



smuggling of migrants — global news march 2017

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

UN: Risky sea crossings fuel sharp rise in migrant deaths – 17 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/sns-bc-eu--migrant-deaths-20170317-story.html>

Migrant deaths rose sharply last year, particularly in the Mediterranean, as smugglers made ever-riskier attempts to ferry asylum-seekers and refugees on increasingly unseaworthy vessels, according to United Nations statistics released Friday.

AFRICA

EGYPT

Egyptian court jails 56 over migrant boat shipwreck – 26 February 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-egypt-idUSKBN16X0HN>

An Egyptian court sentenced 56 people to prison terms of up to 14 years on Sunday over the capsizing of a boat that killed over 200 people, one of the deadliest disasters in the dangerous Mediterranean crossings of migrants to Europe.

Egypt Sentences 56 in Migrant Boat Disaster Case to Prison- 26 February 2017

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_EGYPT_MIGRANTS?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-03-26-15-27-22

An Egyptian court sentenced 56 defendants Sunday in the case of a boat carrying migrants that capsized off the coastal city of Rosetta in September, killing more than 200 people.

LIBYA

Libya naval forces rescue 115 illegal migrants, 25 missing – 3 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-migrants-libya-idUSKBN16A23K>

Libyan naval forces have rescued 115 illegal migrants after their overloaded rubber boat sank off the coastline, and 25 more were still missing, a spokesman said on Friday.

Fighting between Libyan smugglers kills 22 migrants: IOM – 7 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-iom-idUSKBN16E1IG>

Fighting between rival people-smuggling gangs on Libya's Mediterranean coast has killed 22 people, the International Organization for Migration said on Tuesday.

Italy seeks to bolster Libya migrant deal as arrivals surge – 17 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-libya-idUSKBN16O28G>

Italy will host a meeting between European and North African countries next week in a bid to strengthen support for an agreement it struck with Libya to fight people smuggling as migrant arrivals surge.

Italy, EU prep aid for Libya's fight against people smuggling – 20 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-libya-idUSKBN16R1WP>

Italian and European officials said on Monday they are ready to send equipment and economic aid to Libya to help it fight people smuggling, as the leader of Tripoli's U.N.-backed government sought more resources.

240 migrants feared dead in Mediterranean after aid group finds five bodies from capsized boats – 23 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-migrant-deaths-mediterranean-20170323-story.html>

A Spanish aid organization says it has recovered five bodies from waters off the Libyan coast and fears that at least 240 migrants could have died after two boats capsized in the Mediterranean.

Aid group fears hundreds of migrants drowned off Libya – 24 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-migrants-libya-20170324-story.html>

A Spanish aid organization said Friday that it feared hundreds of migrants may have died off Libya's coast, while Turkish media reported that 11 migrants died and four more were missing after a boat sank in the Aegean.

Libya asks EU for ships and radars to stop migrants: sources – 30 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-eu-libya-idUSKBN1712IX>

Libya has asked the European Union to provide it with ships and radars to help its forces stop the smuggling of migrants across the Mediterranean, sources in Brussels said.

IOM expects to fly up to 10,000 migrants out of Libya in 2017 – 31 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-libya-idUSKBN1721CK>

Up to 10,000 migrants stranded in Libya will be flown back to their home countries this year, but the returns can only play a limited role in tackling migrant flows toward Europe, the head of the U.N. migration agency's Libyan office said.

AMERICAS

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

U.S. officials considering separating women, children at Mexico border – 3 March 2017

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/us-politics/us-officials-considering-separating-women-children-at-mexico-border/article34201886/>

Women and children crossing together illegally into the United States could be separated by U.S. authorities under a proposal being considered by the Department of Homeland Security, according to three government officials.

February marks fewest arrests at border in recent years – 10 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/sns-bc-us--border-arrests-down-20170309-story.html>

Arrests of people crossing the border illegally dropped roughly 44 percent during President Donald Trump's first month in office, according to Homeland Security data.

End near for Cuban baseball player smuggling trial – 11 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/sports/sns-bc-bbo--agent-cuban-smuggling-20170311-story.html>

Testimony has ended in the Miami trial of a sports agent and a trainer accused of smuggling Cuban baseball players into the U.S. so they could sign lucrative professional contracts.

Smuggled girl abandoned near Calexico border – 13 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-smuggled-girl-20170313-story.html>

Border Patrol agents found a 4-year-old girl soon after she was abandoned by smugglers east of Calexico on Monday morning, authorities said.

Jury convicts sports agent, trainer in Cuban smuggling case – 15 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/ct-agent-trainer-guilty-cuban-smuggling-case-20170315-story.html>

A Miami jury on Wednesday convicted a Florida sports agent and a baseball trainer on charges they smuggled Cuban baseball players to the U.S. in search of big profits from professional free agent contracts.

Baseball agent and trainer found guilty of smuggling Cuban ballplayers – 15 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/sports/sns-tns-bc-bbo-smugglers-trial-20170315-story.html>

MIAMI Baseball agent Bart Hernandez and trainer Julio Estrada were found guilty Wednesday of smuggling Cuban baseball players into the U.S. in a fraudulent scheme designed to capitalize on the defectors' major league contracts.

L.A. immigrant says teenager duped him into giving a ride that got him busted along the Mexican border – 16 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-daca-smuggling-20170316-story.html>

Border Patrol officials said Arreola Robles and a 17-year-old boy were stopped in a vehicle on Highway 94 in Campo, Calif., about a mile from the U.S.-Mexico border. Arreola Robles was driving, they said.

Man is accused of trying to smuggle 4 Chinese citizens across U.S. border inside car trunk – 16 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-car-smuggle-attempt-20170316-story.html>

A 24-year-old man with U.S. citizenship pulled up to a border crossing from Mexico this week, seemingly with an empty Chrysler sedan.

Man tries to smuggle in 4 people across the border in the trunk of his car – 17 March 2017

<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/17/us/chinese-nationals-found-in-trunk-trnd/index.html>

Border protection agents arrested a man after they found four people stuffed in the trunk of his car. The man, they said, was trying to smuggle the people in to the US.

Mexican man's widow sues, says immigration detention facility staff ignored pleas for help – 24 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-detention-lawsuit-20170324-story.html>

The widow of a Mexican man who crossed into the U.S. illegally in the trunk of a car is suing the U.S. government, alleging that staff at a detention facility in Otay Mesa repeatedly ignored his pleas for medical care, causing him to die from complications of pneumonia weeks later.

Woman guilty of smuggling woman for surrogacy, forced labor – 27 March 2017

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/106b4846f4774d0ea94452a847875372/woman-guilty-smuggling-woman-surrogacy-forced-labor>

Federal prosecutors say a northeast Florida woman has pleaded guilty to smuggling a Mexican woman into the U.S. as a pregnancy surrogate and instead forced her into domestic labor through abuse.

Son of mariachi singer Pepe Aguilar accused of trying to smuggle Chinese citizens in car's trunk – 31 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-human-smuggling-20170331-story.html>

The son of popular Mexican American singer Pepe Aguilar has been charged with trying to smuggle Chinese citizens across the San Ysidro border crossing.

MIDDLE EAST

YEMEN

Military attack kills 42 Somali refugees off Yemen's coast – 17 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/sns-bc-ml--yemen-20170317-story.html>

The boat packed with dozens of Somali refugees was more than 30 miles off war-torn Yemen's coast when a military vessel and a helicopter gunship swooped in, opening fire in the dead of night Friday, killing at least 42 people. The attack, which Yemen's Shiite rebels blamed on a Saudi-led coalition, highlighted the perils of a heavily used migration route running from the Horn of Africa to the oil-rich Gulf, right through Yemen's civil war.

Airstrike Kills Dozens of Somali Migrants Off Yemen's Coast – 17 March 2017

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/17/world/middleeast/yemen-airstrike-somali-migrants.html>

More than 30 Somali migrants, including children, were killed in the Red Sea on Friday when a military helicopter opened fire on their boat, according to Yemeni and United Nations officials.

Somalia blames Saudi-led coalition for deadly strike on boat – 19 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/sns-bc-af--somalia-yemen-refugees-killed-20170318-story.html>

Somalia's government on Saturday blamed the Saudi-led coalition for Friday's attack on a boat that killed at least 42 Somali refugees off the coast of war-torn Yemen, calling the assault by a military vessel and a helicopter gunship "horrific."

Saudi-led coalition calls for U.N. supervision of Yemen port – 19 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-refugees-coalition-idUSKBN16Q0JW>

A Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen called on Sunday for the United Nations to place a strategic port under its supervision after 42 Somalis were killed in an attack on their refugee boat nearby.

U.N. Seeks Inquiry Into Deadly Assault on Migrant Boat Near Yemen – 20 March 2017

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/20/world/middleeast/yemen-refugees-boat-attack.html>

The United Nations on Monday called for an inquiry into an aerial assault on a boat of migrants last week off Yemen's Red Sea coast that left at least 42 people dead.

Somalis fleeing Yemen war caught in nighttime sea attack – 30 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-refugees-idUSKBN17112G>

Three rockets that fell in the darkness nearby were the first sign of trouble for 150 Somali migrants packed into a boat off Yemen's coast earlier this month.

EUROPE

GENERAL

Number of criminal gangs operating in Europe surges to 5,000, says Europol – 9 March 2017

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/mar/09/more-than-5000-criminal-gangs-operating-in-europe-warns-europol>

Europol has warned that the number of criminal gangs operating in Europe has surged to at least 5,000, with alarming increases in human smuggling activity and digital attacks on businesses known as "ransomware".

A Threat on Migration That May Prove to Be Empty – 14 March 2017

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/14/world/europe/turkey-migrant-deal-european-union.html>

When Turkey and Europe reached an agreement a year ago this week to restrict migration to Greece, it was bad news for Abu Samir, a Syrian-Palestinian people-smuggler in Istanbul.

A year on from a deal with Turkey, Europe still struggles with migration – 16 March 2017

<http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21718930-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-periodically-threatens-cancel-it-if-his-conditions-are-not-met>

On a closer look, the deal deserves criticism. Although it has been a political success, seemingly demonstrating that the EU can control its borders, its humanitarian impact has been far murkier. And it leaves the EU uncomfortably dependent on less-than-fully democratic governments elsewhere to manage migration.

Turkey threatens to send Europe '15,000 refugees a month' – 17 March 2017

<http://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/2079987/turkey-threatens-send-europe-15000-refugees-month>

Turkey's Interior Minister Suleyman Soyly has threatened to "blow the mind" of Europe by sending 15,000 refugees a month to EU territory, in an intensifying dispute with the bloc.

Bosnian, Croatian police break up migrant-smuggling ring – 23 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-bosnia-arrests-idUSKBN16U241>

Bosnian and Croatian police said on Thursday they had arrested 13 people suspected of smuggling at least 100 migrants from Turkey into the European Union.

Aid groups deny rescue ships in Mediterranean are abetting migrant smugglers – 28 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-idUSKBN16Z2C7>

Aid groups operating rescue ships in the Mediterranean have rejected suspicions raised by an Italian prosecutor that by saving tens of thousands of migrants they are effectively aiding Libya-based people smugglers.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

6 arrested in Bosnia over suspected migrant smuggling – 22 March 2017

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/49c06409323f4e228c53303111fbb9c7/6-arrested-bosnia-over-suspected-migrant-smuggling>

Bosnian authorities say they have detained six people as part of an international investigation into an illegal migrant smuggling ring.

BULGARIA

Vigilantes prowl Europe's border with a target: Muslim migrants – 14 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/ct-europe-vigilantes-20170314-story.html>

They gathered in a snowy forest dressed in their menacing best: combat fatigues and military-style boots, their faces obscured by ski masks.

GREECE

Greek police bust smuggling ring, arrest migrants hiding in caves – 3 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-greece-arrests-idUSKBN16A23A>

At least 13 suspected members of an international criminal organization smuggling undocumented migrants to other European countries have been arrested, Greek authorities said on Friday.

18 arrested in Greek raids on suspected people-smuggling gang – 3 March 2017

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2017/mar/04/18-arrested-greece-people-smuggling-investigation-national-crime-agency>

Eighteen people have been arrested in Greece as part of an international investigation into people smuggling.

Greek police nab 2 truck drivers smuggling in 20 migrants – 25 March 2017

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/a6e3e292c6d24fc381a0da421b292c03/greek-police-nab-2-truck-drivers-smuggling-20-migrants>

Greek police say they have arrested a Turkish truck driver and a Bulgarian truck driver who were carrying a total of 20 migrants near Greece's northeastern land border with Turkey.

ITALY

Italy arrests Ghanaian for trafficking, torturing migrants – 18 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-torture-idUSKBN16P0OH>

Italian police said on Saturday they had arrested a Ghanaian man for alleged murder, rape, kidnapping and people-smuggling after migrants he is accused of mistreating attacked him at a reception center on the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa.

Rescuers foil fight against migrant smugglers - Italy prosecutor – 22 March 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/europe-migrants-italy-idUSL5N1GZ1PU>

Humanitarian ships operating off the coast of Libya are undermining the fight against people smugglers and opening a corridor that is ultimately leading to more migrant deaths, an Italian prosecutor said on Wednesday.

Italian prosecutors fail to prove identity of suspected human trafficker – 28 March 2017

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/italian-prosecutors-fail-to-prove-identity-of-suspected-human-trafficker/article34467968/>

Almost a year ago, Italian and British investigators claimed they had made a breakthrough in their efforts to crack open the North African human-trafficking and smuggling networks that were sending thousands of migrants to their deaths in the Mediterranean. They said they had arrested Medhanie Yehdego Mered, a notorious Eritrean who Italian prosecutors believe to be a smuggling kingpin.

SERBIA

As Europe closes its doors to migrants, hundreds are stranded at a train station in Serbia – 5 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-europe-migrants-serbia-2017-story.html>

The Balkan nation of Serbia was once a brief stop along the overland route to Western Europe. In 2015, approximately 800,000 refugees and migrants passed through the country, according to government figures. Those numbers have plunged since last March as Europe tried to close the so-called Balkan route and Serbia's EU neighbors erected razor-wire fences and employed harsh police tactics along their borders.

TURKEY

Turkish coast guard: 48 Syrian migrants stopped at sea – 11 March 2017

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/sns-bc-eu--turkey-migrants-20170311-story.html>

Turkey's coast guard has prevented 48 Syrian migrants from reaching Greece, but Turkey's foreign minister said Saturday that the migrant deal is at risk if the country's citizens aren't granted visa-free travel.

Syrians in Turkey: The Human Smuggler and the Young Refugee – 24 March 2017

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/24/world/europe/turkey-human-trafficking-refugee-crisis.html>

After earning \$800,000 in 2015 by sneaking migrants out of Turkey, a smuggler says he has left the guilt and complications of his business behind — mostly. And a Syrian refugee boy, homeless and out of school, must keep roaming the country to find farm work and help his family survive. This is the third part in the State of Emergency series, in which our correspondent takes us behind the scenes of today's Turkey, a nation in crisis.

UNITED KINGDOM

Trio jailed for smuggling people in lorries – 17 March 2017

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-tyne-39306010>

Three men who tried to smuggle 20 people into the UK in a lorry have been jailed.