

Morocco

Migrants in Ouled Ziane, Casablanca



Anticipatory briefing note – 18 December 2018

Moroccan authorities have dismantled shelters and arrested over 6,500 migrants between July and September 2018, forcing thousands of migrants to increasingly move to cities, and away from makeshift shelters in forests near Tangier and Nador, where they waited to cross the Mediterranean sea to reach Europe (CTV News 09/12/2018; Al Jazeera 12/12/2018). There are various informal urban camps that are likely to have an increasing number of migrants in Morocco. The informal camp in Ouled Ziane, Casablanca is one such camps with an increasing number of migrants reported since the beginning of December 2018 (CTV News 09/12/2018).

The winter months (December to March) will bring conditions less favourable for crossing the sea, and make it likely that additional migrants will move away from northern Morocco and toward cities over the coming months (Start 06/11/2017). The colder weather, and the increasingly overcrowded camps, particularly in Ouled Ziane in Casablanca will likely lead to increased shelter and NFI needs. Recent fires have destroyed shelters and NFIs, further adding to migrant needs. The increasing number of migrants will strain already limited WASH facilities, and there is an increased risk of the spread of communicable diseases. Migrants are likely to continue to face protection needs, due to clashes with national authorities and tensions between host communities and migrants.



Map of Morocco

Source: Google Maps

PROBABILITY



NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



IMPACT



Key priorities



Shelter



WASH



Protection

Humanitarian constraints



Migrants staying in informal camps are likely to be frequently displaced by national authorities due to arrests and camp dismantlement. The frequent movement of migrants makes it difficult to assess and address the needs of the affected population.

Limitations

There is a lack of data on the number of migrants staying in Ouled Ziane informal camp, making it difficult to estimate the potential spike in camp arrivals. There is a lack of sectoral data on the current needs in Ouled Ziane camp.

Current Situation

The number of sub-Saharan migrants arriving in Morocco, historically a transit country for migrants entering Europe across the Mediterranean Sea, has increased since May 2018. Confronted with a particularly high number of arrivals in Morocco in 2018, with almost 61,100 arrivals as of 9 December 2018, Moroccan authorities have responded violently in their attempt to prevent illegal migrant flows, and have clashed with new arrivals living in informal camps (Al Jazeera 12/12/2018; UNHCR 09/12/2018). The recent European Union (EU) agreement in July 2018 to strengthen Mediterranean border management, intended to protect migrants in Morocco and to stop illegal flows into the EU, is likely to have placed additional pressure on national authorities (Morocco World News 10/07/2018).

In 2013, Morocco implemented a migrant regularisation programme to grant residency permits to migrants. Since 2014, over 23,095 migrants have been granted Moroccan residency, while more than 25,000 applications are still being processed. However, following the EU agreement to halt illegal flows, Moroccan authorities arrested a total of 6,500 sub-Saharan migrants and refugees between July and September 2018. (CTV News 09/12/2018). There is a lack of information on the current location of arrested migrants and refugees.

There are reports of Moroccan authorities dismantling camps of illegal migrants since the beginning of 2018, destroying shelters and personal belongings of migrants living in forests in northern Morocco, near Tangier and Nador, as well as in Tetouan and Oujda, in the northeast. The arrests and camp dismantlement by national authorities, is forcing migrants to move back to cities (Start 06/11/2017).

An increase of migrants to makeshift shelters in an informal camp near a bus station in Ouled Ziane, Casablanca, has been reported since the beginning of December 2018 (CTV News 09/12/2018; Al Jazeera 12/12/2018). There is no data available on the number or origin of migrants living in Ouled Ziane camp. Many of these migrants lost personal belongings in camp dismantlement and forced displacement in informal camps in remote areas, and are already in critical need of shelter and NFI assistance. Shelters and NFIs were also destroyed in fires in Ouled Ziane in October and July, aggravating needs. It remains unclear if the fire was accidental or set by the host community (Huffpost Morocco 28/10/2018). WASH, health, and protection needs are also likely.

Anticipated crisis impact

Migrants in makeshift shelters in Casablanca are likely to face increased shelter, WASH, and health needs in winter (December to March), with temperatures of between 10 to 20 degrees Celsius expected in Casablanca (AccuWeather). An increase in camp arrivals from makeshift shelters in northern Morocco's forests, to city centres such as Casablanca is likely, given conditions will be unfavourable for sea crossings to Europe (CTV News 09/12/2018; Start 06/11/2017). Information about the current rate of movement is lacking, making it difficult to estimate the future scale of displacement.

An increase in migrants in Ouled Ziane camp is likely to lead to overcrowded shelter and WASH facilities. There is also a risk that overcrowded camps will lead to a rise in arrests by national authorities. A spike in displacement during winter may place additional pressure on response.

Food: A lack of access to food has been reported in informal shelters in Ouled Ziane in Casablanca (Morocco World News 23/02/2018). Throughout winter food needs are likely to be high if displacement spikes, likely resulting in increased pressure on the ongoing response and an increased need for food assistance. (WFP 06/2018, CTV News 09/12/2018).

Health: The need for basic health services is likely to increase throughout the winter as migrants are likely to have inadequate shelter, and some are in need of basic healthcare. Respiratory infections are already high among migrants living in Ouled Ziane camp, and are likely to spread further in the winter, given the increasingly overcrowded camp settings (CTV News 09/12/2018).

Pregnant women are likely to be in need of pre- and postnatal care. Women in informal camps face increased risk of exploitation and sexual violence, are also likely to have additional health needs, including urgent care for sexually transmitted infections and psychosocial care (IOM 06/2015; NewsDeeply 17/02/2018).

WASH: An increased number of migrants living in the Ouled Ziane informal camp will put additional pressure on the limited sanitation facilities, leading to an increased risk of open defaecation (Le Matin 26/11/2018).

Shelter and NFIs: Makeshift shelters in informal camps in the Ouled Ziane in Casablanca are likely to become increasingly overcrowded (CTV News 09/12/2018). Migrants are likely to face increased vulnerabilities due to the lack of heat in the winter. Makeshift shelters have been made from plastic and wood, providing insufficient heat (CTV News 9/12/2018). Migrants living in forests near Nador are frequently forced to evacuate as their shelters are dismantled, leaving them in urgent need of shelter and NFIs, such as clothes and blankets when they arrive in the city. (Al Jazeera 19/11/2018; H24Info 24/05/2018). There are no

reports on the amount of people living in makeshift shelters in Ouled Ziane, making it difficult to estimate the potential spike in displacement.

Protection: The tension between national authorities and migrants heightens protection concerns for migrants in Morocco. There have been several cases where the shelters and belongings of migrants have been destroyed (CTV News 09/12/2018; Al Jazeera 12/12/2018; H24Info 24/05/2018, DW 12/08/2018). Between July and September 2018, 6,500 migrants were arrested, and most are forced on buses to southern Morocco or to Algeria. In winter, the move from remote areas in forests to urban centres creates a risk of increased migrant arrests and deportations (Al Jazeera 12/12/2018; Start 06/11/2017).

Vulnerable groups affected

There are protection concerns for unaccompanied children and women temporarily staying in Morocco as a transit country, or those travelling onwards to Europe. Of the total sea and land arrivals from Morocco to Spanish territory in 2017, 15% are children, 10% are women and 75% are men (UNHCR 03/2018). Children travelling alone are at high risk of physical violence and exploitation. Female migrants travelling to Morocco are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation and becoming pregnant on the trafficking route (IOM 06/2015). Women and children living in the informal shelters in the spontaneous camps are particularly at risk of exposure to incidents of gender-based violence and such incidents go largely underreported (Al Jazeera 03/12/2018).

Humanitarian constraints

Migrants staying in informal camps in cities are likely to be forcibly displaced by national authorities. There is a risk of increased deportations and arrests if displacement toward urban centres spikes during winter, due to the increase in population density in camps. The frequent movement of migrants to and from informal camps will likely make it difficult to assess humanitarian needs and to deliver assistance, as the situation is fluid and tracking the location of migrants is difficult.

Potential aggravating factors

Tension with host communities

Tensions between migrants and the host communities have previously arisen due to limited facilities available in the neighbourhood. On 24 November 2017, residents of the Derb El Kebir district near the Ouled Ziane bus station, attacked the Ouled Ziane migrant

site, throwing stones at migrants and setting fire to trash. Though no injuries were reported, the event shows increasing tensions between migrants and host communities (Huffington Post 25/11/2018). A further increase in migrants within Ouled Ziane throughout the winter is likely to lead to more overcrowding, placing additional pressure on facilities. This is likely to lead to further tensions.

Fire in informal camps

Several fires have been reported in the Ouled Ziane informal camp, which have destroyed shelters and NFIs. On October 27, a fire broke out in the camp, causing destruction of shelters and personal belongings (Yabiladi 28/10/2018). The cause of the fire is unknown, although some media reports claim it was caused by the explosion of gas cylinders (Huffpost Morocco 28/10/2018). A similar incident occurred in July due to the explosion of gas cylinders, although several media reports speculate that people in the host community set fire intentionally (Le360 10/07/2018). Several migrants were injured and taken to the hospital for medical care (LeSiteInfo 06/07/2018). Similar future incidents will increase the vulnerability of migrants in the winter months, should more shelters and NFIs be destroyed.

Shift in migration route

At the beginning of 2017, the majority of migrants transiting the Mediterranean Sea crossed from Libya to Italy. In July 2017, the European Commission announced an Action Plan to reduce crossings from Libya to Italy, and Italian authorities also undertook measures to reduce illegal crossings (UNHCR 03/2018). In 2018 Italy recorded its lowest month of July arrivals compared with the previous five years. There was particularly a steep decline in departures from Libya (IOM 06/2015). The spike in arrivals has led to increased humanitarian needs for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Morocco (Migration Hub 06/2018).

Additional contextual information

Border Protection

In July, the EU agreed to improve border security in Morocco and Tunisia. The funding aims to address irregular migration, following the increased migration flows along the Western Mediterranean route. The funding aims to strengthen the Moroccan border management system, by for instance supporting Moroccan border guards in Rabat with improved equipment to prevent illegal migration, in addition to improved monitoring and

coordination. Migrant protection is also a key priority, by addressing smuggling and trafficking. (Euro Observer 02/08/2018; Europa 14/12/2018).

EU Mobility Partnership

The EU and Morocco cooperate to exchange information on migration flows, aiming to prevent illegal migration and improve border protection and readmission procedures. The EU financially supports member states such as Spain, as well as the main country of origin and transit (Morocco) to reduce illegal migration (European Council 28/06/2018).

In 2013, Morocco signed a Mobility Partnership with the EU, which aims to take a cooperative approach to manage migration in accordance with regional and international policies (European Union 06/2016). Other countries that signed the Mobility Partnership include Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Jordan, Moldova, Cape Verde and Tunisia. The Mobility Partnership includes a commitment to the EU readmission agreement negotiations. Throughout the partnership, Morocco remained reluctant in readmitting irregular migrants (CEPS12/2016).

In 2013, Morocco launched a migrant regularisation programme that aims to grant residency permits to over 50,000 migrants, to shift the perception of Morocco from a transit country to a destination country. Since 2014, over 23,095 migrants have been given Moroccan residency, while more than 25,000 applications are still being processed. (CTV News 09/12/2018; Al Jazeera 03/12/2018)..

Key characteristics of Morocco

- **Demographic profile:** 33.8 million (WFP 26/07/2018)
- **Food security figures.** Morocco is a food deficit country, where agricultural production fluctuates annually due to weather variations (WFP 26/07/2018).
- **Nutrition levels.** In 2016, 815 million people were suffering from chronic undernutrition. (FAO, 2017)
- **Health statistics:** Under 5 mortality rate: 30 deaths per 1000 (data from 2013) (WHO accessed 22/08/2018). Maternal mortality ratio 120 per 100,000 live births (data from 2013) (WHO accessed 22/08/2018)
- **Employment.** Unemployment rate in 2017: 9.33 percent (Statista 2017)

Response capacity

The humanitarian response to the needs of migrants across different displacement camps has been limited. There are some international and local NGOs aiming to improve migrants' living conditions and access to basic services, both in urban and remote areas. Reports indicate that several local partners have actively responded to the needs of migrants (Start 06/11/2017).

During winter, the Ouled Ziane camp may become overcrowded, placing pressure on the limited shelter and WASH infrastructure. Increased needs for food and NFIs are likely. The increase in needs is likely to put additional pressure on the current response.

Information gaps and needs

There is a lack of publicly available data on the number of migrants staying in the Ouled Ziane camp, and other informal camps in Tangier, Nador, Tetouan, and Oujda. This makes it difficult to estimate the potential spike in displacement with the onset of winter, and the additional underlying vulnerabilities.

There is no data on migrants in Ouled Ziane camp disaggregated by gender, age and country of origin. This makes it difficult to predict the impact of the increase in needs on vulnerable groups.

There is a lack of up-to-date data on what happens to migrants that have been arrested.

There is a lack of data on ongoing response in Ouled Ziane camp.

Lessons learned

Both urban and rural camps have a system of internal organisation with community leaders who represent the migrants within the camp. Lessons from previous response to migrants in both urban and rural informal camps in Morocco showed it was critical to include the leaders to ensure that needs of the entire community were adequately addressed (Start 06/11/2017).

Methodology

ACAPS anticipatory briefing notes provide a brief outline of the likelihood and impact of a particular crisis or spike in crisis. Likelihood describes the certainty that a particular outcome will happen, and is therefore a subjective measure. The objective of estimating likelihood is to indicate how certain we are that the identified risk will occur. Likelihood estimates help prioritise the most significant risks. This can contribute to better decision making with regards to preparedness.