

Outsourcing borders

Monitoring EU externalisation policy

Bulletin 6
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"You don't see any borders between countries from space. That's man-made and one experiences it only when you return to Earth."

Sunita Williams, US astronaut

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News and analysis

Impunity for war criminals and the European migration strategy in Libya

New leaked documents show that the EU's "border assistance mission" in Libya is slowly expanding its work and is entering a "consolidation phase". The efforts to "stabilise" the North African country include increased cooperation with Frontex. Meanwhile, in January, a wanted war criminal was arrested in Italy, only to be released and flown back to Libya on a government jet. This act made Italy and the EU's reliance on third-state actors to maintain their migration policy clear. Politicians in Europe consider their migration policies so essential that they are willing to undermine the so-called rules-based international order to maintain them.



European support for Egypt: billions of euros for a dictatorial "partner" in migration control

A year ago, the EU and Egypt announced the launch of a "strategic and comprehensive partnership." This comes with a €7.4 billion aid and investment package from the EU to Egypt. This article analyses this development in the context of regional changes, the ineffectiveness of "external solutions" to migration, and the impact of EU-Egyptian cooperation on human rights in Egypt. It argues that European support for Egypt underpins human rights abuses. Those abuses are then ignored or sidelined so that the EU can claim Egypt is a safe and reliable "partner" for managing migration.



Call to reject new EU laws that "criminalise migrants and human rights defenders"

An open letter to the EU demands action to end the criminalisation of migrants and those who stand in solidarity with them. More than 100 signatories, including Statewatch, condemn proposed reforms to EU laws on migrant smuggling and call for an urgent change of approach.



Protest in Ceuta commemorates "all those who, in search of a better life, met their death"

On 8 February, activists and campaigners once again gathered in the Spanish enclave of Ceuta to demand justice for the deaths of 14 people in 2014. The 14 drowned after Guardia Civil officers fired rubber bullets and tear gas at them as they tried to reach Spanish territory. The manifesto of the 'XII March for Dignity', supported by Statewatch and published here, calls for the Spanish state to "make reparations to their victims and establish mechanisms to safeguard lives at the borders."



Libya: After discovery of mass graves, EU funding should "save lives and open up safe routes"

More than 30 organisations, including Statewatch, have called on the European Commission to use its funding for immigration control in Libya "to save lives and to provide alternatives to dangerous journeys." The call comes after the discovery of two mass graves in Libya, containing the bodies of almost 50 people believed to have been migrants and refugees.

Thematic and regional developments


All the documents summarised here, and those published with previous editions of the bulletin, are contained in our [document archive](#).

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Border management

From 25-27 March, **Madrid played host to the World Border Security Congress**. Topics on the [agenda](#) included “OSINT (Open Source Intelligence) at the Border” and “Emerging Trends in Technology at the Border.” Multiple speakers were present from European governments, as well as from other states around the world and international organisations.



On 8-9 April, representatives of **16 states in the [Prague Process](#) participated in a workshop on [border surveillance](#)**. A number of EU and other international institutions were also present. A summary of the meeting notes that, amongst the “highlights” was the view that combining “**real-time intelligence, risk analysis, modern surveillance tools, and physical infrastructure**” are “effective responses to evolving migration challenges.”




On 19 March, the [Working Party on Frontiers discussed](#) (pdf) “**national policies and innovations in the area of combating new threats at the borders,**” in relation to “external sea border protection.”



Budgets and funding

In February, [a European Commission communication on the EU’s next “multiannual financial framework” \(budget\)](#) referred to **funding for border externalisation policies**: “The next long-term budget should therefore help address challenges related to migration, including effective protection of the EU external borders and comprehensive partnerships with countries of origin and transit.”



Deportation and readmission

On 16 April [the European Commission published a proposal](#) to “frontload elements of the Pact on Migration and Asylum as well as a first EU list of safe countries of origin.” The proposal is designed to **make it easier for member states to place asylum-seekers from certain countries into accelerated procedures**, limiting their rights and the safeguards that apply to their asylum application.

EU law expert Steve Peers [sums the proposal up](#) as “**both murky and unprincipled**: an unimpressive start to the next phase of EU asylum law.” A [document](#) (pdf) drafted to inform the [SCIFA meeting on 13 February](#) notes that the “practical implementation” of the safe third country concept has so far been limited, and “**pilot projects**” **might be useful** “to gain further experience in this area.”



On 1 and 23 April, the Working Party on Integration, Migration and Expulsion (IMEX) [discussed](#) the **European Commission’s proposed deportation Regulation**, known formally as the proposal for a “common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union.”

At its 1 April meeting, IMEX also discussed **implementation of the “return border procedure.”** A [document](#) (pdf) provides some background to the discussion.

SCIFA held a “[strategic discussion ahead of the expected new return framework](#)” (pdf) at its meeting on [13 February](#).



Officials in IMEX continue to discuss **ways to increase the number of deportations under the current legal framework**. On the agenda of the [January meeting](#) were the results of the 2024 “thematic Schengen evaluation” of the EU’s deportation systems, and how to increase “the effectiveness of returns in view of the future legal framework.” A number of documents related to those discussions are [published with this bulletin](#).

At the [IMEX meeting on 18 February](#), “[digitalisation of the third country nationals’ identification process](#)” (pdf) was on the agenda. The Commission due to publish a proposal on “digitalisation of the return process” later this year.



Migration partnerships

On 7 May, the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR, one of the right-wing groups in the European Parliament) hosted an event ‘[Libya and Mediterranean Migratory Routes](#)’. The publicity for the event described Libya as “a key country for controlling migratory routes and the security of Europe.” It featured speakers from the ECR group, as well as Libyan officials.

Authorities in Libya recently [expelled a number of aid groups](#) it accused of “plotting to change the country's ethnic make-up by encouraging African migrants to stay there,” the same line as adopted by the Tunisian authorities prior to launching [a wave of violence and repression and migrants and those who support them](#).

Four different types of “**migration agreements**” agreed between the EU and other states are examined in a [new note from the Meijers Committee](#) (pdf), published on 6 May:

- agreements based on the “safe third country” concept;
- financial support agreements;
- externalised asylum procedures; and
- “return hubs.”

The note highlights “common issues including blurred accountability, limited access to justice, and potential breaches of non-refoulement obligations.”

On 10 April, the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum [discussed](#) the **role of the EU’s “comprehensive partnerships” on migration with third countries**. The details of the discussion remain unknown.

The **Khartoum Process** is “a platform for political cooperation amongst the countries along the migration route between the Horn of Africa and Europe.” Its 10th anniversary was marked by [a ministerial meeting Egypt on 9 April](#).

Ministers adopted a [Declaration](#) (pdf) and a new [Action Plan](#) (pdf). The Declaration describes the Plan as “the strategic framework guiding the Khartoum Process.” It covers five areas:

- strengthen the nexus between regular migration and development as well as address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement;
- promote regular migration and mobility, in particular of young people and women;
- ensure international protection for refugees and forcibly displaced persons and the respect of the dignity and the human rights of all migrants;
- reduce and prevent irregular migration and fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings;
- strengthen international, regional and bilateral cooperation for safe, timely, dignified and effective return, readmission and for sustainable reintegration.

The Ministerial Conference followed the [13th Senior Officials’ Meeting, held on 8 April](#). At that meeting, the **French government announced some of its priorities for its forthcoming presidency of the Khartoum Process**: “cross-cutting issues such as legal identity, anti-trafficking efforts, climate-related migration, and addressing missing migrants.”

Officials in the External Aspects of Asylum and Migration Working Party (EMWP) discussed the **“operationalisation of the New Pact on Asylum and Migration” through cooperation with non-EU states** on [26 March](#).

The [note](#) (pdf) was drafted for the Polish Presidency of the Council by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). It recommends that the EU use the various “processes” run by the ICMPD to aid the border externalisation agenda.

Cooperation between the EU and Senegal was also discussed at the [EMWP’s meeting on 26 March](#), as part of a wider discussion on the **“Western Mediterranean Route.”**

A [document](#) (pdf) produced for the meeting says that “developing an effective system of border management, including maritime, land borders and international airports” is “a key political objective” of the Senegalese government elected in 2024. “The EU is urging cooperation in areas such as border management, smuggling of migrants and combating trafficking in human beings, return and readmission of irregular migrant,” the document says.

Two documents on the **EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya** were published alongside our [analysis on EU-Libya cooperation](#):

- [Interim Strategic Assessment \(ISA\) EUBAM Libya 2024](#) (5 July 2024)
- [Presentation on EUBAM Libya](#) (21 October 2024) from a [meeting on the same date](#)

Other

At the end of March, [27 partner countries of the Rabat Process met with civil society and international organisations](#) “to improve cooperation on missing migrant cases.”

In [March](#), the Visa Working Party [discussed](#) (pdf) possible **changes to the EU’s visa suspension mechanism**. These would allow the targeting of people holding “special categories” of passport, in response to political or legal concerns.

That discussion followed one held in February, when the [Visa Working Party discussed](#) (pdf) the implementation of measures to **partially suspend the EU-Georgia visa agreement**, with regard to holders of Georgian diplomatic passports.

At the same meeting, a [discussion](#) was held on **“visa policy alignment” between the EU and non-EU states** covered by the visa suspension mechanism.

Other updates to the document archive

The [Outsourcing Borders document archive](#) hosts key documents from the Council of the EU and the European Commission.

Alongside the other documents referred to above, the following have been added to the archive with this edition of the bulletin.

External Aspects of Asylum and Migration Working Party (EMWP)

- [Silk routes region: Presentation by ICMPD](#) (WK 13195/2024 INIT, 21 October 2024)
- [Missing migrants – Presidency discussion paper](#) (WK 7772/2024 INIT, 7 June 2024)
- [ICMPD, EPC, ENABEL and Egmont Institute paper on partnerships for skills mobility](#) (WK 6102/2024 INIT, 13 May 2024)

Operational Coordination Mechanism on the External Dimension of Migration (MOCADDEM)

- [Agenda of the MOCADDEM Round Table on 12 September 2024](#) (WK 10547/2024 REV 1)
- [Further facilitating the effective operation of the MOCADDEM - Streamlining the structure of Action Files](#) (WK 11065/2024 INIT, 6 September 2024)
- [Agenda of the MOCADDEM Round Table on 16 July 2024](#) (WK 9471/2024 INIT)
- [Presentation of the priorities of the Hungarian Presidency in the external dimension of migration](#) (WK 10464/2024 INIT)
- [Eastern Mediterranean Matrix – Implementation report](#) (WK 10190/2024 INIT, 22 July 2024)
- [Agenda of the MOCADDEM Round Table on 20 June 2024](#) (WK 8319/2024 REV 2)
- [External dimension of migration: Coordination of actions at local level](#) (8321/24, 14 June 2024)
- [Agenda of the MOCADDEM Round Table on 23 May 2024](#) (WK 6993/2024 INIT)

Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA)

- Operationalisation and implementation of the Migration and Asylum Pact: update and state of play
 - [Presentation by the Commission](#) (WK 12049/24 INIT, 27 September 2024)
 - [Presentation by the European Union Agency for Asylum, EUAA - General workflows and capacity needs for the screening and for the border procedures](#) (WK 12018/2024 INIT, 27 September 2024)

Working Party on Frontiers

- Proposal for a Council Regulation on strengthening the security of identity cards of Union citizens and of residence documents issued to Union citizens and their family members exercising their right of free movement: [Presentation by the Commission](#) (WK 11336/2024 INIT, 13 September 2024)

Working Party on Integration, Migration and Expulsion (IMEX)

- Towards the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum – recent initiatives on alternatives to detention
 - [Presentation by EU Asylum Agency](#) (WK 15883/24 INIT, 9 December 2024)
 - [Presentation by Frontex](#) (WK 15298/24 INIT, 6 December 2024)
- [Presentation of the priorities of the incoming PL Presidency](#) (WK 15296/2024 INIT, 6 December 2024)

About this bulletin

This project, carried out by *Statewatch* and *migration-control.info* and funded by *Brot für die Welt*, *Misereor*, *medico international* and *Pro Asyl*, aims to make the EU's externalisation policies, plans and practices public. In doing so it seeks to highlight their impact on the rights of people on the move, as well as democratic standards, transparency and accountability. It addresses a lack of public information by publishing relevant EU documents, in this phase primarily those produced or discussed by the Council of the EU. It also tackles the overflow of information that results from a variety of EU institutions, working groups and national governments involved in the externalisation agenda by summarising thematic and regional developments, and by analysing key issues in depth.