathological consequences. Indeed, migrants who have been victims of traumatic experiences are at risk of developing severe mental disorders. Among the mental disorders most frequently diagnosed by Medu clinicians, there are the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other disorders related to traumatic events, but also depressive disorders, somatisation related to trauma, anxiety disorders and sleep disturbance. Often these disorders receive less attention compared to physical illnesses, so that they are diagnosed too late or even ignored. As a result, many disorders become chronic, leading to a significant deterioration of the clinical condition and adversely affecting the migrant's integration process in host countries.

“I can still see the body of my friend murdered in my house. They killed him, but they wanted to kill me as they did with my father for his political affiliation. I had to escape from Nigeria. I cannot erase this from my memory. Also in Italy I relive that moment and I have the feeling of being right there in front of the body of my friend. It can happen anywhere: while I am on a crowded bus or in the middle of the night in my nightmares. It is just horrible, I sweat, I tremble. What happened was my fault. My head hurts, and despite taking painkillers the pain does not pass. I cannot concentrate when I attend the Italian course, I cannot follow the lessons, my thoughts always go back there, to that day. I often feel scared, and even a little sudden movement makes me jump. I spend the days alone, I cannot be with others. I lost interest in things that before I liked to do”.

O.P., 19 years from Nigeria, interview collected at Medu Psychè Centre in Rome, June 2016

“...I will die, the devil tells me so. He has already killed one person in the boat when the sea was very strong, and now it's up to me. He appeared to me for the first time when we crossed the sea by huge waves and made a person die. The devil is chasing me, speaks to me, wants me and will appear again tonight. I am scared, he wants to come and get me and from that day he will not leave me. During the day, he is threatening me with his voice and it's really terrible to see him at night while spitting fire and changes appearance. He is transformed from man to woman and vice versa, and during sleep is punishing me by hitting me all over the body. I not am able to stay alive; maybe I can no longer see my family in Gambia. Help me, give me some medicine to defeat the devil, I'm scared...”

M.K. 27 years from Gambia; interview collected in the CARA of Mineo, October 2015

Psychiatric Diagnoses among migrants interviewed in Sicily (N=162)

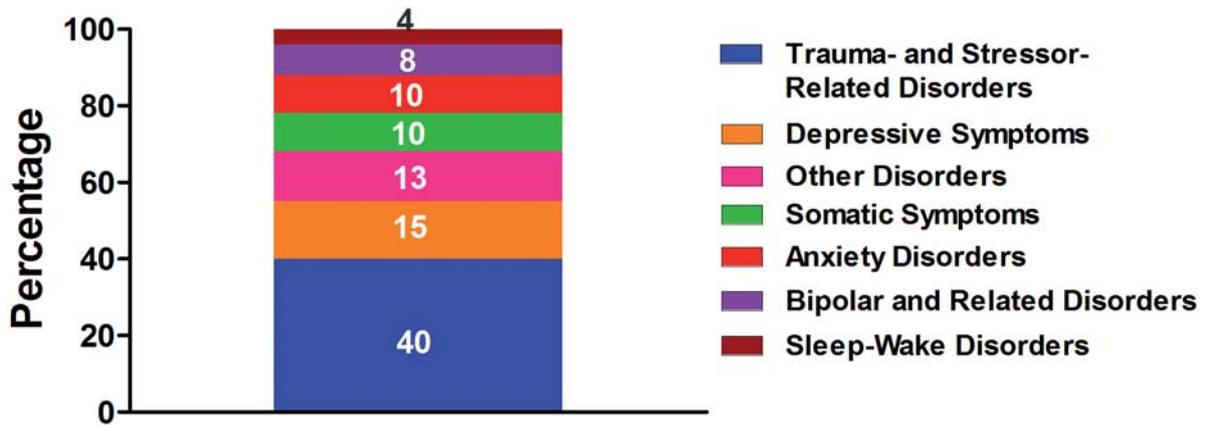


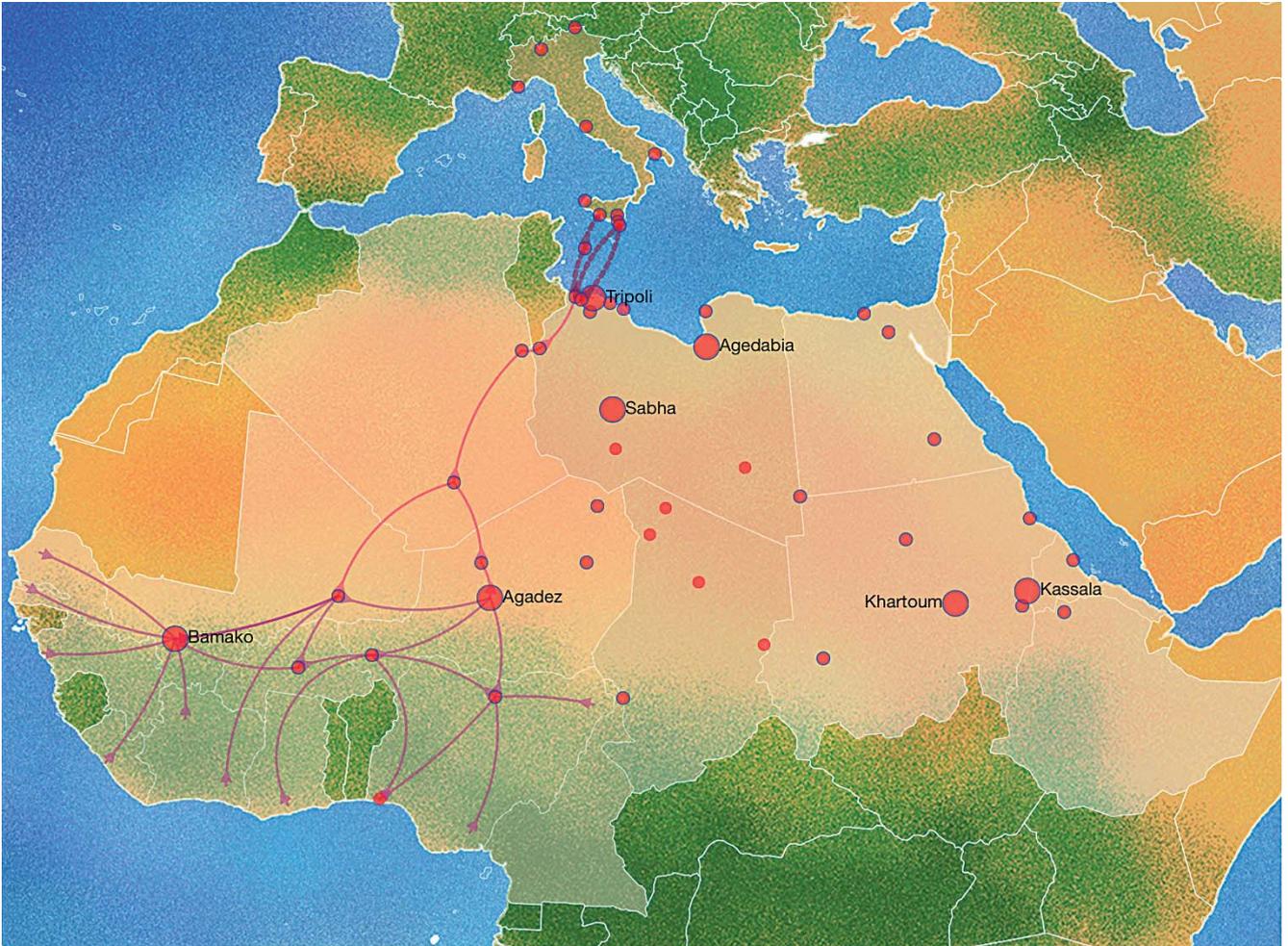




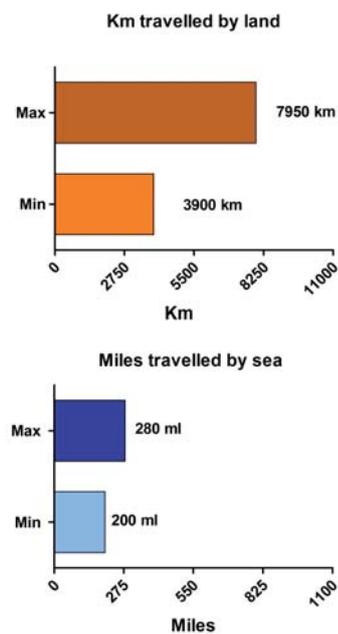
Photo by **Giulio Piscitelli** – The Sahara Desert (Sudan / Libya border)

PART II: Migration routes

Western-West Route



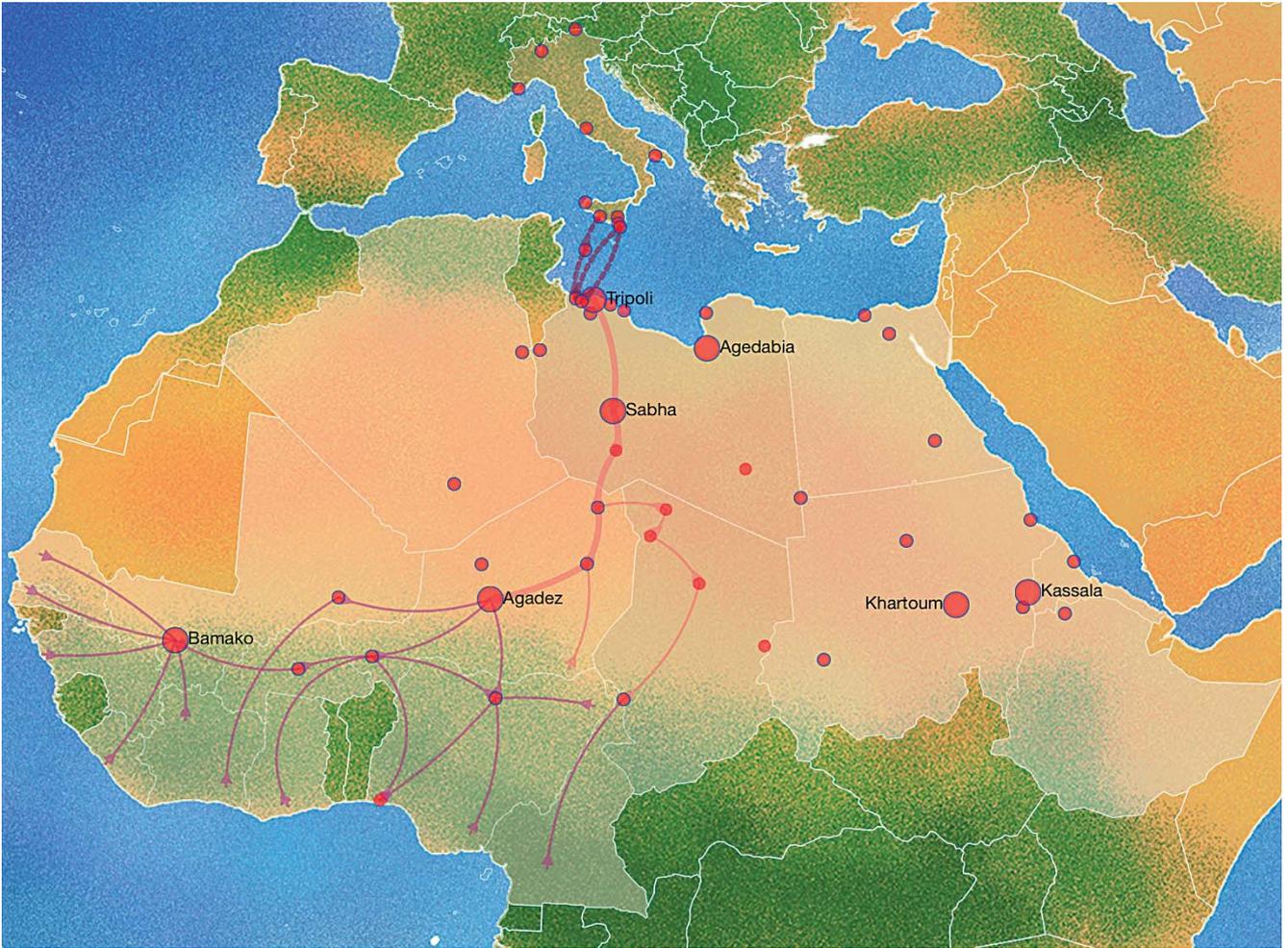
Some migrants escaping from West African Countries, after having crossed important transit cities in Mali (Gao) and Niger (Agadez) reach the city of Tamanrasset, the most important Tuareg centre of Algeria. From Tamranasset, migrants head to the North of Algeria, where they stop in the transit city of Deb-Deb before entering Libya, and then in Ghadames, a Libyan transit city at the border between Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Some migrants interviewed by Medu reported that they had decided to take this route because they believed that they would find in Algeria better working and living conditions than those experienced in Sub-Saharan Countries. However, once in Algeria, the expectations are unfulfilled, the working conditions are described as unsafe; often the employers do not pay their employees, and beat them brutally.



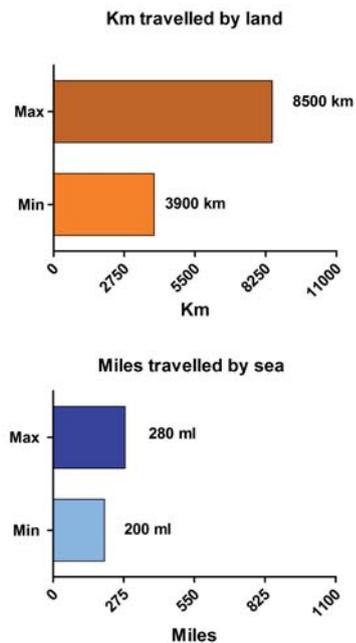
“I was working in construction work in Tamanrasset (Algeria). The working time was crazy and we were not even getting paid. I decided that I had to say something to defend my rights. I did not see my employer arriving, I just turned my head and he beat me on my head with a wooden stick. Unfortunately, he hit me just in my eye. He did not bring me to the doctor; it was another guy working there who brought me there. The doctor treated me for 2 days only. Even now I have pain. The worst thing is that I could not see from that eye anymore”.

M.J. 22 years from Gambia; interview collected in the CAS of Gerico, July 2015

Western-East Route



The main route to reach the Libyan Coast from West and Central Africa is the Western-East Route via Niger and Libya. Many West African migrants interviewed by Medu reported to have left their countries of origin by public buses, whose fares are usually cheap. Migrants from Senegal, Gambia, Guinea and Ivory Coast reach Bamako (Mali), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Gao (Mali) and then they continue to Agadez (Niger). An alternative route goes from Bamako to Niamey, passing through Ouagadougou. Many Nigerians reached Niger through Kano. Some migrants from Cameroon have reported to have crossed Chad, reached Madama in Niger and continued in Libya. The route between Agadez and Sabha (Libya) is also known as "the road to hell" that all migrants are forced to face to reach Libya.



The “road to hell”

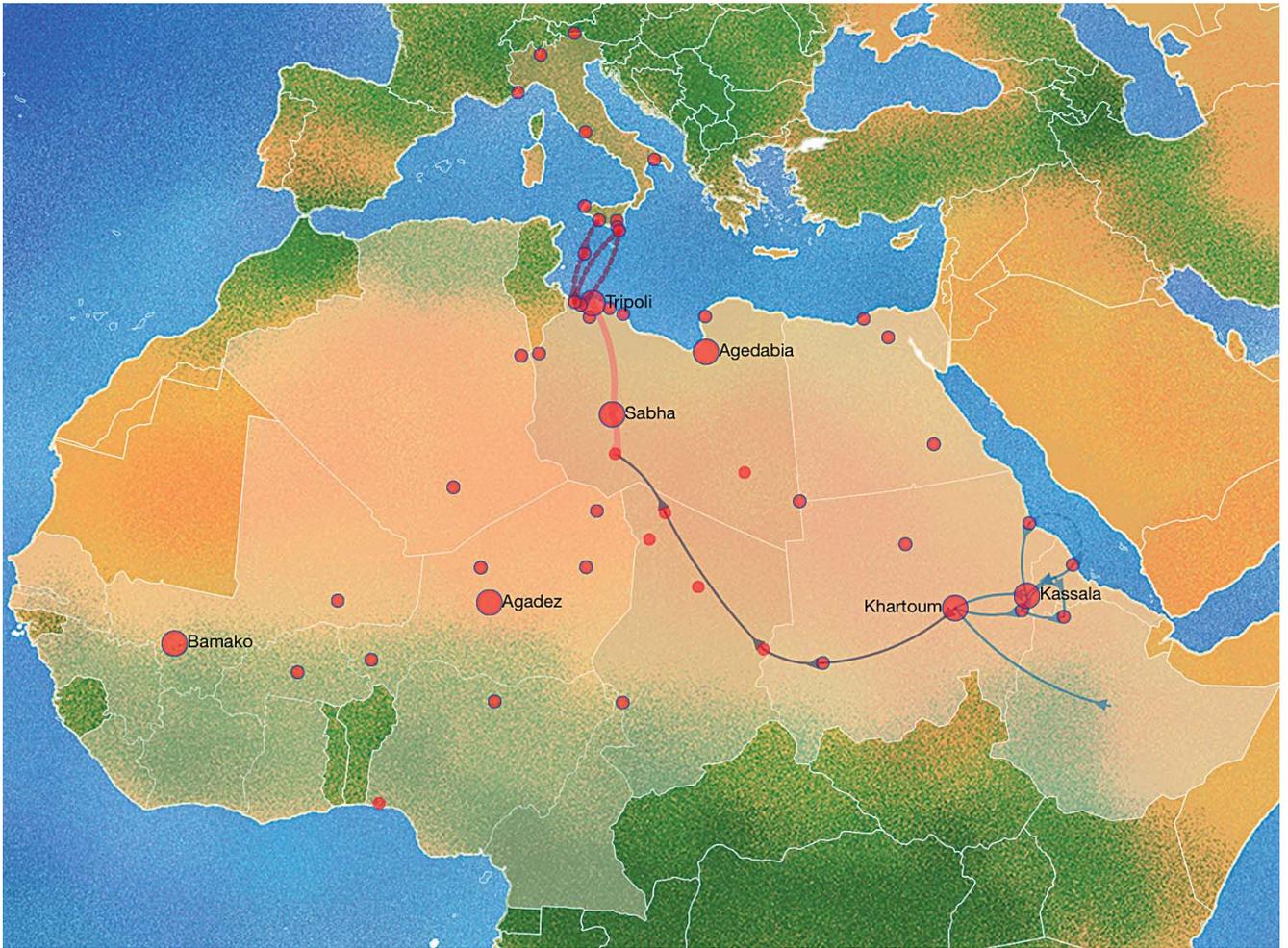
The “road to hell” consists of tracks crossing the desert of Tenerè. The main stations of this route are Agadez, Dirkou, Madama, Al-Qatron and Sabha. This journey takes usually 3 to 6 days with crammed pick-ups managed by smugglers. Pick-ups usually carry up to 20-30 people. The cost of the travel from Agadez to Libya ranges from 50 to 200 Euros. According to the testimonies of migrants, there is a well-organized network of smugglers who manages the different sections of the journey. Each village has its own driver and smuggler, so that migrants are in many cases forced to stop along

the way to wait for the next driver (and sometimes for another vehicle) to continue. Given all these steps, the trip can take several days and it can be longer than expected. Most of the time several vehicles move together forming a row of pick-ups that migrants call “comba”. Migrants reported having faced harsh conditions (extreme heat, thirst and hunger) and the risk of falling from pick-ups travelling at very high speed. Many people interviewed by Medu witnessed people dying in front of their eyes when falling down from the moving vehicles or being abandoned in the desert.

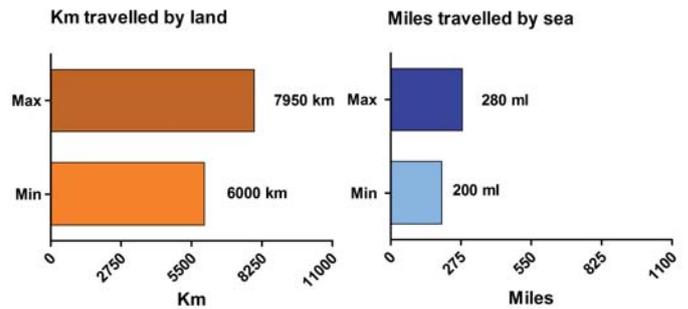
“Our driver tried different routes in the desert to avoid check-points. But he lost his way. He stopped in the middle of the desert and went away, leaving 34 of us behind, with no food and water. Some of us started walking away: they never came back, they must have died there. Most of us remained next to the vehicle, for 3 days. I saw 8 of us dying there because of dehydration and lack of food. We ended up drinking the perfume we had with us and our urines. I was completely out of mind, I had blurred vision and I started seeing things that were not real. After 3 days a vehicle came and picked us. Out of 34 passengers, only 4 of us made it. But even on the vehicle, I was still dazed and not conscious. I had pain all over my body and for 15 days my vision was still blurred and I was feeling weak. I should have gone to the hospital for treatment, but I did not have money. So I called a previous contact I had who came to pick me up in El Gatrun (Al-Qatron) and brought me to Murzuk where I was treated in his house. I kept on having stomachache, headache and blurred vision. Even now, during the night, I see the dead body of my friends in the desert. My body is among them”.

C.A. 27 years from Senegal; interview collected in the CAS of Canicarao, February 2015

Eastern-West Route



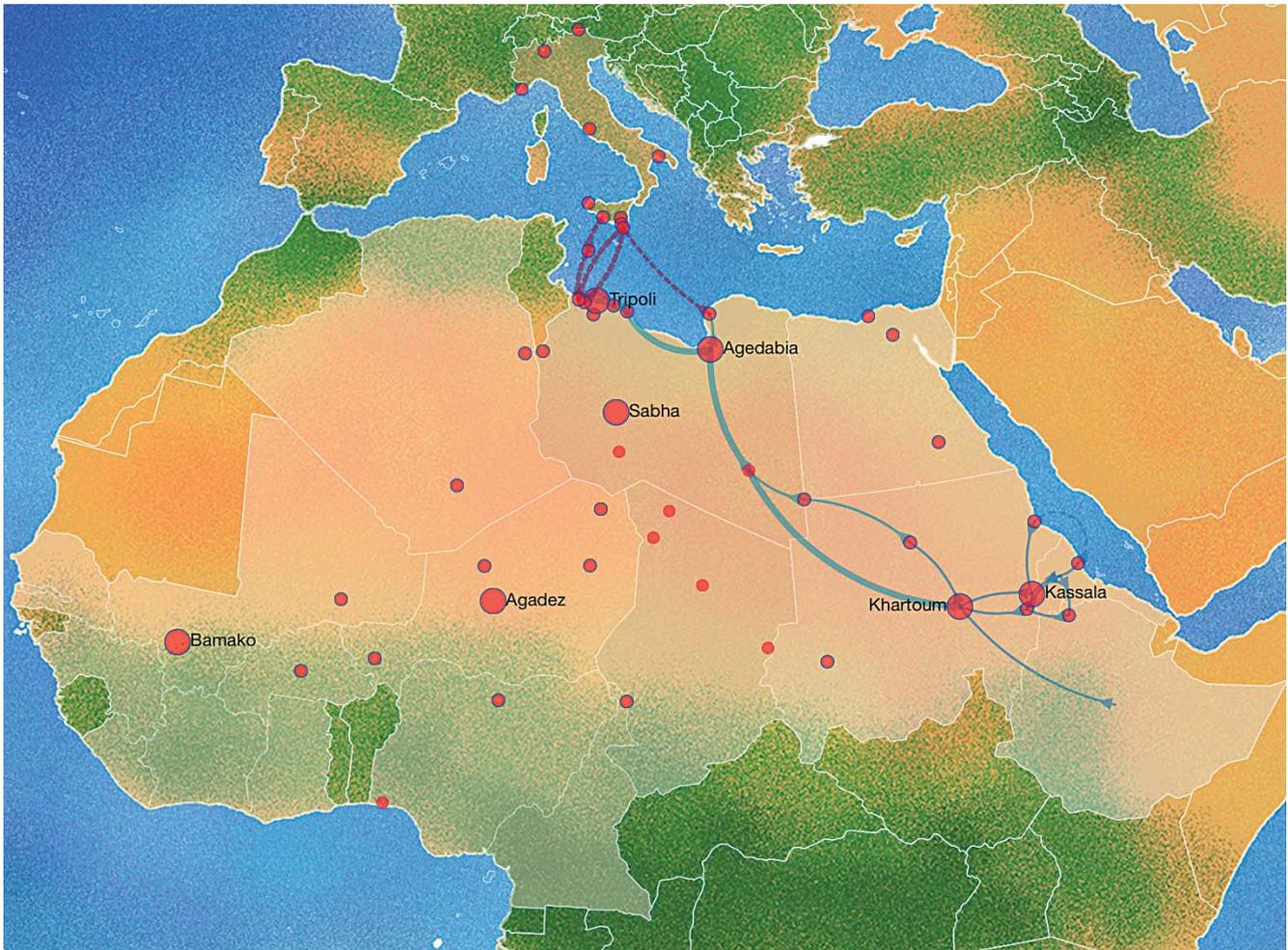
Some migrants from the Horn of Africa interviewed by Medu have passed through the route that crosses Sudan and Chad in order to reach Libya. The main transit points are Edere and Aouzou in Chad, and the village of El Gatrun (Al-Qatron) in the southern desert of Libya. Once there, migrants continue to Sabha, Tripoli and the Western Libyan Coast.



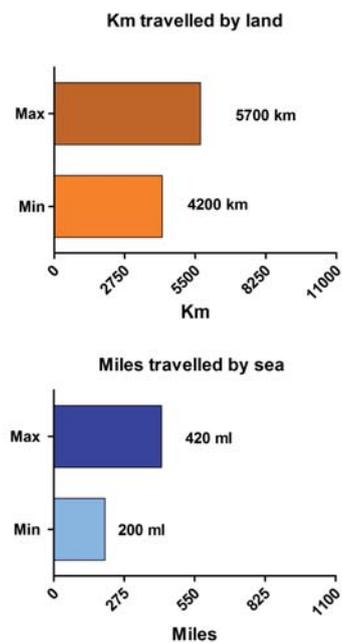
“I lived with my uncle in the city of Al-Fashir, one day some Sudanese soldiers came and killed him in front of me, they also hit me in the abdomen with the butt of a rifle and they left. I was taken to the city hospital, but they did not have the tools to treat me properly, I was then led by a man in Khartoum, where I was operated. This man also paid my medical care. I was brought back to Al-Fashir. From there I followed another man - a friend of one person who had helped me to reach Khartoum and had paid for my treatment - and I crossed the border with Chad near Edere”.

M.I., 19 years; interviewed collected in the Medu Psychè Centre in Rome, July 2016

Eastern-Central Route



The majority of the people from the Horn of Africa interviewed by Medu reached the Eastern Libyan Coast (Benghazi) and the Western Libyan Coast (Tripoli, Sabratha, Zuwarah) passing through Sudan and Libya. The Eritrea-Sudan border crossing is very dangerous due to the massive presence of military forces that since 2004 are in charge of the implementation of the "shoot-to-kill policy" against citizens who try to leave the country. Moreover, many migrants report to have been kidnapped or to have witnessed other people being kidnapped for ransom by members of Rashaida tribe with the collusion of the military forces. After crossing the border many people reach Kassala or the refugee camp of Shagrab in Sudan or the camp of Mai Aini in Ethiopia. From there, they go to Khartoum. Once there, migrants cross the desert packed in trucks or pick up with shortage of food and water. Generally, a first pick-up brings migrants to the border with Libya and comes



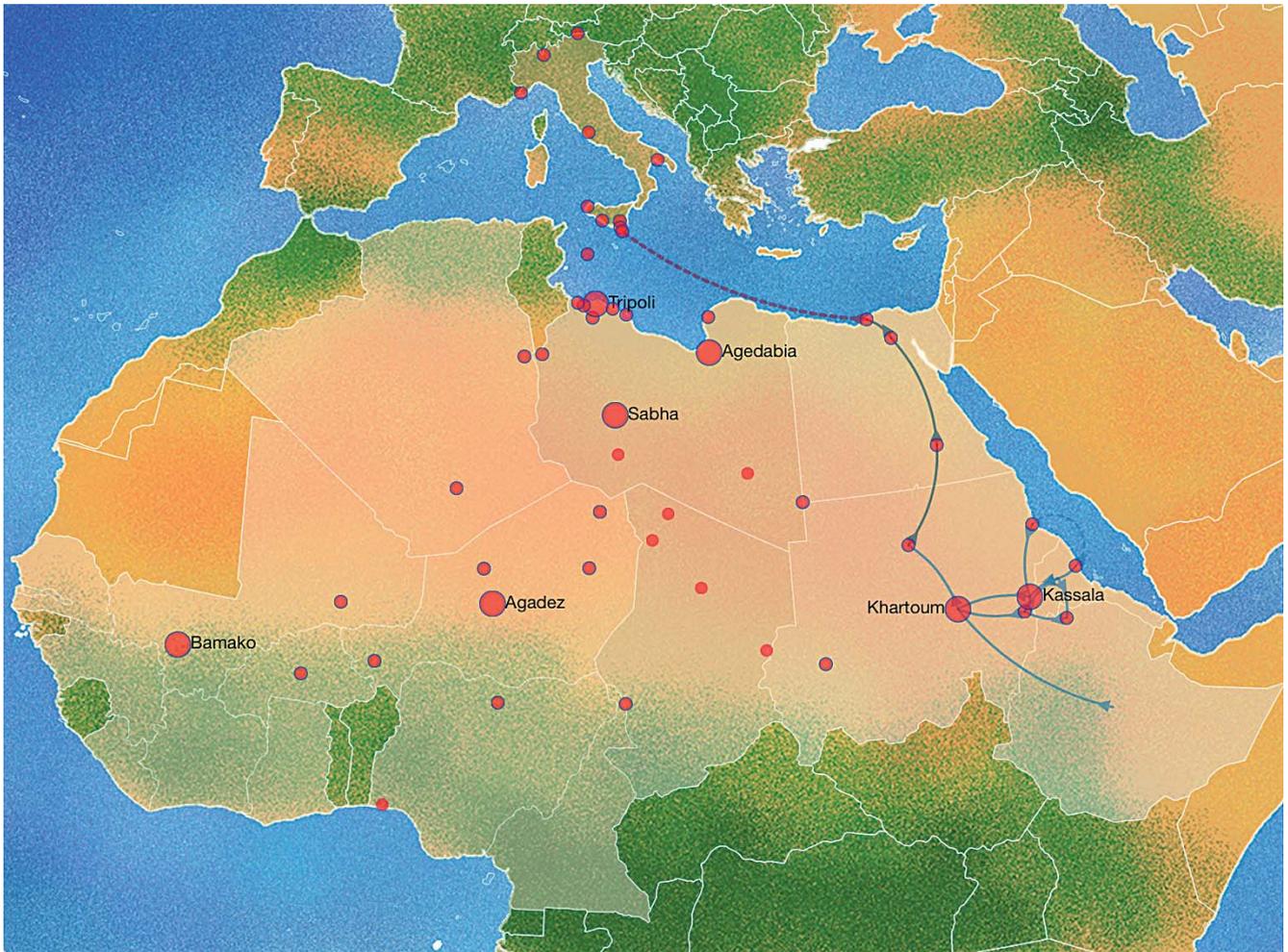
back to Khartoum. Migrants are then moved to another pick-up managed by Libyan smugglers. The cost of the travel from Sudan to Libya ranges from 1,000 to 1,500 US dollars. Afterwards, the majority of the migrants reach Ajdabiya, located in the Cyrenaica, only few km far from the Mediterranean coast. From the north of

Libya, they try to reach the coast in Benghazi (north-east) or Zuwarah and Sabratha (west of Tripoli and closer to Italy), to finally cross the Mediterranean sea. This route is as well marked by violence, detention and kidnappings.

“Crossing the desert from Sudan to Libya was very dangerous. We had only one bottle of water per person and almost nothing to eat. We were all crammed in the same pick-up that was travelling at high speed. Some people fell, but were left behind ... It took four days to cross the desert”.

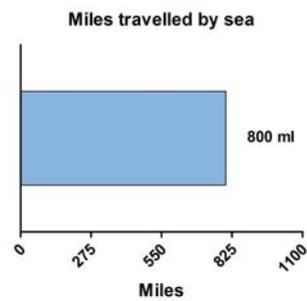
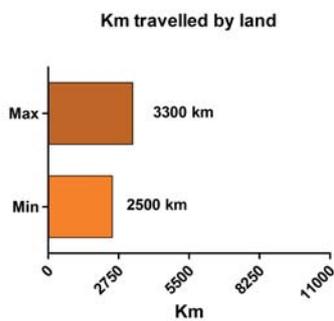
Y.D. 20 years from Eritrea; interview collected in Ponte Mammolo (Rome), September 2014

Eastern-East Route



An alternative route used by migrants from the Horn of Africa crosses Egypt. After having reached Khartoum, some of them head to Egypt via Aswan and Cairo, and reach Alexandria. From the Egyptian Coast migrants try to reach Italy through a very long and risky sea jour-

ney that lasts on average 8-10 days. Migrants often suffer kidnappings for ransom or are intercepted by the police and the Egyptian Army and detained for years in prisons and detention centres in Aswan and Cairo.



“The most dangerous part of the trip was crossing the border between Sudan and Libya. In the desert in Libya, I witnessed the killing of 20 people by the Libyan soldiers, who shot on sight. The border with Egypt is very dangerous because there are many soldiers. The people who are stopped are taken to detention centres until they are not able to pay US dollars 300 to return to Ethiopia. I know people who are still detained in Egypt after crossing the Sinai”.

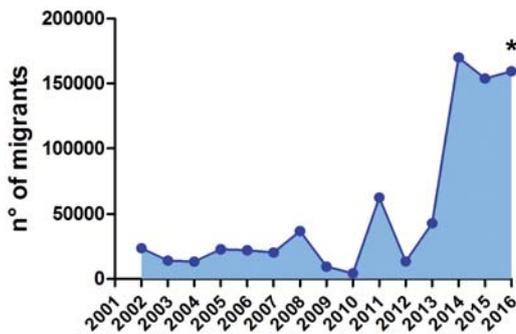
S.O. 31 years from Eritrea; interview collected in the CAS of Comiso, February 2014

Sea Routes

During the last 15 years, from 2002 to 2016, over 770 thousand migrants have landed on Italian shores. In the same period almost 15 thousand migrants have died in the Strait of Sicily and in the Central Mediterranean Sea by trying to reach Italy from the Tunisian, Libyan or Egyptian coasts. To these we need to add more than 200 drowned in the sea area between Algeria and Sardinia. Many are also the "ghost" shipwrecks of which we have no certain information. In most instances the

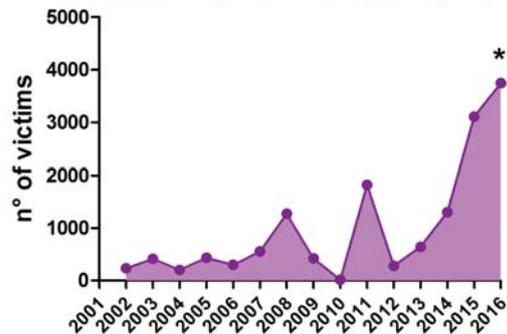
bodies of victims have not been recovered and lie on the seabed. In the first 10 months of 2016, 159,427 migrants have landed in Italy mainly from Nigeria, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Sudan (Ministry of the Interior). The year 2016 is also the year with the highest number of deaths (3,743 victims until October 31st) ever recorded. In other words, one migrant out of 42 died crossing the Strait of Sicily (Iom).

N° of migrants landed on Italian coasts
Source: Ministry of Interior



* January-October 2016

N° of victims in the Strait of Sicily and Central Mediterranean Sea
Source: Fortress Europe (2002-2015),
International Organization of Migration (2016)



Western Route from Libya

The boarding points of the main and shortest sea route from Libya to Europe are in the Western part of Tripoli. The distance from Zuwarah and Sabratha to Sicily is about 260 nautical miles. Migrants are obliged to walk into the sea until water is up to their knees, sometimes up to the neck, before boarding the boat. Armed Libyan traffickers use force against migrants to speed up the boarding. Someone is given a satellite phone and a GPS, a bit of food and little of water. Some traffickers show to each person the sitting position in the boat and once the boat departs they quickly return by swimming to the shore. Usually boats are not steered by smugglers but by migrants who are often forced to it and given only rudimentary instruction before leaving.

The trip is described by everyone as dramatic. The cost of the crossing depends on the type of boat and the place occupied on the boat. According to the collected testimonies, the price paid by migrants from West Africa is about 600 Euros, although it can vary greatly even among people of the same nationality, from a minimum of 250 to a maximum of 1,000 Euros. Several witnesses from West Africa have, however, reported that they were forced to board without having to pay a fee for the crossing after being exploited in the workplace or kidnapped. Testimonies collected among the Eritreans and Ethiopians suggest that the cost ranges between 1,000 and 1,500 Euros.

“...During all the journey by boat which lasted about 15 hours, four people were sitting over my ankle and right foot. I could not move, I was forced to sit and there was absolutely no room because we were 140 people crammed into a small boat. it was terrible. When I got in the boat I would have never imagined such a high number of people on board and I could not complain because the smugglers on the beach were threatening and violent. Today I continue to have strong pain in my leg and I have the impression that the foot falls asleep. I received treatment for more than one month in hospital after landing, because on arrival I realized I had urine full of blood and the blood pressure was high. I limp and I'm afraid of not being able to walk properly”.

G.H. 25 years from Nigeria; interview collected in the CAS of Comiso, January 2016

Eastern Route from Libya

Another boarding point located on the Libyan coast is Benghazi. The distance between Benghazi and Sicily is approximately 370 nautical miles. This route is more dangerous and more risky compared to the western

one. Nevertheless, some migrants coming from the Horn of Africa referred to have boarded from Benghazi, after passing through Ajdabiya.

“I can't stop thinking about those 70 bodies, there were also Somali women there”.

I.H. 30 years from Somalia; interview collected in the CAS of Canicrao.

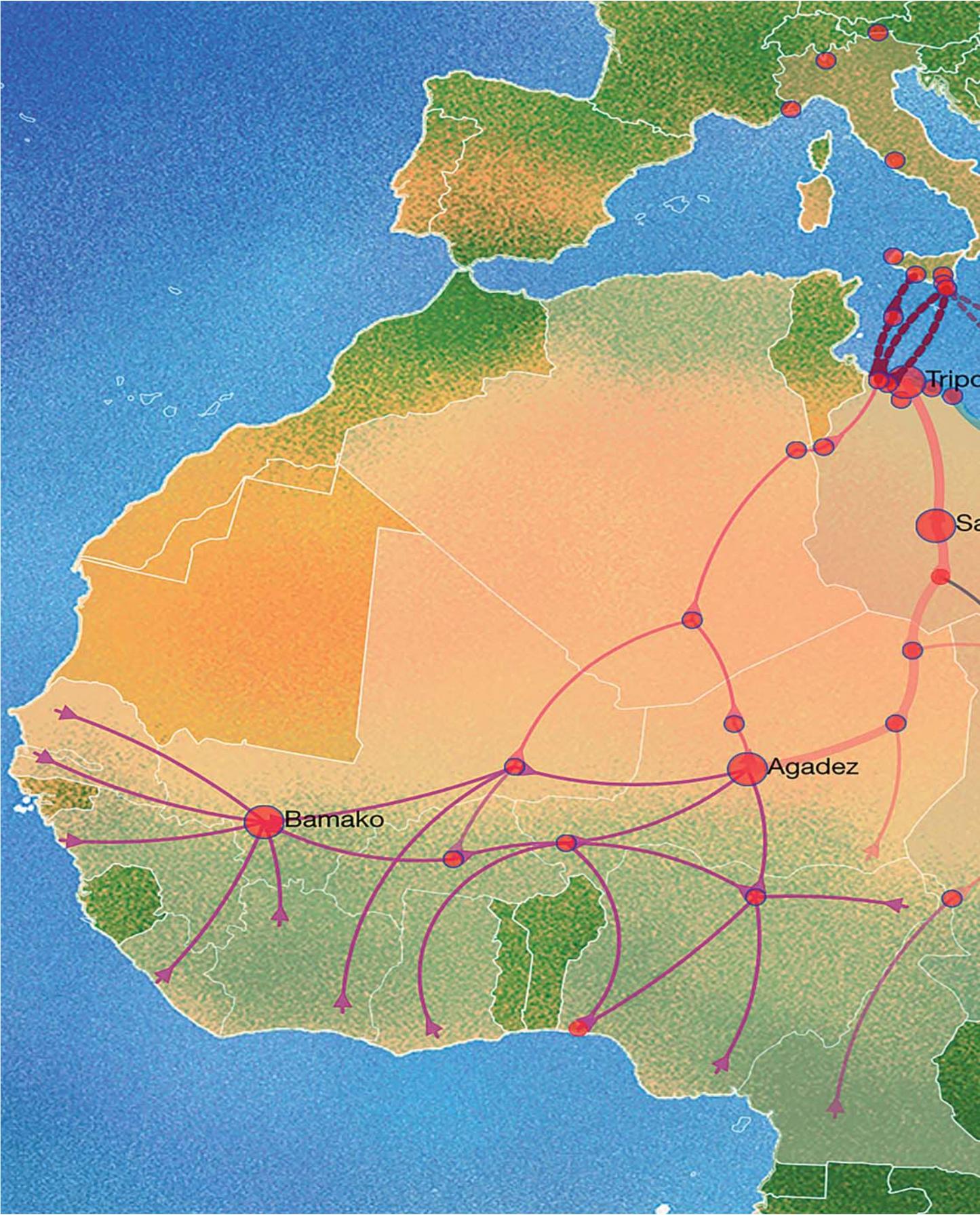
Egyptian Route

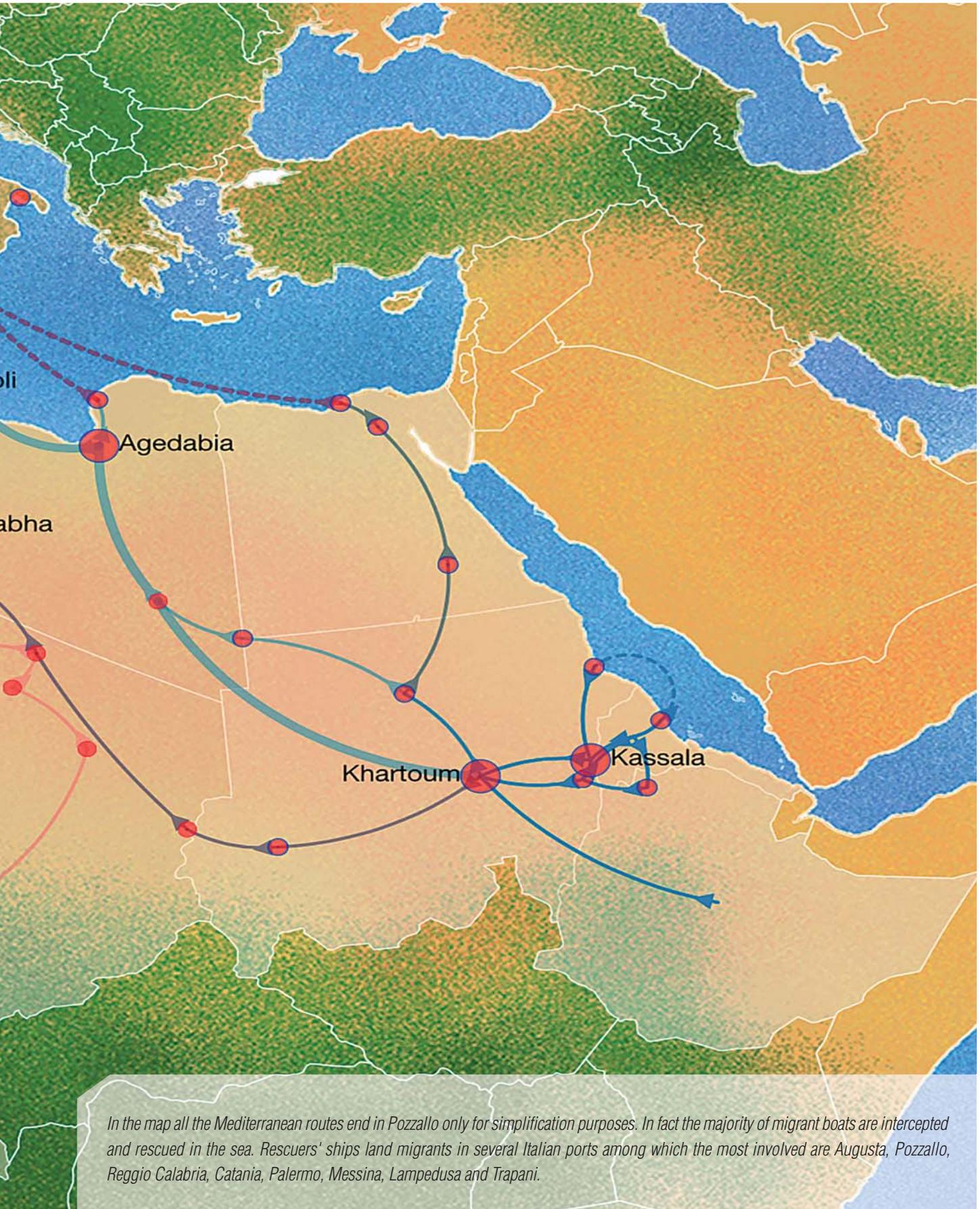
Alexandria and the surrounding areas represent the boarding point for the migrants coming from the Horn of Africa and Sudan who want to avoid passing through Libya. The distance from Alexandria to Italy is approx-

imately 800 nautical miles. This very risky crossing lasts at least 8-10 days and consists of moving from one boat to another.

“Once in Egypt, an Egyptian intermediary asked me to arrange a trip to Italy for US dollars 2,000. Every Egyptian intermediary has a group of refugees (7-10), which are held in a place (in my case in a pharmacy) until it is the right moment to leave. We took a bus to the coast, where we had to get on a small boat. From the small boat, we were transferred to a larger one, which was ten miles away from the coast. We stationary lived on this boat for about ten days; we were about 500 people from Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Syria, and Egypt. There were many children and women. Every day each one only drank half cup of water and ate a small piece of bread. The man who was driving the boat was Egyptian, although he lived all the time on the boat with others. People were scared, the children were crying and making a lot of noise. The trip to Italy lasted seven days. Just before arriving on Italian shores, we were intercepted by the Italian and Spanish police forces that rescued us. 300 persons was made into a boat and 200 on another, and then everyone was taken to Palermo”.

F.P. 28 years from Sudan; interview collected in Ventimiglia, May 2016





In the map all the Mediterranean routes end in Pozzallo only for simplification purposes. In fact the majority of migrant boats are intercepted and rescued in the sea. Rescuers' ships land migrants in several Italian ports among which the most involved are Augusta, Pozzallo, Reggio Calabria, Catania, Palermo, Messina, Lampedusa and Trapani.

PART III: Countries of Origin and Transit Countries

PRINCIPAL COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Gambia

According to Amnesty International Annual Report, in December 2014, an attempted coup led to several arrests and contributed to further human rights violations (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016). Some people from Gambia interviewed by Medu team have reported to have suffered serious deprivation of

basic needs while in detention in their own country. Besides poor hosting conditions, overcrowding and lack of adequate sanitary facilities, they also reported forced labour and a series of inhuman treatments and punishments.

“I spent more than 2 months in a prison in Banjul. We were 9 persons in a small cell, without space to lie down. The toilet was not there and they gave us a small bin where we had to piss and defecate. The smell was terrible. The room had just a small opening on the top, from where a lot of insects were entering. There was no light. The guards were giving us food in small recipients through a split in the door. Moreover, they were entering and forcing us to some punishment and humiliation, like obliging us to stand naked while they were grabbing us by our ears. When I was too tired from overwork, soldiers were coming, forcing me to lie down and beating me everywhere with sticks. I saw lots of people seriously injured there because of the beatings: some were brought to the hospital, some others never came back”.

B.S. 27 years from Gambia, Interview collected in the CARA of Mineo, April 2015

Nigeria

The last annual report of Amnesty international (2015-2016) reported that the conflict between the military and the armed group Boko Haram continued, resulting in the deaths of thousands of civilians and over 2 million internally displaced people at the end of the year. Torture and other ill-treatments by the police and security forces were widespread. Demolitions of informal settlements led to the forced eviction of thousands of people. Death sentences continued to be imposed.

Apart from the violations performed by Boko Haram, several migrants interviewed by Medu reported about religious persecutions. They stated to have left their country because their fathers or other relatives were

forcing them to join a cult whose members are requested to do sacrifice and traditional rites, which are against their religion. In most of the cases, the migrants interviewed by Medu were Christians and could not accept to be part of the sect as it was against their religion and the religion of the mother. Due to their refusal, the young boys are persecuted and they believe to have been victims of some evil spells, which made them sick. Going away seems one of the few options to weak the impact of this witchcraft. Most of them are threatened up to death.

In addition to this persecution, the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) still represents a very common

practice in Nigeria (41% of all adult women) and it is carried out for cultural reasons. The modalities differ considerably from one state to another, even from tribe to tribe. This practise involves a serious violation of the rights of young women who cannot refuse this practice, despite the high risks for their health, security and physical integrity.

Medu interviewed J.K., 35 years, from Nigeria, who wanted his daughter to do FGM, as *“this is part of our culture”*, even though his village committee had decided to abolish this practice. As he wanted to do it anyway, he was put in jail. Nevertheless, he told us that even in those Gambian villages where FGM is said to be not practiced anymore, this is a decision taken by the high society and FGM continues to be largely, though covertly, practiced.

“I was with my father on our way back to Benin City. Some people with masks stopped our vehicle and asked me to get out. They tied me up, while they shot to my father, just in front of me. I was eager to save my dad, but those people put me inside their car, covered my face and brought me in the bush. I was shocked. I didn’t even know if my father had survived. When I arrived in the bush, they uncovered my eyes and I saw hundreds of people detained, including women and children. They told me that as a young boy I had to join Boko Haram. But I was a Christian, I would have never done that. When I refused, they beat me with wooden sticks and guns and they broke my leg in three different parts. The day after they came again, they asked me to join Boko Haram but I again refused. They forced me to put my leg in the fire and my soles are still burnt. They did not give me medical assistance and I had to medicate by myself. I stayed there for 4 months. We were almost 300 persons in a small hut under the control of 20 persons, heavily armed. They were giving us food only once a day, mainly bread and tea. I saved myself just because one day I asked to go to the toilet and I managed to escape together with the guys they had sent to check over me. We walked for hours, then we reached a big road where 2 guys brought us back to Benin City and rescued us. But when I arrived there, I found a city completely destroyed. Everybody was scattered. I asked around where my dad and my mother were, and I was told that my father had died in the hospital and my mother had escaped due to a Boko Haram attack. I went to a friend’s house and I was treated for one month by a traditional healer. But situation in Benin City became dangerous with bomb blasting everywhere. That’s why I decided to leave Nigeria, with 10,000 Naira in my pockets”.

E.I., 28 years from Nigeria, December 2014

Eritrea

According to the last annual report by Amnesty International, thousands of Eritreans continue to leave the country to flee the forced indefinite conscription in the government army, a nationwide system similar to forced labour. Furthermore, rule of law remains non-existent; political opposition is still banned, independent media or universities are not allowed to operate; freedom of religion and movement is still restricted;

arbitrary detention without charge or trial continues to be the norm for thousands of prisoners of conscience (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016).

The Eritrean Diaspora

Since the independence declared 23 years ago, one third of the population has escaped from Eritrea. According to the Unhcr, more than 4,000 people leave the country every month. More than 10,000 people are detained as political prisoners (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016). Different sources of information report about human rights violations, persecutions, tortures, repression not only due to political but also to religious control. In Eritrea, the national military service continues to be mandatory for everyone, both men and women, until the age of 50 for men and 40 for women. Even families of the people who left the country are in danger due to the possible retaliation by Eritrean authorities. The regime uses migration to enrich the country. The government has in fact established the "Diaspora taxation", stating that each Eritrean citizen living abroad has to pay 2% of his own income to the Eritrean Government.

Borders' Control

Several migrants interviewed by Medu team reported that the Eritrea-Sudan border crossing is very dangerous. Since 2014, there is a massive presence of military forces in charge of the implementation of the 'shoot-to-kill policy' against citizens who try to leave the country. Moreover, many migrants reported to have been kidnapped or to have witnessed other people being kidnapped for ransom by members of Rashaida tribe with the collusion of the military forces (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016).

“I saw with my eyes border police selling migrants to Rashaida. Another time, in 2011, the police found 28 people who were kidnapped by Rashaida. People were released but the Rashaida were not arrested. Police never apprehends the Rashaida.”

H.T., 28 years from Eritrea; interviewed collected in the CAS of Comiso, February 2014

COUNTRIES OF TRANSIT

Mali

Mali is both one of the principal countries of origin of migrants from West Africa and a transit country of the Western routes, particularly from Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia and Ivory Coast. In its annual report, Amnesty International describes a deep internal conflict which continues despite a peace agreement has been already signed. Armed groups that take part in the conflict perpetuate abuses and crimes against international laws on human rights. This conflict fosters insecurity, especially in the north of Mali.

M.M. a 21 years old Malian refugee interviewed by Medu in April 2015 describes the climate of violence that rules in Mali:

“I had a son without being married, which is considered to be a crime in Mali according to the Shariya (the Muslim law). Me and my family were threatened by the Tu-areg, who are in favour of the strict application of the Muslim law and who wanted to punish me for my behavior. My father advised me to leave the country and I did it. I left Mali on February 2012. Only later, when I was heading to Libya I got to know that my father had died, after he had been stopped and tortured by Muslim guys who were looking for me.”

“I had to pay 10,000 CFA to cross the border between Senegal and Mali (15 Euro). At the check-point between Mali and Burkina Faso I was requested by the police 30,000 CFA. I did not have this money so the police tortured me: they beat me all over my body with a pipe and they kept me in a detention centre in Mali for 3 days. After 2 months in Ouagadougou I was without a job, so I decided to move to Niger where – someone told me- I should have found a job easily. I moved with the public transport but at the border between Burkina Faso and Niger I was again detained for 1 day.”

A.D., 20 years from Gambia, interviewed collected in the CAS of Canicarao, December 2014

Niger

Migrants travelling along the Western routes are likely to pass through Niger. The last annual report of Amnesty International (2015-2016) reported that the armed group Boko Haram committed crimes under international law, escalating the conflict and leading to an increase in the number of people displaced. The authorities introduced a state of emergency in the Diffa region. Human rights defenders were arbitrarily arrested. The government restricted freedom of expression. Thousands of refugees were deported back to Nigeria (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016).

The journey from Niamey, the capital of Niger, to Agadez is referred to as the most difficult part of the route across the countries of the Sahel. Compared to other check points encountered before, undocumented migrants report more frequently about mistreatments and brutalization by security forces. Moreover, this route is full of false check points created by bandits looking for easy money. In terms of cruelty, Nigeriens are usually compared to Libyans. They are seriously armed and they use weapons to threaten migrants in order to extort money.

“The journey from Mali to Niger lasted 4 days but we had to pay a lot of money at every border we crossed. They stopped our bus and collected all our documents. Then, they parked Gambians in one side, Nigeriens in another. Then, they said all Gambians had to pay 10,000 CFA (15,25 euro). A friend I was travelling with paid for me at the border between Mali and Burkina Faso. After 100 meters there was another check-point. I refused to pay so I was put in detention for 5 hours, where I was seriously beaten. I was travelling by public bus so when I was released my bus had gone and I had to wait for the next one. I was requested other 10,000 CFA at the border between Burkina Faso and Niger and I paid them. In Niamey the life was very tough: there was no job and I had to live in the street for one week. Food was rotten and water poisoning. I decided to move to Agadez, but to reach there it took other 5 check-points to pass through. At every check point they asked me for money.”

I.S., 33 years from Gambia; interviewed collected in the CAS of Ragusa Ibla, November 2014

The city of Agadez is located in the Sahara Desert and it is the capital of the Air, one of the most traditional Tuareg Federation. Together with Al-Qatron and Sabha it is considered as a part of the "road to hell". The northern part of Niger is considered as the meeting point for those who want to cross Sahara Desert to reach Libya and Algeria. Out of the 260 migrants interviewed in Sicily, 80% stated to have contacted a smuggler to reach Libya from Agadez. In most cases, migrants got to know who they could contact in Agadez simply by

asking around for information about smugglers organizing trips to Libya. Indeed, as already shown in previous investigations, Agadez hosts a large number of transit houses called "Foyer". Sometimes migrants are immediately able to pay for their fare, or they just manage to work in order to collect the amount of money they need. In some cases smuggler agree to anticipate the costs of the journey from Agadez but once in Libya migrants have to work for free during some weeks in order to repay the debt.

“I spent 6 months in Agadez. I was staying at the bus station but the situation was terrible. There were bandits everywhere. I have been beaten by them several times. They catch you on the road and they beat you, with sticks and ropes. Every time they were stealing me money. I decided to move to Libya because of them.”

L.C., 23 years from Senegal; interview collected in the CAS of Gerico, March 2014

“I spent one week in Agadez, where I got to know about the most popular smugglers organizing trip to Libya: Modu Boss and Sow, of the Fulah tribe, both ex-soldiers in Niger. Everyone in Agadez knows that if you want to go to Libya you have to talk to them. I paid 200 dollars for the trip from Agadez to Sabha, travelling with 36 persons in the back of a pick-up. Unfortunately after 2 days of travel, the driver stopped the vehicle in the middle of the desert, forced us to go down and left us in the desert for 5 days, without a shelter, food or water. They came to pick us up only on the 6th day. We travelled for other 2 days before reaching Libya. At the first check-point we were brutally approached and forced to pay 20 dinars each. At the second check-point, in the middle of nowhere with mountains around us, I had finished my money. So they beat me seriously for 2 hours. Then we reached Sabha.”

A.D., 34 years from Gambia; interview collected in the CAS of Vittoria, December 2014

Dirkou is another meeting point in Niger, in the middle of the desert on the way to Libya. Even there, people might get arrested at the check point and suffer several abuses. The bus drivers usually cross the desert to

avoid the check-points. Nevertheless, when migrants are stopped at the border between Niger and Libya they can be victims of extreme violence, detention and inhuman treatments.

“We were travelling on a pick up when armed people at the check-point in Dirkou stopped us. Soldiers wanted to rape a girl who was travelling with us, with the excuse she did not have the money to pay. I paid for her, and they let her go. She shared with me her contact of a Madame. I called that lady and she arranged also for me a trip from El Gatrún to Sabha with a private car for 1000 Dollars. I was covered like a goat, with lots of merchandise over me. Once in Misurata, at the check-point armed people opened the back of the Hylux and found me. They started torturing meso seriously that I lost consciousness for some days. When I woke up I found myself in Gharyan Busha Prison.”

E.A.J., 25 years from Nigeria; interview collected in the CARA of Mineo, April 2015

The border settlement of Madama is the last station before Libya. It is used as a check point station to monitor

the movements of people between Niger and Libya.

“We travelled in a pick-up for 4 days. At the last check-point in Niger, Madama, soldiers beat me seriously. I thought I was going to die. A friend of mine picked me up from the floor and put me inside the vehicle. I was as a dead body.”

S.D.B., 27 years from Gambia; interview collected in the CARA of Mineo, April 2015

Algeria

Algeria is a country of transit on the way from Mali or Niger to Libya. According to Amnesty International annual report (2015-2016), Algerian authorities heavily limited freedom of speech, association and assembly. Many activists, journalists and protesters have been arrested, persecuted and incarcerated. Legislators have amended the Penal Code to protect women against violence and sexual assaults. However, current legislation does not effectively protect girls and women from gender-based violence. Perpetuators of torture and

human rights violations committed during the internal conflict in the 1990's have never been prosecuted. On the other hand, many sentences to death have been emitted, although none has been executed. Migrants have been victims of abuses and many of them have been forced to leave the country (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016).

This is the description of the journey through Algeria by a Gambian migrant, M.J. 19 years.

“I escaped from Gambia and I reached Mali passing through Senegal. My English teacher paid for my trip. From Mali I paid 30,000 CFA and jumped with other guys in a truck to Algeria. In the desert in Kidal (Mali) we were stopped by the Tuareg, we had to get out of the truck, we were beaten and robbed of money and clothes, they raped women in front of us, we were forced to jump for five hours in the desert, if we stopped they beat us seriously. Two travel companions died. They forced us to get into another truck and they drove to Timiaouine, in Algeria, where I worked for a week and I earned some money to go to Tamanrasset. In Tamanrasset I met a man from Mali and we went together to Ouargla where I worked as a painter. In the area where I lived, there was an explosion, and many people died. After that the president decided to repatriate many Africans. I decided to run away to Libya together with a friend and we reached Ghadames, along with two other guys we took a "taxi" for Zliten paying 450 dinars (290 euro)”

Interview collected in the CAS of Canicarao, July 2014

Libya

Libya is a major transit country for both Western and Eastern Routes.

Libya is in the midst of an armed conflict among different groups fighting for the territorial control. Military forces of both governments and armed groups are responsible for war crimes, violations of international laws and crimes against humanity that remain unpunished. Freedom of speech, association and assembly have been strongly limited. People are detained without tri-

als, and torture and abuses are common practices. Death penalty is in force and several former senior officials have been sentenced to death. Migrants, refugees and women experience any type of abuse and violence (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016).

Migrants' exploitation

“As soon as you reach Libya, you are in a big prison...You can't go back, you cannot escape. Libya is a place where you are no more considered as a human being.”

A.K., 18 years from Eritrea; interviewed at Collatina squat (Rome), September 2014.

The business of migration across the Sahara Desert, Libya and the Mediterranean Sea is a combination of highly organized smugglers and unprofessional individuals acting on their own or providing a specific service on a contract basis. The smuggling network has become a loose chain in which even a single individual can enter and exploit the vulnerable migrants, through kidnapping, forced labour or extortion of money. This makes the dismantling of the trafficking network even more challenging for authorities. Migrants from West Africa interviewed in Sicily identified a broader set of perpetrators:

- **Police officers:** they are used to kidnap or arrest migrants without documents. During detention, migrants are tortured and beaten.
- **Libyan soldiers and militias:** they kidnap or arrest migrants for money. Torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments and food and water deprivation are common practices in their military camps or in other places where migrants are detained.
- **Armed gangs (i.e. Asma Boys):** they usually attack people on the road, in their private houses or in the “foyers” in order to extort money. They manage places where migrants are detained and daily beaten and tortured.
- **Armed professional traffickers:** they operate in the Sahara desert and on the Libyan coast. They buy and sell migrants for money and they often beat their clients to speed up boarding.
- **Civilians and businessmen:** they force migrants to slavery and to unbearable living conditions. Sub-saharan Africans and Libyans who manage the “foyers” beat migrants when they are not able to pay for the monthly rent.

Detentions centres

Before the fall of the Gaddafi regime there were between 19 and 25 migrant detention centres and prisons in Libya (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016). These centres are officially run by the Interior Ministry but nowadays there is no longer any supervision and therefore it is difficult to know exactly how many of them are actually used to detain illegal migrants. Inmates complain of being locked, beaten with weapons and sticks, of receiving rotten food and being forced to live in terrible hygienic conditions. Migrants can be imprisoned in two different kinds of detention facilities: institutional prisons and unofficial detention facilities. Government facilities are usually referred to as deportation camps or prisons where migrants are detained for being undocumented. The length of detention is indefinite and prisoners are released only when the government can deport them back to their home countries. However, Medu collected several testimonies describing different ways to escape these detention centres.

“When I was on the road I was caught by people in uniforms who brought me in a prison inside Tripoli. While I was captured, they hit me with a rifle on my head. I started bleeding and I fainted. When I woke up I thought I was dead. There was blood everywhere. I found myself in a cell with other people. They were giving us only 1 loaf of bread per day. Every day soldiers came and asked each of us 700 Dinars (500 Euro). They also forced us to call our relatives. If you could not pay, they beat you without limits. The cell was full of dead bodies. I saw soldiers breaking the nose of one guy and beating him so seriously on his head that he lost his eyes. They broke me a finger and cut my left leg with a knife. I remained there for 3 weeks, then one day when no one was watching me I managed to escape through the window of the toilet”.

A.N, 18 years from Senegal; interview collected in the CAS of Canicarao, January 2015

“I was in an open space in Tripoli (Kupri), where migrants are searching for job. A Libyan man came and asked 5 people to work. I was one of them. Instead, he brought us to the police station. From there, we were taken to the Al-Khums prison, far away from Tripoli. There were 300 persons in a room and there was no space for lying down and sleep. Food and water were insufficient. Every day they gave us only 1 bread and 1 glass of water at noon and at midnight. This was the only food and the only water I have seen during the 8 months I have spent in Al-Khums prison in Libya. They also beat us every day with water pumps. They used to throw cold water over us, to call us by group and beating us violently. Many people were injured. I saw some people losing their legs due to the beatings. They were beating us like crazy because they wanted money. Several times they asked me for 500 Libyan dinars to be released. Since I did not have this money they were beating me”.

A.D., 20 years from Gambia, interview collected in CAS Canicarao, December 2014

Unofficial detention centres are smaller facilities where soldiers and policemen detain asylum seekers until they are able to pay the ransom. Medu team has collected testimonies of migrants detained in Tripoli (Janzur, Abu Salim, Jadida), Gharyan, Zawia, Al-Khums, Sabah, Bahe.

Duration of detention:



The living conditions in Libyan prisons are well described by a migrant from Guinea Bissau interviewed by Medu:

“One day while I was walking for Tripoli I have been arrested and brought to a prison. I spent there 8 months. I was detained in a room with 300 persons, from Gambia, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry and Eritrea. We were all men, even though in the surroundings there was also a prison for women. They were beating us every single day. You can be released only if you pay money. I saw soldiers obliging people to call their relatives and ask for money while being tortured. For 8 months I have never seen a doctor there. But I saw 4 persons dying in front of my eyes (2 from Somalia and 2 from Guinea Bissau) as a result of beatings by soldiers. Most of the time they were under alcohol effect. After a clash with militias, the prison was opened and I managed to escape”.

A.R.J., 28 years from Guinea Bissau; interview collected in the CAS of Comiso

“In Tripoli I was arrested as I had no documents. They put me in this detention centre near Tripoli, where I spent 2 months. We were hundreds of people in the same room and we were forced to use the same toilet. The guards were policemen and were used to beat us seriously. They shouted always at us, calling us sons of animals and insulting us with bad words. One night while I was sleeping, they came and beat my face with iron bars breaking my nose. Food and water were not enough, the room was dark and there was not air. Many people got sick inside that prison and were left to die. Some other just died because they did not have enough to eat and drink. I also lost my dear friend, a Somalian guy like me, in the prison, as he was undernourished and sick”.

I.H., 30 years from Somalia; interview collected in the CAS of Canicarao

Kidnapping for ransom

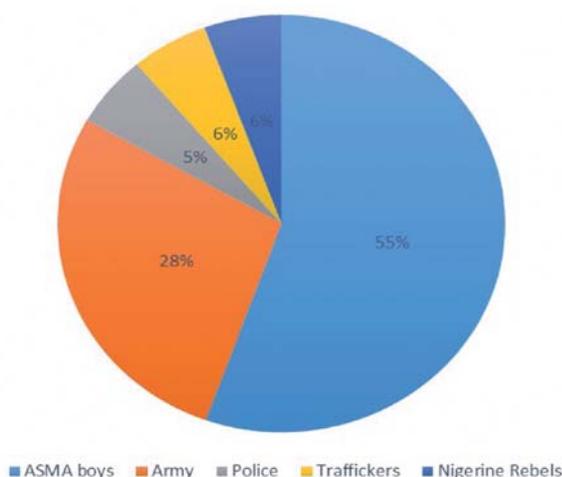
This practice is very common in Libya where the cost of the ransom can vary between 400 and 1,000 Euros. In Tripoli and Sabha migrants are usually captured on the road, especially in those corners where they use to go to look for daily jobs. The hostages refer about being locked in small rooms inside one of the many abandoned buildings in the town with precarious hy-

gienic conditions and very poor food provided only once a day. Moreover, they are daily beaten for ransom. Migrants are kidnapped upon their arrival in Libya. Most of them suppose that smugglers they paid for their journey from Niger have an agreement with the kidnappers in Libya.

“I was on the road in Benouali (Libya) when 3 persons stopped me and offered me a job. I did not know they were Asma Boys. I followed them, but they brought me to their “special place” where Asma Boys are used to detain people. It’s a place far from everywhere, so even if you scream none can come to rescue you. They locked me in a big room, without windows with other 5 persons. We didn’t have a toilet and we could go out to the toilet just once a day. We were given food only once a day. But above all, 3 Asma Boys were coming every morning asking us for 700 Dinars. I did not have that money, so every morning I was beaten with plastic tubes by 2 of them, while the third was there pointing his rifle against me. They also tight me and beat my feet with a wooden stick (falaka). After they were beating the soles of my feet, they were painful and swollen. I could not even walk and I had to walk on my knees to go to the bathroom”.

F.A. K., 26 years from Gambia; interview collected in the CAS of Canicarao

Identity of kidnappers:



Sudan

Sudan is a key hub for the flow of migrants from the Horn of Africa trying to reach Europe through Libya, Egypt and then the Mediterranean Sea. It is also a country of emigration, as a result of political instability, economic crisis and armed conflicts.

Amnesty international reports a repressive policy of Sudanese authorities against media, civil society organizations and political opposition, mostly implemented through limitation of freedom of speech, association and assembly. The ongoing armed conflict in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions have already caused massive displacement and many victims among civilians. All the groups involved in the conflict have committed serious violations of human rights. Government forces have destroyed hospitals, schools and outpatient clinics. Due to the ongoing conflicts, humanitarian organizations are forced to stay out of the war zones, so that civilian victims cannot be rescued (Amnesty international, Annual Report 2015-2016).

The “Khartoum Process”

Despite being governed since 1989 by a president who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and genocide, Sudan has been chosen by Europe as a counterpart in countering the flow of migrants along the route from the Horn of Africa to Central Mediterranean, the same as Morocco for the Western Mediterranean and Turkey for the eastern Mediterranean route. To achieve this task, in April 2016, Sudan received 155 million of Euro by the trust fund for the management of migration flows of the European Union. These money have been used by the Sudanese government to launch large-scale checks of migrants at its borders as well as in the capital Khartoum, in the towns and in the refugee camps located in the East part of Sudan. According to Human Rights Watch, in May 2016 the Sudanese authorities declared to have repatriated at least 442 Eritreans in one month, six of whom were recognized and registered as refugees and several were minors. The authorities have also denied the access to Unhcr which is designated to identify the possible asylum seekers. The same happened to 46 Ethiopian prisoners awaiting repatriation. Sudanese security forces are intercepting and stopping hundreds of migrants at the borders with Libya and Egypt. The same security forces, also known as janjaweed militias, are responsible for serious abuses against civilians, carried out with impunity in conflict zones where they operate. The Europe Agreement with Sudan, in line with the so-called “Khartoum Process” launched on the initiative of Italy in 2014, seems to sacrifice in the first place the human rights of migrants.

Shagarab

Shagarab is one of the largest African refugee camps. It was set up in 1968 near the city of Kassala to house people exiled from Eritrean war of independence against Ethiopia. Today more than a reception center it is a city of shacks located in the middle of nowhere near the border. More than 30 thousand refugees divided into two camps (Shagarab 1 and Shagarab 2) live there and the new arrivals from Eritrea continue relentless. According to the Unhcr, on average 1,500 asylum seekers per month reach the camp. It should be the first place to protect the Eritrean migrants fleeing the dictatorship but it is instead described by testi-

monies as "a hellish place" of abuse and violence. Inside the camp there is a Unhcr office for the examination of asylum applications, but the same Unhcr has repeatedly denounced the conditions of insecurity that make it virtually ungovernable. The management depends entirely on the Sudanese Ministry of Interior but the entire complex is left to itself. Traffickers (in particular the ones belonging to the ethnic group of Rashaida) operate with impunity recruiting migrants and, in many cases, kidnapping them with the recourse violence.

"I left the refugee camp of Shagarab after 1 year of stay because the conditions of life were dramatic. There were more than 16,000 people. Food and clothes were not enough, you are not allowed to work and you are not safe there. If I think to that place, I go crazy. After leaving Shagarab I reached Khartoum, travelling 2 nights."

S.M., 22 years, from Eritrea; interview collected in the CAS of Ragusa, February 2014

Egypt

The situation of human rights in Egypt continues to deteriorate. Egyptian authorities have limited freedom of speech, association and assembly and have declared a new, and very strict law against terrorism. Moreover, people who had criticized the government, activists and political opponents have been arrested and incarcerated or have been victims of forced disappearance. Security forces have used excessive force to persecute protestors, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The Courts have emitted thousands of sentences to death and long prison sentences after unfair proceedings. Prisoners have been tortured and abused. On the other hand, violations of human rights have remained unpunished. Women and minorities have faced discriminations and are not protected from human rights violations. People have been persecuted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity and accused for indecent exposure. Authorities chased out people living at the bor-

der between Egypt and Gaza (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016).

Present situation in Sinai

It is estimated that since 2009, tens of thousands of migrants from the Horn of Africa, particularly Eritreans, have been kidnapped and tortured for ransom in Sinai by gangs of Bedouin traffickers. The migrants are kidnapped while trying to reach Israel or, more recently, they are captured in Sudan and taken to the Sinai by a complex network of traffickers that involves Rashaida ethnic groups colluded with the Bedouins of Sinai. The kidnapers can ask for a ransoms of up to 40,000 US dollars. In the last two years this phenomenon seems to have reduced significantly. As a consequence of the construction by Israel of a barrier along the border and

of the current instability and violence prevailing in the north of the Sinai - a battleground between the Egyptian army and jihadist groups - migrants from the Horn

of Africa now prefer to follow the Libyan or the Egyptian route to Europe (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015-2016).

Two young Eritrean women have described their journey across Egypt as follow:

“We fled Eritrea in 2013 and we arrived through Ethiopia to Sudan, in the Shagarab refugee camp. We therefore reached Khartoum where we were kidnapped by a gang of traffickers in July 2013 and taken to the Sinai. We remained in the hands of Bedouin traffickers for 11 months until June 2014. The ransom demanded was 33,000 US dollars. We were around 25 hostages. We have been subjected to violence and beatings every day. In June, after being released by the traffickers, we were arrested by Egyptian security forces and brought to Qenater prison in Cairo where we have been detained for over three months. The conditions of detention are very harsh, we use to live and sleep in the same dormitories where criminals are held for common crimes. In each room there are about 90 people, space is not enough, it seems to suffocate, we are obliged to sleep in pairs in single beds. We have lost hope of being able to reach Europe and be recognized as refugees. We are waiting to be deported in Ethiopia by the Egyptian authorities as happens to many other Eritreans imprisoned here. With us there is also F.H. our friend, 21 year old, who has suffered particularly fierce violence during the kidnapping in the Sinai. His right arm suffered fractures in several points and he has also several scars on his head due to beatings. He is devastated in his body and in his mind”.

M.T., 25 years, W.A., 22 years, from Eritrea, October 2014

Aswan

Aswan is a key transit town for migrants from Sudan trying to reach Cairo. In the outskirts of the city is located the Shellal military camp where hundreds of migrants from the Horn of Africa who were intercepted in the desert near the borders with Libya and Sudan are de-

tained. There is also a women's section, made of a large room where women and children are held. Migrants can spend even more than one year in the camp waiting to be repatriated.

“I left Eritrea in September 2015. I first reached Kassala, then I paid to get to Egypt and arrived in Aswan where the traffickers kept me prisoner beating me every day. After two weeks, I was able to get away and I reached Cairo. Once in Cairo, I met people who told me they would take me to a safer place, but along the way, in the night, I realized that they were taking me to a place outside the city. I was afraid to be kidnapped again so I decided to throw from the moving car. I reported a trauma to one eye. Now I'm always afraid and I cannot sleep at night.”

S.A., 17 years from Eritrea; interview collected in Cairo, November 2015

Cairo

In the Egyptian capital thousands of Eritrean refugees live in conditions of severe deprivation. Moreover, many migrants from the Horn of Africa, particularly Eritreans who have been kidnapped either in Sinai (by

Bedouin traffickers as they tried to reach Israel) or in the south part of the desert, are detained in the prison Qenater, in the outskirts of Cairo.

“I was born in Dbarwa in Eritrea. In 2009 I fled to Sudan and I lived in the field of Shagrab refugees camp for two years. In 2011 I reached Khartoum where I was seized in August by traffickers and taken to Sinai. I was seized in Sinai for four months along with other 70 people, including 58 men and 12 women, mostly of Eritrean nationality. Traffickers asked our families a ransom of 40,000 US dollars. I was blindfolded for the entire period of the seizure without ever being able to see my jailers. Every day we suffered violence: we were regularly beaten or bound and suspended by the arms and feet. Two people (a boy and a woman) paid a ransom of 33,000 US dollars and reached Israel, other 30 people have paid 25,000 US dollars and they have also reached Israel. Others have paid 20,000 and only some of them have managed to reach Israel. Those who paid between 2,000 and 15,000 were released, but they failed to reach Israel. In total traffickers took from the kidnapped group more than a million dollars in ransom. I paid 5,000 and I was released near the Egypt-Israel border. I was very weak and could hardly walk because I had a "broken foot" due to their violence. Shortly after, I was arrested by the Egyptian army. I'm sure that there are agreements between the Egyptian military and the traffickers. After being detained for 48 hours I was brought to a local hospital and then I was transferred to the prison of Al Arish (Sinai), located near the border with the Gaza Strip. After two months in detention in Al Arish I have been transferred to the prison of Qenater where I have been detained for the past three years. I would like to obtain refugee status in Europe or in the United States. I do not want to be deported in refugee camps in Ethiopia where many Eritrean migrants are transferred from Egypt.”

Y.B., 27 years from Eritrea; interview collected in Cairo, October 2014

Alexandria

In the surroundings of Alexandria there are some places where it is possible to embark to reach Europe.

“I fled from Eritrea and Sudan until they seized me and brought me to Egypt where I remained in the desert with other migrants for two months. We were then able to escape so I reached Aswan by train and then I arrived in Cairo. I sought the Unhcr office but before I could reach the office I found intermediaries who offered me to reach Europe by sea. Therefore, I moved to Alexandria to take a boat. On the boat we were 135 people from different countries: Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia. Five people died during the trip. We remained several days in the sea but at some point the smuggler and the person who was sailing the ship began to fight and did not find an agreement on the route. They looked like they were afraid of being intercepted by the police. Finally they brought us in front of the Egyptian coast near Alexandria and left people in the sea in front of a beach. As soon as we set foot on shore we were arrested by the Egyptian police.”

M.S., 31 years from Eritrea; interview collected in Cairo, December 2015

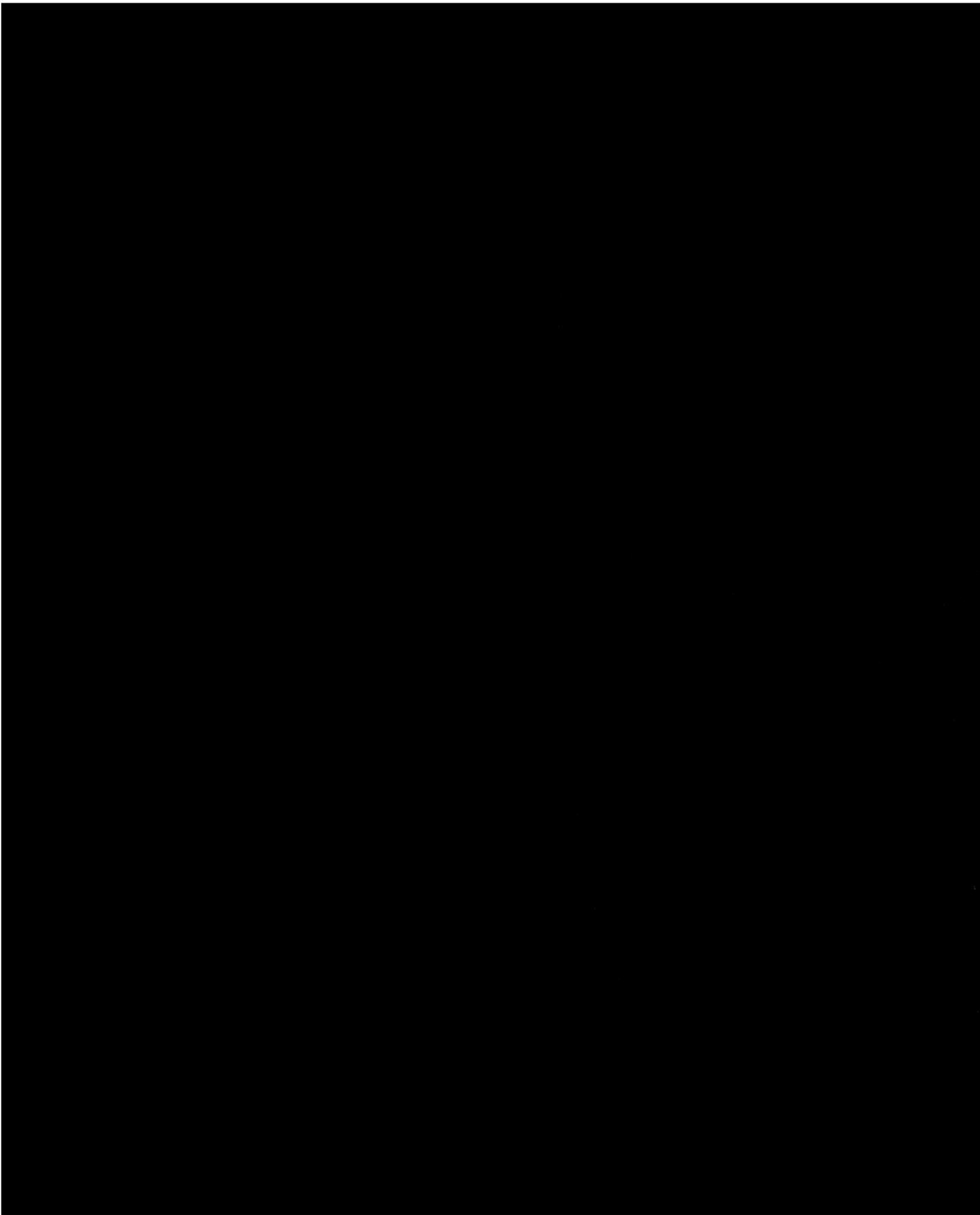




Photo by **Rocco Rorandelli** – Mediterranean Sea

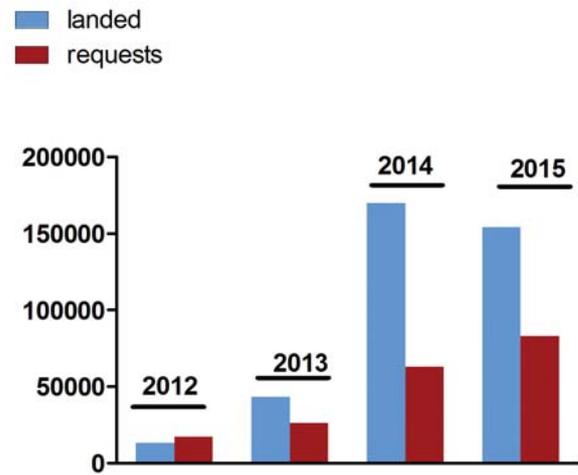
PART IV: Italy

Until September 2016, 159,419 migrants were hosted in the Italian reception system, a significant increase compared to the end of 2015 (103,000 people hosted). The vast majority of them (123,178 or 77%) is housed in temporary structures named CAS (Special Reception Centres). The standard national system consisting of SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers) centres and CARA (Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers) centres, hosts less than a third of all migrants. The regions hosting the largest number of migrants are in order Lombardy, Sicily, Lazio and Veneto (Unhcr).

Asylum seekers and transiting people

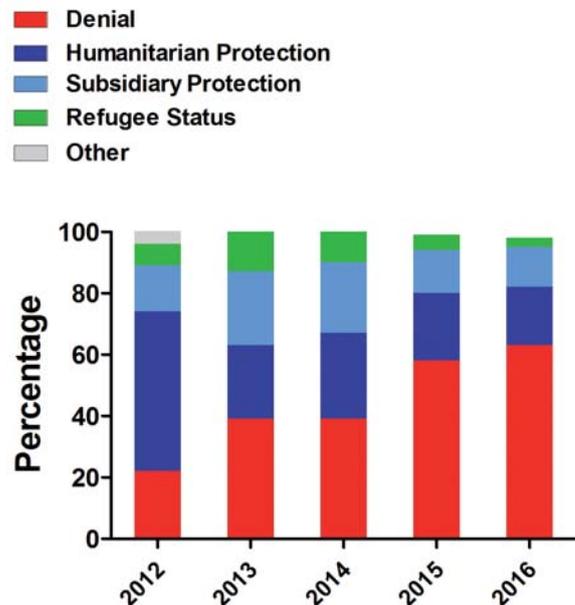
Some migrants landing on Italian shores remain and have applied for asylum while others, a very consistent part, pass through the peninsula (in many cases transiting in major cities such as Rome and Milan) and then try to cross the border towards the countries of northern Europe, in particular Germany, the United Kingdom and Scandinavian Countries. The graph on the right illustrates this phenomenon. In 2014, for example, 63,000 migrants out of the 170,000 who landed on Italian shores applied for asylum. In recent years, applications for asylum in Italy have gradually increased, but at the same time the number of rejected requests has also increased. In the first eight months of 2016, for instance, only one-third of the applicants were recognized international protection or humanitarian residence permit while two-thirds of the migrants were refused any kind of protection by the 40 territorial commissions responsible for the examination of asylum claims. At present, the main countries of origin of asylum seekers are Nigeria, Pakistan, Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Bangladesh and Afghanistan (Italian Ministry of Interior).

Comparison between n° of migrants landed in Italy and asylum requests over the years



Source: Ministry of Interior

Outcomes of asylum applications



Source: Ministry of Interior

Hotspot approach

The hotspot approach promoted by the European Union is the organizational model operating in Greece and in Italy to manage large arrivals of migrants. Currently in Italy 4 hotspots have been identified (Lampedusa, Trapani, Pozzallo and Taranto) and arranged to allow the operations of first assistance, identification, information and repatriation/relocation. In each Hotspot these activities are carried out by a team of national experts together with representatives of the European agencies (EASO, Frontex, Europol). Organizations for Human Rights noted several critical issues concerning the hotspot approach including: (1) the inadequacy of some structures - designed for a first reception of no more than 48 hours - to host and assist migrants in some cases also for more than 30 days (as indeed it is happening); (2) the risk of a rough selection between migrants who can ask for asylum or relocation and migrants to repatriate; and (3) the refusal of a part of migrants to identify himself with the fingerprinting and subsequent detention in first aid centres without clear rules governing detention for prolonged periods (Commission on Human Rights, Senate of the Italian Republic; Amnesty International).

Relocation

In September 2015 the European Commission adopted a set of measures to deal with what has been called "a refugees emergency". These measures include the replacement (relocation) of 160,000 people in "clear need of international protection" from Greece (66,400) and Italy (39,600) to other EU countries from September 2017. The relocation procedure can be applied only to that nationalities of migrants who obtained a rate of at least 75% of recognition of international protection at the EU level. To date, only three nationalities currently enjoy such high recognition rates: Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis. However, the European States are far from meeting their commitments in terms of relocation numbers. Indeed, up to November 2016 only 6,925 asylum seekers (i.e. about 4% of the total) have been transferred (European Union Commission, 2016).

The Pozzallo Hotspot

Pozzallo is one of the four operative Hotspots in Italy (180 seats). Since July 2016, a Medu team is operating there, providing medical and psychological assistance to migrants upon landing. During the months of the year when the number of landing migrants is

higher (May-October), the Hotspot is frequently overcrowded and the structure is not adequate to guarantee first aid nor to host people, including minors, for a long period (sometimes up to one month) as it often happens.

The story of a landing on the 6th November 2016 in Pozzallo

“Today Vos Hestia Ship arrived in Pozzallo Harbour together with 300 rescued persons from two different operations. Migrants are mainly coming from West Africa, some of them are also coming from Pakistan (Punjab) and from Sudan (Darfur); there are 105 not accompanied minors. Many people report fuel burns, 20 women had burns on their face too. Almost all the migrants said they had suffered violence and torture in Libya. The Medu team collected the testimonies of seven people who have lost part of their family in Libyan prisons. A young boy (18 years old) from Ivory Coast referred to the psychologist of Medu team to have spent more than seven months in a Libyan prison where he was brutally beaten every day and forced to hard labour. The boy shows clear physical signs of violence on his body and he says: “My body is full of scars but larger wounds are in my heart ... I do not know if I will return to be the person I was before.” A 30 years old man from Nigeria reported gunshot wound to the leg. A 30 years old woman from Ivory Coast lost two daughters aged 14 and 6 year old just before boarding. The woman told us that traffickers entered the connection house and started taking people to bring them to the boarding area, they also took the two girls. The Medu team has asked to other humanitarian organizations, but her children had not yet arrived in Italy. Among the people who arrived in Pozzallo there are also two children aged 6 and 9 years of Mali who lost their mother during the sea crossing. Due to the overcrowding of the boat (130 people) the woman was crushed. One guy told us that the rubber boat started to leak water, people have started to fidget and move around, the suffering woman could not move and remained in the bottom of the boat”.

Flavia Calò, coordinator of Medu team in Sicily

The reception Centre of Mineo

The reception centre for asylum seekers (CARA) of Mineo is the largest CARA in Italy with a capacity of 2,000 seats. The centre presents serious problems of overcrowding since it often host over three thousand people, and in some cases has to accommodate four thousand migrants. This, along with other critical issues, makes of it an inappropriate place to host with dignity asylum seekers and particularly the most vulnerable persons such as victims of torture. From Oc-

tober 2014 a Medu team consisting of physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists and cultural mediators operates in the CARA, providing medical-psychological assistance to the many asylum seekers who survived torture and violence in the country of origin and / or along the migration routes. The assisted migrants come in 97% of cases from West Africa, especially from Nigeria, Gambia, Mali, Senegal and Ivory Coast.

“I escaped from my country because I did not want the infibulation on my daughter, as I had when I was child. I don’t want my daughter suffers as I suffered. I left my country and I reached my brother in Libya. One day when I was in the house with my brother and my daughter a group of rebels entered home. I was really afraid: they were screaming and they had guns. They beat us, they took me and they raped me in front of my brother and my daughter. He tried to protect me but he couldn’t because they beat him badly. They took also my daughter and they violated her with their fingers. Right now I am here and I am afraid. This camp is not good for my daughter. One evening I was in the cue to take food, and a man slapped my daughter because she did not stop talking. I’m afraid, I’m not sleeping well during the night, I’m not feeling safe. In the camp there are many alcoholic men, many people who can get into my apartment. I’m afraid: they can hurt me and my daughter”.

M.O., 27 years from Ivory Coast; interview collected in the CARA of Mineo, September 2016

Rome

For several years, Rome has been hosting a major influx of migrants in transit, particularly during the season of the landings in southern Italy (May-October). It mostly consists of young men, but also women and children from the Horn of Africa, especially from Eritrea, fleeing the dictatorship of that country. During 2015, it is estimated that over 30 thousand migrants directed to other European countries of northern Europe (in particular to Germany and to the Scandinavian Countries) have passed through the city where they have spent on average one week. Most of these people even if extremely exhausted for the journey by sea and for the violence they suffered in Libya and along the route to reach Europe, did not find in Rome any kind of institutional reception. Informal settlements managed by volunteers with very poor housing and sanitary conditions represent the only reception structures existing in the city.

A Medu team (a coordinator, a logistic, cultural mediators, doctors, socio-sanitary operators, volunteers) is currently working in the main informal settlements in the city such as the shanty town in Ponte Mammolo, an occupied building in Collatina, the ex Baobab Centre located in Via Cupa, providing medical assistance to migrants in transit. The migrants assisted are coming mainly from Eritrea (95%). Furthermore, in Rome, a Medu Psychè Centre has been opened, providing psychological support and medical care collecting testimonies and advocating against tortures and inhuman and degradation treatments. Assisted migrants of the centre are asylum seekers hosted in reception centres such as CAS and SPRAR, and they are mainly coming from Gambia, Mali and Nigeria.

“I ran away from Eritrea in 2011, I went to Israel passing through Sudan and Egypt. In Israel I lived 4 years, but afterwards I was forced to leave the country, otherwise I could be brought to prison. On May 2016 I left Israel, I took a flight for Uganda (I supposed there should be bilateral agreements between Israel and Uganda) - from Uganda I went to South Sudan, to Sudan, than to Lybia, where I stayed for 3 months detained in a collection point in Ben Walid. We must have been nearly 1500 people “stored” in a very small space, during the night we could only sleep by laying on a side without moving, because there was not enough space for everyone. I got up at night to go to the toilet, but every time I was back my place had already been occupied by someone else, so I was forced to sleep for the rest of the night sitting. The smugglers frightened us constantly with guns, they hit us every time something was going wrong. I was once in line to go to the toilet, suddenly the smugglers decided time was over, I got angry for this and was therefore hit with violence. It was very difficult, when I arrived in Italy and I saw the conditions in which we are forced to live as migrants, I cried, I had never thought to find such a bad situation in Europe. Since I am in Rome, already one week, I have started to sleep on the street, under the rain, sometimes police come and tell us that we can’t stay in that place “under the platform no! Under the portico no! Away from here! Away!” It’s so hard, I’m tired, I have forced myself to resist for a longtime, I survived the violence, the trip in the desert and the sea crossing, and now that I thought to be safe I am told to leave even this corner of the sidewalk”.

C.H., 22 years from Eritrea; interview collected in Rome, September 2016

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Photo by Emilio Morenatti (Ansa/AP) - Mediterranean Sea

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