



smuggling of migrants — global news december 2016

This monthly newsletter summarises news items and media commentary from some of the world's leading media outlets. The Migrant Smuggling Working Group takes no responsibility for the content and accuracy of the information provided in these news items.

GENERAL

Review Intimate cellphone footage gives 'Exodus' a powerful first-person view of the global refugee crisis – 23 December 2016

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-et-st-frontline-exodus-review-20161223-story.html>

On Tuesday, PBS' "Frontline" presents "Exodus," a two-hour special documenting the experiences of refugees fleeing Syria, Afghanistan and Gambia for what they hope will be safety and prosperity in Europe. Directed by James Bluemel, the film provides a powerful first-person perspective of refugee journeys over many months, thousand of miles and dozens of international borders.

2016: The year the world stopped caring about refugees – 30 December 2016

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/12/2016-year-world-stopped-caring-refugees-161227090243522.html>

Refugees, rights groups, aid organisations say empathy towards refugees is fading even as deaths in Mediterranean soar.

AFRICA

EGYPT

Egypt refers two officials to court for migrant boat capsizing – 3 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-egypt-idUSKBN13S0MC>

Egypt has referred two maritime inspection officials to trial for their role in the capsizing of a migrant ship that led to the death of over 200 earlier this year, state news agency MENA reported on Saturday.

On April 9, 500 migrants drowned off the Egyptian coast. No one investigated – 6 December 2016

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/on-april-9-500-migrants-drowned-in-the-mediterranean-no-one-investigated/article33215054/>

At around 2 a.m. on Saturday, April 9, a large blue fishing boat carrying hundreds of African migrants and their children capsized just off the coast of Egypt.

The forgotten shipwreck – 6 December 2016

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-38211589>

An investigation by Reuters and BBC Newsnight has, for the first time, revealed the untold story of what is understood to be the biggest single shipwreck of a migrant boat in 2016. More than 500 people are believed to have died, but there has been no inquiry into the deaths.

Migrant crisis: Europol to investigate Egypt mass drowning – 6 December 2016

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-38211588>

The European policing agency Europol is planning to investigate what is believed to be the biggest loss of a migrant boat in 2016, following a Reuters-BBC Newsnight investigation.

LIBYA

Migrants in Libya facing 'human rights crisis': U.N. report – 13 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-migrants-idUSKBN1422MA>

Migrants in Libya are suffering consistent and widespread abuse, including arbitrary detention, forced labor, rape and torture, a United Nations report said on Tuesday.

AMERICAS

GENERAL

Crossing the Darién Gap – 22 December 2016

<http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-fg-immigration-trek-america-colombia/>

Migrants from around the globe are forging a grueling path to the U.S. — through the heart of the rainforest

MEXICO

Haitians, Africans, Asians – 22 December 2016

<http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-fg-immigration-trek-america-tijuana/>

The sharp rise in non-Latin American migrants trying to cross into the U.S. from Mexico.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MLB accused of ignoring Cuban baseball player smuggling – 15 December 2016

<http://money.cnn.com/2016/12/15/news/mlb-cuban-baseball-players-smuggled/index.html>

Major League Baseball knows -- and ignores -- how Cuban players are preyed upon by a violent criminal underworld that smuggles them to professional teams, according to several lawyers who have investigated this black market.

The Cuban baseball smuggling machine behind MLB – 15 December 2016

<http://money.cnn.com/2016/12/15/news/mlb-cuban-baseball-main/index.html>

There's a vast and vicious human trafficking network that supplies Major League Baseball with some of its top players.

They gambled, and lost – 24 December 2016

<http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-fg-immigration-trek-america-bangladesh/>

Dozens of migrants braved thousands of miles of jungles, seas and bandits to reach the U.S. Then they were sent home.

Mexico eyes border, migration as leverage in talks with Trump – 28 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/usa-trump-mexico-idUSL1N1EN0BI>

Mexico aims to defend free trade with the United States by using border security and immigration policy to gain leverage in talks with U.S. President-elect Donald Trump after he takes office next month, senior officials say.

ASIA-PACIFIC

HONG KONG

Hong Kong, mainland China authorities smash people-smuggling service for Vietnamese – 24 December 2016

<http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-crime/article/2057062/hong-kong-mainland-china-authorities-smash-people-smuggling>

A people smuggling syndicate that provided a “one-stop service” to Vietnamese nationals seeking illegal entry to Hong Kong for work has been smashed by city and mainland Chinese authorities, with its two leaders sentenced to 24 and 32 months’ imprisonment.

EUROPE

GENERAL

Australia closes the door on migrant boats. Will it be a model for Europe? – 7 December 2016

<http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-australia-refugees-protests-2016-story.html>

Amid rising anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe — seen in Britain’s vote to leave the European Union and strong recent showings at the polls in various countries by parties of the far right — some European politicians are expressing interest in the Australian immigration model.

Rescuers save 1,164 migrants in Mediterranean, find six bodies – 11 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-idUSKBN140100>

Rescuers plucked 1,164 people from rubber and wooden boats in the Mediterranean under heavy thunderstorms on Sunday and recovered six dead bodies during the operations, relief services said.

Greek, British police smash gang supplying forged passports to migrants – 12 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-crime-idUSKBN1411N9>

Greek and British police said on Monday they had broken up a criminal network that supplied forged travel documents to hundreds of illegal migrants trying to reach Britain and northern European countries.

More than 5,000 migrants have died on the Mediterranean Sea in 2016 – 23 December 2016

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/ct-mediterranean-death-toll-over-5000-20161223-story.html>

Around 100 people are missing and feared dead after two shipwrecks off Italy, raising the estimated death toll among migrants on the Mediterranean this year to at least 5,000 — a new annual record, U.N. agencies said Friday.

AUSTRIA

Austria searches freight trains in new frontline on illegal migration – 17 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-austria-trains-idUSKBN1460IN>

Austrian police have started searching freight trains traveling from Italy at night to tackle illegal migration and avert further deaths after two stowaways died earlier this month.

GERMANY

After Berlin attack, German CSU wants clampdown on Mediterranean – 29 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-germany-idUSKBN14I0QI>

Germany's arch conservative Christian Social Union (CSU) party, a junior partner in Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition, wants to close off the Mediterranean Sea route for migrants by sending them back to Africa rather than allowing them to stay in Europe.

ITALY

Tunisian Captain in Deadly Migrant Shipwreck Jailed for 18 Years – 13 December 2016

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/world/europe/italy-migrants-libya-shipwreck.html>

A Tunisian captain who was piloting a fishing vessel crammed with migrants that collided with another ship, resulting in the deaths of about 700 people traveling to Italy from Libya, was sentenced on Tuesday to 18 years in prison.

Italy judge convicts 2 in sinking that claimed 700 migrants – 13 December 2016

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/sns-bc-eu--italy-migrants-20161213-story.html>

A judge in Sicily on Tuesday convicted a ship captain and crew mate in the April 2015 sinking off Libya that left 700 people dead in the Mediterranean's worst-known migrant disaster.

Italy convicts Tunisian over sinking that killed almost 700 migrants – 13 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-smuggler-idUSKBN1421H8>

A Tunisian man accused of being the captain of a migrant boat that sank killing almost 700 people was found guilty of multiple manslaughter and people-smuggling on Tuesday and sentenced to 18 years in jail.

Italian prosecutors: wrong man may have been arrested in smuggling case – 19 December 2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2016/dec/19/wrong-man-smuggling-trial-prosecutors-suggest-medhanie-yehdego-mered>

Italian prosecutors have suggested for the first time that a man accused of being one of the world's most-wanted people smugglers may in fact be the victim of mistaken identity, in an embarrassing blow to a high-profile investigation led by Britain's National Crime Agency.

SERBIA

2 Afghan migrants killed, 10 injured in car crash in Serbia – 29 December 2016

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/sns-bc-eu--europe-migrants-20161229-story.html>

Serbian police say two Afghan migrants have been killed and 10 have been injured in a car crash on a highway in central Serbia.

Serbia arrests three after 77 migrants found hidden in vehicles – 26 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-serbia-idUSKBN14F00X>

Serbian authorities arrested three men on suspicion of people trafficking after 77 migrants were found hidden in cargo vehicles, the defense ministry said on Monday.

Serbia has no more beds for migrants as bottlenecks build: UNHCR – 30 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-serbia-idUSKBN14J1IO>

Serbia's centers for housing migrants are completely full, the U.N. refugee agency said, leaving more than a thousand facing a winter sleeping rough in the Balkan country that has become a bottleneck as the European Union sealed its borders.

SPAIN

Hundreds of African refugees storm Spain's killer fence – 10 December 2016

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/hundreds-african-refugees-storm-spain-killer-fence-161209163717980.html>

More than 400 people from Africa stormed a border fence to enter Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta from Morocco in one of the biggest illegal crossing attempts in recent years at the frontier.

SWEDEN

Sweden sentences three men for smuggling in migrants – 13 December 2016

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-sweden-smuggling-idUSKBN1421J5>

A court on Tuesday sentenced three men for organizing the smuggling of 80 migrants into Sweden, hiring drivers to bring them in minibuses across the EU's open-border zone from northern Italy.

UNITED KINGDOM

'Iranian smuggling ring': Nine people arrested – 8 December 2016

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-manchester-38254424>

Nine people have been arrested in an inquiry into the suspected smuggling of Iranian nationals into the UK.

Paris smugglers offering migrants Lidl trucks to get into UK – 15 December 2016

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-38329439>

Illegal migrants are being offered Channel crossings in the back of a Lidl supermarket lorry for thousands of pounds.