



### [Tunisian-Libyan Refugee Crisis Continues Deadly Escalation](#)

After over a week of detainment in the Tunisia-Libya border region, about 500 migrants have been returned to Tunisia. The refugees were initially rounded up by armed men in Sfax, a prominent migration port city, in the middle of the night earlier this month. Once transported to the detainment area between the Tunisian-Libyan land border near Ben Guerdane and the Mediterranean Sea, migrants were forced to endure inhumane conditions, including denial of food or fresh water. Many migrants detained were originally from various African countries, including Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal, and Sudan, hoping to voyage to Italy on dangerous, ill-equipped boats. Yet, while the migrants have been returned from the Ben Guerdane zone, deeper underlying issues facing migrants in both Tunisia and Libya remain.

Back in Sfax, racial tensions remain heightened after escalations between African migrants and Tunisian residents resulted in the death of one Tunisian man. With fears of potential retaliation, this event sparked one of the recent overnight detainments of migrants and relocation to the desolate Tunisian-Libyan border area. The current conditions within Sfax are compounded by food insecurity, state conflict, and economic peril, leaving Sub-Saharan migrants often as the scapegoat for the frustrations resulting from these conditions. Tunisian President Kais Saied's speech strengthened these xenophobic sentiments earlier this year, citing migrants as sources of "all the violence, crime, and unacceptable practices." This combination of rhetoric and instability has created the perfect conditions for discrimination and racial targeting within Sfax. Following the detainment and later return of the 500 migrants to Ben Guerdane, the Tunisian government denied accusations of bias and mistreatment from various global human rights groups such as the Human Rights Watch, with President Saied stating that migrants had not only been adequately treated but also were protected in alignment with "the values" of the state.

Yet, despite these claims of discrimination, migration trends to Europe via Tunisia have only increased this past year as migrants remain desperate in their attempts at resettlement. Intending to create a better life for themselves and their families, many migrants embark on incredibly unsafe journeys across the Mediterranean Sea via ill-equipped boats. With a ship bound for Italy from Tunisia sinking this past weekend, leaving one dead and ten missing, the migrant death toll this year due to sea-related deaths has risen to over 600 individuals, a staunch increase from previous years.

As conditions for migrants within Tunisia remain dire in all capacities, attention has shifted to the international community for an adequate response. With an anticipated \$1.1 billion in aid expected to be disbursed within the state from European countries in hopes of deterring migration, the situation within Tunisia remains hostile as upticks in migrant expulsion continue. Yet, as Italy recently lifted its 10-year travel ban on Libya, European nations continue demonstrating a vested interest in Tunisia and Libya. To what extent these endeavors will help contribute to de-escalation within both Tunisia and

Libya and the long-term and sustainable approaches to refugee management remains unknown. Despite this uncertainty, one thing remains, the simultaneous persecution and perseverance of the migrant within Tunisia. As perilous conditions are faced from all perspectives, those seeking migration to Europe continue to undertake these all for the opportunity of a better life abroad. With the situation at the Tunisian-Libyan border remaining tense, only time will determine if European relief will aid the issues at hand.