



smuggling of migrants – global news

december 2015

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

AFRICA

LIBYA

Libyan navy rescues more than 100 migrants bound for Italy – 21 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/libya-migrants-idINKBNOU429V20151221>

Libyan naval forces have rescued more than 100 migrants whose vessel ran into engine trouble on the way from the Libyan coast to Italy, authorities said on Monday.

MOROCCO

Two dead as hundreds of migrants storm Spanish border post – 25 December 2015

<http://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/two-dead-as-hundreds-of-migrants-storm-spanish-border-post>

Hundreds of African migrants stormed the border between Morocco and the Spanish territory of Ceuta on Friday, and two migrants drowned and 12 others were hospitalised, officials in both nations said.

AMERICAS

CANADA

Quebec man sentenced to nine months for smuggling immigrants into U.S. – 15 December 2015

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/quebec-man-sentenced-to-nine-months-for-smuggling-immigrants-into-us/article27757214/>

Two men have been sentenced for separately smuggling a total of eight immigrants across the Canadian border into northern New York.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

As migrant children surge at border, federal officials plan for more shelters – 8 December 2015

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-migrant-children-surge-border-20151208-story.html>

Federal officials plan to open new shelters in Texas and California this month, adding at least 1,400 beds, after a surge in unaccompanied migrant children crossing the Southwest border this fall.

Smuggled immigrants found in fake Border Patrol SUV – 14 December 2015

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/8fda30f691f0456ea91aa1206179ed2d/smuggled-immigrants-found-fake-border-patrol-suv>

A dozen smuggled immigrants have been detained after being crammed into a fake Border Patrol SUV that was stopped by a real officer in Texas.

As federal officials open shelters for migrant children, Texas fortifies its border – 15 December 2015

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-texas-fortifies-its-border-20151215-story.html>

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced Tuesday that he is extending the deployment of National Guard troops at the southern border to combat the dramatic increase in young migrants caught crossing into the United States.

With a Castro as an ally, MLB focuses on the high-stakes smuggling of Cuban ballplayers – 20 December 2015

<http://www.latimes.com/sports/dodgers/la-sp-usa-cuba-puig-20151220-story.html>

The story of Yasiel Puig's escape from Cuba reads like a crime thriller, complete with speedboats, kidnappings, betrayal, drug kingpins and murder.

Immigrant deaths along Mexico border decrease, officials say, but critics are left wondering – 22 December 2015

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-migrant-deaths-decline-20151222-story.html>

For the third straight year, migrant deaths along the southern border have decreased, even in some areas where the number of migrant children and families crossing increased over the summer, authorities said Tuesday.

Immigration officials plan stepped-up deportations for new year – 25 December 2015

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/ct-immigration-deportation-20151225-story.html>

Immigration officials are preparing a nationwide push in January to find and deport Central American families who arrived in recent years and have been ordered by immigration judges to leave, according to officials familiar with the plan.

ASIA-PACIFIC

GENERAL

Southeast Asia urged to halt repeat of 'boat people' tragedy – 1 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-asia-migrants-idUSKBN0TK3IO20151201>

Southeast Asian countries were urged on Tuesday to treat migrants landing on their shores humanely and avoid a repeat of this year's disaster in which hundreds of refugees were either lost at sea or died in jungle camps.

Without labour deal, Southeast Asia risks subsidising human smugglers – IOM – 3 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/asia-migrants-idINKBN0TM16G20151203>

Southeast Asia needs legal channels of migration to help curb human smuggling, the International Organization of Migration said on Thursday, days after it urged efforts to avoid a repeat of this year's disaster when hundreds of refugees were lost at sea or died in jungle camps.

Thailand launches regional meet calling for migrant crisis framework – 3 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/asia-migrants-idUSL3N13T1G920151204>

Thailand's foreign minister called on Friday for concerted action to tackle irregular migration in the Indian Ocean, as regional nations met in the for talks aimed at preventing another "boat people" crisis.

Thai migrant crisis meeting ends without any solution on offer – 4 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-asia-migrants-idUSKBN0TN19P20151204>

Thailand called on Friday for concerted action to tackle "irregular" migration in the Indian Ocean, but no substantial solutions emerged from a regional meeting aimed at preventing this year's "boat people" tragedies in which hundreds drowned.

CHINA

Chinese police bust USA, South America human smuggling syndicate; arrest 22 and seize 35,000 forged visas plus counterfeit seals – 1 December 2015

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1885649/chinese-police-arrest-22-suspects-and-seize-35000-forged-visas-plus>

Guangdong police have reportedly busted a massive people smuggling operation that earned 220 million yuan (HK\$266 million) from getting 3,200 people out of the country.

Guangdong busts human smuggling op, 22 nabbed – 3 December 2015

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/guangdong-busts-human-smuggling-op-22-nabbed>

A massive people smuggling operation which smuggled 3,200 people out of China and reportedly earned 220 million yuan (S\$48.5 million) has been busted in Guangdong.

INDONESIA

2 Myanmar fishermen tell Indonesian court they were enslaved – 5 December 2015

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/12/05/2-myanmar-fishermen-tell-indonesian-court-they-were-enslaved.html>

An Indonesian court on Friday overruled defense objections and decided to proceed with the trials of five Thais and three Indonesians accused of human trafficking in connection with slavery in the seafood industry.

Boat crew taking migrants to New Zealand could face eight years in jail – 22 December 2015

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/21/indonesia-boat-crew-smuggling-migrants-to-new-zealand-could-face-8-years-in-jail>

Indonesian prosecutors have asked a court to jail the captain and crew of a boat that attempted to take asylum seekers to New Zealand for eight years for people smuggling.

THAILAND

Thai officer who exposed corrupt officials involved in human trafficking seeks asylum in Australia – 10 December 2015

<http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/1889316/thai-officer-who-exposed-corrupt-officials-involved-human>

The police general who led Thailand's probe into human trafficking said on Thursday he was seeking political asylum in Australia, after fleeing the kingdom fearing for his life for implicating senior officials in the grim trade.

Asylum row highlights Thai human trafficking – 11 December 2015

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/asylum-row-highlights-thai-human-trafficking-151211071903422.html>

Thai police say they are considering a defamation case against a police officer who fled to Australia and is claiming political asylum.

Activists Call for Witness Protection as Major Thai Human Trafficking Trial Begins – 24 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-humantrafficking-idUSKBN0U70WG20151224>

Thai authorities must step up witness protection for a major human trafficking trial with the accused including an army general and one investigator fleeing the country fearing for his life, activists said on Thursday as the first witnesses gave evidence.

Massive human trafficking trial begins in Bangkok – 25 December 2015

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/massive-human-trafficking-trial-begins-in-bangkok>

A massive human trafficking trial began in Bangkok yesterday as a Thai court dismissed concerns that the departure of a key police investigator would have much impact on the case.

EUROPE

GENERAL

Number of migrants reaching Europe dips but 1 million in sight for year: U.N. – 1 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-un-idUSKBN0TK42Y20151201>

An estimated 140,000 refugees and migrants reached Europe by sea in November, a big drop from October, although the numbers crossing remain very high and could reach 1 million for the year, the U.N. refugee agency said on Tuesday.

Children Account for 20% of Maritime Arrivals to Europe in 2015: IOM and UNICEF – 1 December 2015

<http://www.iom.int/news/children-account-20-maritime-arrivals-europe-2015-iom-and-unicef>

A new data brief produced by IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre and UNICEF shows that children make up at least one in five of the 870,000 refugees and migrants who have crossed the Mediterranean Sea so far this year.

Huge Pan-European Operation Dismantles Migrant Smuggling Network – 2 December 2015

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/huge-pan-european-operation-dismantles-migrant-smuggling-network>

On 2 December Europol supported a large-scale joint operation carried out by law enforcement and judicial authorities from Austria, Greece, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The international case, coordinated by judicial authorities in Thessaloniki (Greece), targeted an organised crime group suspected of smuggling people into the European Union.

23 suspects arrested across Europe in raids targeting migrant smuggling gang – 2 December 2015

<http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-europe-smuggling-migrants-raid-20151202-story.html>

The European Union's police agency said Wednesday that 23 suspects were arrested in raids targeting an organized crime gang that smuggled thousands of migrants into Europe.

Meeting on problem of Myanmar's boat people – 4 December 2015

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/meeting-on-problem-of-myanmars-boat-people>

The meeting of senior officials, plus UN organisations and diplomats based in Thailand, is a follow-up to the one in May that was called when thousands of boat people were coming ashore across Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

IOM Monitors Mediterranean Arrivals, Fatalities – 8 December 2015

<http://www.iom.int/news/iom-monitors-mediterranean-arrivals-fatalities>

IOM estimates that over 909,000 migrants and refugees have entered Europe by sea so far in 2015 – four times the 219,000 recorded in all of 2014.

Mediterranean Migration Update – 11 December 2015

<http://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migration-update>

Despite worsening weather conditions, large numbers of migrants and refugees are continuing to arrive in Greece by sea from Turkey. According to Greek police and IOM field staff, over 30,000 migrants and refugees have arrived since the beginning of December. Some 735,000 migrants crossed into Greece the first 11 months of the year.

EU border agency to ramp up operations in Greece – 18 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/europe-migrants-greece-frontex-idINKBN0U11J20151218>

The European Union's border agency Frontex will increase its presence in Greece at the end of the month after the two sides agreed on the need for a larger operation to handle migrants.

EU gets 1 million migrants in 2015, smugglers seen making \$1 billion – 22 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-migrants-idUKKBN0U50WC20151223>

More than 1 million refugees and migrants came to the European Union this year, while almost 3,700 died or went missing in perilous journeys which reaped huge profit for smugglers, the International Organization for Migration said on Tuesday.

Irregular Migrant, Refugee Arrivals in Europe Top One Million in 2015: IOM – 22 December 2015

<http://www.iom.int/news/irregular-migrant-refugee-arrivals-europe-top-one-million-2015-iom>

IOM confirmed yesterday (21/12) that over a million irregular migrants and refugees arrived in Europe in 2015, mostly from Syria, Africa and South Asia.

Over 3,770 Migrants Have Died Trying to Cross the Mediterranean to Europe in 2015 – 31 December 2015

<http://www.iom.int/news/over-3770-migrants-have-died-trying-cross-mediterranean-europe-2015>

With over 3,770 estimated deaths, 2015 has been the deadliest year on record for migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean, trying to reach Europe. In comparison, approximately 3,270 deaths were recorded in the Mediterranean in 2014. Globally, IOM estimates that over 5,350 migrants died in 2015.

ALBANIA

Albanian court imprisons 5 for smuggling people into the US – 4 December 2015

<http://www.bigstory.ap.org/article/e854806c6fcb4905b0c556a563939860/albanian-court-imprisons-5-smuggling-people-us>

An Albanian court has sentenced five people to prison on charges of arranging for more than 600 Albanians to illegally immigrate to the United States through Mexico.

BULGARIA

Bulgarian Border Police Accused of Abusing Refugees – 23 December 2015

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/24/world/europe/bulgarian-border-police-accused-of-abusing-refugees.html>

A report released last month by Oxfam and the Belgrade Center for Human Rights drew on interviews with 110 refugees who had passed through Bulgaria and into Serbia. Each one who had contact with the Bulgarian police reported some form of abuse, the report said, an outcome so unanimous that even other aid groups found it a little suspect.

GERMANY

Germany arrests man suspected in drowning of 5 migrants – 23 December 2015

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/germany-arrests-man-suspected-in-drowning-of-5-migrants/2015/12/23/b106b938-a961-11e5-b596-113f59ee069a_story.html

A suspected people-trafficker wanted in connection with the drowning of five Syrians has been arrested in Germany, police said Wednesday.

GREECE

Clashes as thousands of migrants are stuck outside Macedonia – 3 December 2015

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/e8547592ed6c4c649cea3aa8d774f24a/clashes-thousands-migrants-are-stuck-outside-macedonia>

Greek riot police struggled to maintain order Thursday after chaotic clashes between asylum-seekers at the country's border with Macedonia, where thousands seeking a new life in the European Union have seen their long trek north brought to an abrupt halt by closed borders and new rules.

IOM Monitors Greece-FYRoM Border Amid Security Concerns – 4 December 2015

<http://www.iom.int/news/iom-monitors-greece-fyrom-border-amid-security-concerns>

The situation at Greece's border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM) is extremely tense with protests and sporadic rioting by stranded migrants and refugees.

At least 12 dead, 12 missing in latest Aegean boat sinking – 9 December 2015

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/db6e26e3cc9a4f0daa65a5f4e0e8b7f5/least-12-dead-12-missing-latest-aegean-boat-sinking>

A wooden smuggling boat carrying about 50 people sank Wednesday in the eastern Aegean Sea. Greek authorities said at least 12 people drowned, including six children, and 12 others were missing.

Refugee flow to EU defies cold weather and crackdown – 12 December 2015

<http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/europe/2015/12/refugee-flow-eu-defies-cold-weather-crackdown-151212114723776.html>

People are now travelling from the farthest reaches of the Asian continent to Turkey and then by sea to the Greek islands and the European Union.

Photographer's journal: A look at the migrant crisis in Lesbos, Greece – 18 December 2015

<http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-photographers-journal-migrant-crisis-in-lesbos-greece-20151217-story.html>

At the break of dawn, spotters on the northeast coast of Lesbos assume their positions at lookout points along the rugged sea cliffs. They scan the horizon through high-powered binoculars, looking for tiny black spots on the Aegean Sea. Each spot is a rubber raft ferrying up to 35 refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan or other troubled lands.

Refugee Baby Dies at Greek Island Registration Center – 30 December 2015

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/12/30/world/europe/ap-eu-greece-refugee-baby-dies.html>

Greek authorities say a seven-month-old Syrian baby temporarily staying with its family in a refugee registration camp on the island of Lesbos has died, apparently of natural causes.

KOSOVO

Police arrest seven men in Kosovo for printing fake EU passports – 10 December 2015

<http://www.reuters.com/article/kosovo-passports-arrests-idUSL8N13Z3Z620151210>

Police in Kosovo said on Thursday they had arrested seven men after an investigation during which they found hundreds of fake passports and other ID documents from EU countries, probably intended to be sold to Kosovan migrants hoping to work abroad.

TURKEY

6 Afghan Children Die as Migrant Dinghy Sinks Off Turkey – 8 December 2015

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/09/world/europe/6-afghan-children-die-as-migrant-dinghy-sinks-off-turkey.html>

Six Afghan children drowned after a rubber dinghy carrying migrants to Greece sank off Turkey's Aegean coast on Tuesday, the state-run news agency reported.

Turkish prosecutors want 35 years jail over refugee toddler Aylan Kurdi's death – 10 December 2015

<http://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/turkish-prosecutors-want-35-years-jail-over-refugee-toddler-aylan-kurdis-death>

Turkish prosecutors on Thursday (Dec 10) demanded 35-year jail terms for two alleged people-smugglers blamed for the death of a three-year-old boy whose beached corpse came to symbolise Syria's refugee crisis, local media reported.

Turkish news agency: 18 refugees drown, 14 saved at sea – 19 December 2015

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/90bfcdd24da441819fd4850213836135/turkish-news-agency-18-refugees-drown-14-saved-sea>

A Turkish news agency says at least 18 migrants have drowned and 14 others were rescued after a boat taking them to Greece sank off the Turkish coast.

Turkey says 19 migrants drown after boat capsizes – 24 December 2015

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/sns-bc-eu--europe-migrants-20151224-story.html>

Another 19 people, including six children, drowned Thursday in the waters of the Aegean off the coast of the Turkish city of Izmir after their boat capsized.

Syrian Family's Tragedy Goes Beyond Iconic Image of Boy on Beach – 27 December 2015

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/28/world/middleeast/syria-refugees-alan-aylan-kurdi.html>

When Alan Kurdi's tiny body washed up on a beach in Turkey, forcing the world to grasp the pain of Syria's refugees, the 2-year-old boy was just one member of a family on the run, scattered by nearly five years of upheaval.

UNITED KINGDOM

'People smuggling gang leader' arrested in Liverpool – 2 December 2015

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-34989893>

The alleged leader of an organised crime group that smuggled about 100 migrants a day into the European Union has been arrested in Liverpool.

Suspected head of £7m people-smuggling ring arrested in UK – 4 December 2015

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/dec/04/suspected-head-7m-people-smuggling-ring-arrested-in-uk-liverpool>

A man suspected of heading a multimillion-pound operation that smuggled thousands of people into western Europe is facing extradition after being arrested at an asylum shelter in Liverpool.