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### Newest Wave of Middle Eastern Emigration to Africa

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The post-2019 economic crisis in Lebanon has accelerated emigration to several Sub-Saharan African states, particularly Côte d'Ivoire. The popularity of African destinations is prompted by the relative ease of access, established diaspora centres, and growing demand in numerous trades. The Lebanese add to the Syrian and Yemeni refugees, many of whom have settled on the Horn of Africa permanently, in the newest episode of Middle Eastern emigration to the continent. It has generated positive effects on local economies, although it adds to fears of extending the fallout of Middle Eastern conflicts onto host countries. The EU could apply some of the policies developed by the African states towards the Syrians or Yemenis in its direct neighbourhood.

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## The Context of Reversed Migration to Africa

While migrants generally tend to move from poorer to richer countries and the post-independence period saw an exodus of non-African foreigners from the continent, in the last two decades, the

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opposite trend has been accelerating, with more than a million non-Africans settling throughout the continent. Individual and group decisions to move to a certain African destination are determined by a combination of push factors (conditions in migrants' home countries) and pull factors (conditions in destination countries). Such was the case of the post-2008 Portuguese emigration to Angola, where by 2014 about 150,000 people had relocated after being pushed out by the

financial crisis and unemployment.<sup>1</sup> Citizens of overpopulated China (500-650,000<sup>2</sup>) and India continue to settle in Africa. Ghana offered citizenship to African-Americans in the highly publicised "Year of Return" (2019), counting on their input to the economy. Would-be emigrants rarely choose their destination on an objective assessment of overall conditions, if so, most would often favour a non-African one. But as access options to more developed countries are scarce, it is the perception of a relative improvement, particularly in safety, combined with the availability of existing diaspora networks, which pushes non-standard migration decisions. Such was the case of the trend of Londoners of East-African origin who around 2020 preferred to send their teenage children to Kenya or Somaliland (a relatively calm secessionist part of Somalia) to avoid knife violence and gangs to which they were exposed in the UK capital.<sup>3</sup> The existence of such migration patterns do not invalidate the parallel movements in opposite directions—they often occur simultaneously, and certain African groups see relative advantages in moving to the very states others leave.

In this context, the recent growth in arrivals of Middle Easterners to Africa comes as the next phase of a wider trend. Different approaches and strategies have been adopted by African states to accommodate the newcomers. Prospects for turning this new immigration, particularly in the case of refugees, into an input into local economies depend mostly on a receptive climate within the host societies and on the political will of the host country governments.

## Lebanese Fleeing Crises to West Africa's Côte d'Ivoire

The latest wave of migration to Africa is directly related to the post-2019 [economic downturn in Lebanon](#). In 2019, banks started to fail, and throughout 2020 the Lebanese currency lost 60% of its value. The number of people unable to meet their basic needs doubled to 55%. By 2020, rapid economic deterioration and spiralling inflation made 77% of young Lebanese consider emigration—the highest rate in the world.<sup>4</sup>

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The dynamic situation in Lebanon required would-be migrants to make quick arrangements. As many young graduates found their job applications sent inside Lebanon unsuccessful due to the economic crisis and those aimed at the EU, North America, or the Gulf unavailable due to COVID-19, offers from long-established Lebanese companies in West Africa seemed more attractive. Additionally, the COVID-19 travel restrictions further narrowed the possibilities. Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Ghana, and other African states remained more accessible than

<sup>1</sup> L. Åkesson, "Moving beyond the Colonial? New Portuguese Migrants in Angola," *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, LVI (1-2), 221-222, 2016, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Y. Jung Park, "One million Chinese in Africa," *Perspectives*, 2016 Issue John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, <http://www.saisperspectives.com>.

<sup>3</sup> S. Clare, "London teens sent to Africa to avoid knife crime," *BBC News*, 28 May 2019, <https://www.bbc.com>.

<sup>4</sup> Arab Youth Survey 2020.

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destinations in Europe or the U.S. Regular air routes were not interrupted,<sup>5</sup> and to obtain a visa, it was—in most cases—enough to present a letter of invitation from a residing relative.

The new situation accelerated shortly after Lebanon developed plans to incentivise the return of the diaspora in the hope of invigorating the country's economy. Lebanese President Michel Aoun even proposed granting diaspora-born children Lebanese citizenship.<sup>6</sup> In this context, the formal ties with Côte d'Ivoire, home to the largest Lebanese community in Sub-Saharan Africa, numbering 80-100,000 people (mostly in Abidjan, the country's economic capital), were developed. The 2013 Beirut-Abidjan economic cooperation agreements aimed to boost exchange in the tourism and health sectors, and the 2017 Air Côte d'Ivoire-Middle East Airlines memorandum on code-sharing allowed the Ivorian company to sell tickets to Lebanon while not being an operator there. In the new context, these closer ties played in favour of further enabling migration options in the opposite direction.

The Abidjan-based diaspora benefited from the city's quick recovery after civil conflicts (2002-2007, 2011-2012). The Lebanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Côte d'Ivoire estimates that the around 4,000 Lebanese-run firms generate about 150,000 jobs and contribute 15% of the country's tax revenues by paying about \$650 million annually.<sup>7</sup> Shortly before the economic crisis in Lebanon sharpened, the Abidjan-based diaspora became more visible after it hosted the first forum of Lebanese businesspeople working in Africa in February 2018. The event, under the title "Lebanese diaspora energy", attracted some 400 Africa-based and 100 Lebanon-based businesses. It served to promote success stories of Lebanese in Côte d'Ivoire and to attract more investments.

With the newest crisis in Lebanon, the Abidjan diaspora mobilised to provide urgent financial assistance for the most affected families in areas already connected to Côte d'Ivoire. For example, in Zrariah in Southern Lebanon, where a third of the nominal 15,000 population lives in Côte d'Ivoire and the main avenue is called "Abidjan Road", 1,000 needy families received about \$100,000 in aid in a few months.<sup>8</sup> This further strengthened Abidjan's status for many in Lebanon as a place offering access to some of the best business opportunities in Africa.

The idea of joining the successful and accessible diaspora accelerated a new wave of emigration. Although the actual scale of the newest migration wave is difficult to measure, pilots operating connections to West Africa report flights full of Lebanese migrants and regional embassies note a significant increase in visa applications.<sup>9</sup> Researchers investigating emigrants' motivations note that most Lebanese moving to Africa decide to settle there permanently and a big portion of them had little or no previous connection to the continent—increasingly often they require assistance in tracing distant relatives in Africa for their visa invitation.<sup>10</sup> Although they add to the established diaspora, the new arrivals represent a generation that faces challenges with accommodation. Moreover, as the established West African diaspora mostly hails from Southern Lebanon, the crisis-driven new migrants come from across the country. As most of them follow already identified employment opportunities, their arrival should not produce immediate tensions.

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<sup>5</sup> It also enabled bringing cash from the diaspora when bank withdrawals were restricted.

<sup>6</sup> A. Pukas, "Lebanese across the globe: How the country's international community came to be," *Arab News*, 04.06.2018, <https://www.arabnews.com/>.

<sup>7</sup> "Des investisseurs libanais à Abidjan pour investir en Afrique," *VOA Afrique*, 01 February 2018, <https://www.voaafrique.com>.

<sup>8</sup> C. Domat, "Lebanese flee crisis at home to seek better life in Africa," *The Africa Report*, 26 November 2020, <https://www.theafricareport.com>.

<sup>9</sup> "Lebanese move to west Africa, escaping the crisis at home," *The Economist*, 12 June 2021, <https://www.economist.com>.

<sup>10</sup> C. Domat, "Lebanese flee ...," *op. cit.*

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## Syrians in Sudan—from Supported to Scapegoated

The eruption of the Syrian civil war prompted mass forced displacement and literal escape, primarily to neighbouring countries. As the numbers of refugees grew, third countries placed restrictions on Syrian passport holders, fearing their mass arrival and long-term stay. Contrary to this trend, Sudan continued to offer Syrians visa-free access, based on a bilateral deal originally designed to facilitate Sudanese holidaymakers and students reach what was then the more developed and stable Syria. This, combined with no requirement for work permit, university fees initially equal to those for Sudanese students and an open route to obtain Sudanese citizenship in six months,<sup>11</sup> created arguably the world's most welcoming legal framework for the Syrian refugees.

Initially, a good political climate prevailed: Sudanese officials declared they would support Syrians in need “as long as the Nile flows”, and public media often displayed positive stories of Syrians in Sudan, typically calling them “guests”.<sup>12</sup> Since 2015, Syrians have been arriving by plane, either directly from Syria or, more often, from Lebanon or Jordan, with no additional formalities at Khartoum airport.<sup>13</sup> A new diaspora of about 250,000 sprung up. The Syrians often settled in the Bahri Kfourri suburb and Riyadh area of Khartoum,<sup>14</sup> creating consistent and visible diaspora habitats. Although Sudan was itself falling into economic crisis and decent opportunities were difficult to find, the social environment was good in this Arab-speaking country where historically mass displacement and refugee flows were part of the daily experience. With no additional aid provided by the state, the prime role in accommodating newcomers was ceded to newly established community networks, such as the Committee for the Support of Syrian Families in Sudan. As registration with the UNHCR was not required, only about 15,000 Syrians (and Yemenis) registered in Khartoum for assistance due to particular vulnerability.<sup>15</sup>

The welcoming climate changed as generally better educated and more business-savvy Syrians established themselves despite the political and economic crisis. This created an additional political cost for their presence, as they were seen as beneficiaries of the former regime of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir (removed in April 2019) and a barrier to the improvement of the living conditions of Sudanese. The changed narrative offered the government a chance to externalise some of the domestic problems by blaming the Syrians. The issuance of Sudanese passports to nearly 10,000 Syrians under al-Bashir came to be described as compromising national security and was highlighted by the new authorities, who began to adopt the rhetoric of threat when dealing with the growing Syrian community. As part of the so-called “campaign to control foreign presence”, a requirement for employer-specific work permits, paid by employers, was introduced, which increased the previously low costs of running companies with a Syrian workforce. New rules about starting businesses, such as the need for Sudanese-majority ownership and a \$500 registration fee, seemed to have been designed to weaken the Syrian competition. By mid-2019, work inspections began targeting Syrians with fines, jail, and deportation. In December 2020, Sudan cancelled 3,500 passports issued under al-Bashir to foreigners (mainly Syrians) and the country started to require visas for Syrian nationals.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> While the Sudanese passport is among the world's least desired, as the country has remained isolated throughout the last 25 years, it enables Syrian refugees to reach Turkey to join family members, or the Gulf States and their labour market and developed infrastructure.

<sup>12</sup> N. Malik, “Sudan's reception of Syrian refugees proves popular will matters more than economic might,” *The Correspondent*, 18 December 2019, <https://thecorrespondent.com>.

<sup>13</sup> R. Faek, T. Abd El-Galil, “Young Syrians Take Their Chances in Sudan,” *Al-Fanar Media*, 06 December 2016, <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org>.

<sup>14</sup> S. A. Tobin, “No Longer a Guest: Permitting Syrians in Sudan,” *Sudan Brief* No. 6, CMI Chr. Michelsen Institute, December 2020.

<sup>15</sup> “Sudan country refugee response plan (January 2020–December 2020),” UNHCR, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> “Sudan cancels 3,500 passports issued to foreigners,” *BBC News*, 10 December 2020, <https://www.bbc.com>.

# PISM STRATEGIC FILE

## Yemenis in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and the Horn of Africa

Other countries of the Horn of Africa, specifically Ethiopia and Somaliland, host a few hundred Syrians. For them, however, as well as for Djibouti, it was the refugee flow from Yemen that was more significant. While Syrians in many cases were in the professional class, including engineers, doctors and dentists, Yemenis fleeing to the Horn across the Gulf of Aden from March 2015, when the Saudi bombardments started, were comparably less skilled. Key drivers pushing them to the Horn were the small distance, cultural proximity, and prior movement of people from Yemen, mainly Somalis (250,000 in Yemen before the war), who were first to flee the war in this direction.

In 2015 alone, some 70,000 people (including about 25,000 Yemenis<sup>17</sup>), or close to 40% of all who fled Yemen, headed to the Horn of Africa. Some 200-300 daily arrived by sea, often from the battlefield city of Taizz, located near the Gulf of Aden coast.<sup>18</sup> This represented a much more significant portion of the movement than in case of Lebanese and Syrians, for whom only a fraction chose African destinations. Most of the Yemeni nationals (almost 19,000) initially went to Djibouti, as its Obock Region is located only 30 km from the shores of Yemen. In subsequent years, the figures stabilised,<sup>19</sup> with some returning, and new groups crossing by the sea as the fighting escalated. Contrary to the Syria-Sudan case, the human movement flows were not completely reversed, but the two (Horn of Africa to Yemen and Yemen to Horn of Africa) continued simultaneously, with one periodically outnumbering the other, depending on the changing situation on the ground. Such a spike in new arrivals from Yemen came, for example, after the killing of the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh in December 2017. Unlike Middle Eastern or European states, Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan granted Yemenis *prima facie* refugee status,<sup>20</sup> which prevented them from falling into legal limbo, enabled swift registration and access to potential assistance, even if mostly symbolic—in Somaliland, it was initially only about \$100, paid by the UN.

Despite the language barrier, due to the history of connections and mutual influences dating back to the ancient Kingdom of Axum, Yemenis share multiple cultural features identical to those of Somalis, or Ethiopians. In Ethiopia, Yemenis temporarily arrived for economic as well as political reasons throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and thus, the newest refugees could merge into the local population and avoid attention.

In Djibouti, new arrivals were placed in the Markazi camp located near the coast. Harsh conditions inside the camp remain a point of concern and its residents are often described as “forgotten”. Djibouti’s government did not restrict their movements. It favoured Yemenis’ settlement in cities and additionally, in 2017, it broadened Yemenis access to social services and eased requirements for employment.<sup>21</sup> However, the newcomers faced very high costs of living in Djibouti or difficult weather conditions in Obock, a major town in the vicinity of the camp.<sup>22</sup> Both factors made individual settlement difficult and prompted returns to the camp or further relocations within the region.

In Somaliland, the initial response was generally positive, with the authorities declaring no intentions to set up a refugee camp, recognising, unlike most other states, Yemeni passports<sup>23</sup> and encouraging the local population to be receptive. The head of the International Cooperation department at the

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<sup>17</sup> “Yemen Situation,” *UNHCR Regional Update* #36, February 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Y. Mori, “Yemeni Refugees in Djibouti,” *Yuichi Mori (Medium)*, 24 October 2019, <https://yuichimori.medium.com/yemeni-refugees-d2409268b217>.

<sup>19</sup> “Global Trends 2019,” UNHCR, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> T. Wood, “Lessons in refugee hospitality from the Horn of Africa,” *The Conversation*, 23 October 2015, <https://theconversation.com>.

<sup>21</sup> R. Alameri, “We cry in our hearts. We cry to God:’ Forgotten Yemeni refugees of Djibouti,” *Arab News*, 22 May 2018, <https://www.arabnews.com>.

<sup>22</sup> “Yemen Situation Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, January-December 2016,” UNHCR, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> J. Craig, “Yemenis Escaping Conflict Flee to Somaliland,” *VOA*, 13 April 2016, <https://www.voanews.com>.

# PISM STRATEGIC FILE

Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted two Yemeni refugee families at his home.<sup>24</sup> Somaliland though is an unrecognised state, facing 75% youth unemployment, and as such had no resources to allocate to the Yemeni (or some 300 Syrian) refugees. Self-help groups, such as the Yemeni Community Centre gathering Yemeni businessmen in Hargeisa, played a major role in accommodating them.

In Ethiopia, the arrival of the Yemenis coincided, and partially contributed to a major shift in the country's approach towards refugees. In September 2016, the Ethiopian authorities made nine pledges<sup>25</sup> to facilitate the economic and social inclusion of refugees. They were included in the 2017 Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in which Ethiopia declared it would be granting them work permits and facilitating employment.<sup>26</sup> These processes cumulated in the passing of the January 2019 law giving refugees the right to live and work outside of the camps. It formalised the existing and tolerated reality on the ground for about 700,000 refugees, mostly South Sudanese, Eritrean, and Somali.

## Impact on Economies

New Middle Eastern migrants into Sub-Saharan Africa are generally welcome, although—except for the Lebanese—they face similar difficulties in making a decent living as the local population, being essentially left without host-state assistance. This makes Syrians' desired stay in most of the African countries temporary, as they tend to seek access to more developed countries. As such, however, they are highly motivated to find employment and improve their initially very difficult living conditions, thus stimulating economic activity.

New Middle Eastern migrants into Sub-Saharan Africa are generally welcome, although they face similar difficulties in making a decent living as the local population.

Syrian doctors, engineers, restaurant owners, and craftspeople fill important gaps in the service industry available to African states' populations. However, the fragile local situations push the immigrants to live on the margins of the host countries' societies and thus they eventually leave only a limited footprint on their economies. The Sudanese case remains different, as concrete incentives were offered to promote Syrian settlement.

New Syrian arrivals in Sudan has consisted mostly of young men (20-30 years old), many of whom were leaving to avoid conscription to the Syrian army. They typically tended to seek employment in restaurants offering Syrian food, which have spread across Khartoum, the vehicle tyre market (many of them had experience in car maintenance), artisanal furniture, or market wholesalers. Syrian-run businesses quickly became well noticed in the capital city. Shortly before al-Bashir lost power under pressure from mass protests, public discontent arose with the relative success of the Syrians in several trades, particularly in vehicle tyres, which left many Sudanese unable to compete with the newcomers. Although there was no overall negative impact on the economy, the even limited cases in which Sudanese workers felt the economic expansion of the skilled newcomers produced setbacks. A new atmosphere in which the economic activities of the Syrians were monitored with suspicion and even discouraged, further pushed them to scale down their presence.

Today, Yemenis are less visible in local economies, although they have a good reputation as having a sense of trade. Many are shuttling between the Markazi camp and Obock for temporary work,

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<sup>24</sup> K. Riordan, "Yemenis fleeing to Somaliland 'struggle for survival'," *Al Jazeera*, 21 May 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com>.

<sup>25</sup> The declaration was announced at the Leaders Summit on Refugees and Migrants in New York, September 2019.

<sup>26</sup> "A Bridge to Firmer Ground. Learning from International Experiences to Support Pathways to Solutions in the Syrian Refugee Context," Migration Policy Institute, 2021, p. 80.

# PISM STRATEGIC FILE

which brings some economic movement into the towns. Those who relocate to Obock are often hired as fishermen or taxi drivers.<sup>27</sup>

The unique character of the Lebanese society in which the diaspora (10 million) numbers more than the population inside Lebanon (4 million) has offered potential emigrants access to established Lebanese networks throughout the world, including the 500,000-strong diaspora in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in West Africa. In this region, out of the earlier waves of immigration (with 1970s witnessing the biggest of them), several Lebanese family fortunes were built in some of the most lucrative trades. Giants such as Fadoul (Burkina Faso), Ezzedine, Fakhoury (Côte d'Ivoire), Fares (Senegal), or Heheij (Gabon) evolved into conglomerates operating in diverse sectors—real estate, the hotel industry, telecoms, food processing, etc. In Côte d'Ivoire, Lebanese control 80% of the [cocoa and coffee trade](#), and 50% of the wholesale trade.<sup>28</sup> In Guinea, they developed the lucrative bauxite mining industry. In Nigeria's Lagos, the Lebanese Chagoury Group, which employs 10,000, is currently building Eko Atlantic, the biggest luxury district on the continent. The Chagoury family's hometown of Miziara in Lebanon is now fully dependent on remittances flowing from Nigeria.<sup>29</sup> In Liberia, the Lebanese family Abi Jaoudi created and runs the biggest supermarket chain. Big Lebanese businesses became major employers in their host countries and as such could be accommodating the newcomers.

The Lebanese diaspora have historically presented high levels of adaptivity. The presence of Lebanese small traders and entrepreneurs is not seen as controversial. Locals frequent Lebanese restaurants and grocery stores. Also, despite its members holding influential business positions in African states, the Lebanese diaspora generally remains discreet in relation to the local political situation. The potentially negative impact of significant figures in new arrivals of the Lebanese is being mitigated by available employment options around the existing businesses.

## Challenges for Host Countries

Risks for relatively swift reception are connected to the fragility of the host countries and their economies, unstable internal situations, limits on the ability to accommodate newcomers, and security concerns. As exemplified by the change in approach towards the Syrians in Sudan, not only can a large number of unemployed foreigners create tensions but more importantly, their relative success, if seen as won at the expense of the locals, can exacerbate it. As the host countries are unable to proactively provide policies that offer safety nets for locals pushed out of their trades by the refugees, the governments may rather choose to follow the popular resentment.

To avoid developing hostile attitudes among the recipient societies, governments would try to stimulate the receptive discourse, as in Ethiopia or Somaliland. Simultaneously, they must keep public order. Ethiopia was able to impose in January 2019 a ban on street begging by Syrians, which was common in Addis Ababa and Hawassa,<sup>30</sup> without compromising the generally positive and supportive attitude reflected in legislation and the daily practice of the administration and population.

States and territories like Djibouti and Somaliland, surprised with the new wave of Middle Eastern (Yemeni) refugees, tend to become impatient with the slow reaction of international agencies in assisting them until the tensions and hardships are highlighted. In May 2015, Somaliland authorities, by then struggling to receive the 2,000 refugees from Yemen in their Berbera port, threatened to

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<sup>27</sup> J. Fenton-Harvey, "The Forgotten Yemeni Refugees," *Inside Arabia*, 30 September 2020, <https://insidearabia.com>.

<sup>28</sup> "Lebanese move to west Africa, escaping the crisis at home," *The Economist*, 12 June 2021, <https://www.economist.com>.

<sup>29</sup> C. Domat, "Planes and pyramids: The surreal mansions of Lebanon's Nigeria Avenue," *Middle East Eye*, 19 October 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net>.

<sup>30</sup> "Ethiopia: Syrian refugees banned from begging on streets," *APA News*, <http://www.apanews.net>.

# PISM STRATEGIC FILE

stop taking in any more people from Yemen if the UNHCR did not make its resources available for the newcomers.<sup>31</sup>

Political turbulence has occasionally resulted in violence and incidents of targeting Lebanese businesses by looters, such as in Senegal (1989), Mali (1991), or Côte d'Ivoire (2004, 2011). The return to Côte d'Ivoire in June 2021 of the former President Laurent Gbagbo, a divisive figure whose rule was marred by unrest, sparked fears of a re-igniting of partisan and intercommunal tensions. In case of renewed political violence, the Lebanese newcomers could potentially be exposed. However, their perceived political neutrality and strong community networks offer them a degree of protection.

The arrival of a new generation of South Lebanese migrants carries the risk of strengthening Hezbollah networks in the region, known to be active in Sierra Leone, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and other states, and potentially exposing the migrants to the fallout of Middle Eastern conflicts. Part of West Africa's Lebanese Shia-owned businesses offered financial support to Hezbollah during the Syrian civil war. In June 2013, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned four individuals from Senegal, Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Côte d'Ivoire as key Hezbollah financiers and recruiters. A Lebanese supermarket chain in Senegal was allegedly instrumental in a money-raising scheme then,<sup>32</sup> as were diamond businesses in the Democratic Republic of Congo, sanctioned in 2019.<sup>33</sup> After the killing of Iran's [Qasem Soleimani](#) in January 2020, the risk of retaliatory attacks by Hezbollah on U.S. facilities in Africa increased and Nigeria issued a nationwide red alert. With the newest migration, the security services of the receiving countries, in cooperation with Western agencies, need to scrutinise the newcomers to identify potential extremists.

## Importance for Europe

Some of the experiences of African states in dealing with this new influx of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees can be applied in Syria's direct neighbourhood with the support of the European Union. The Ethiopian "One Stop Shop" scheme, introduced as part of the 2016-2019 reforms, facilitating all the necessary documentation in a single office visit, helps to quickly settle the legal status of the newcomers. The 16 pilot offices set up by the UNHCR in 2020 across Ethiopia offer overcrowded camps in Lebanon or Jordan with a model for a way out of the legal limbo, which usually keeps Syrian refugees incapacitated and frustrated. Also, opening labour market and residency opportunities to refugees, explored to various effect by Ethiopia and Sudan, provide vital clues for other refugee-hosting countries. Out-of-camp policies adopted by most African states in relation to the Middle Eastern newcomers help to diffuse tensions within the refugee communities.

Some of the experiences of African states in dealing with this new influx of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees can be applied in Syria's direct neighbourhood.

However, dire daily life conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa, difficulties in finding satisfying employment by Middle Eastern migrants and refugees, and the sense of temporality—of being stranded *en route* to a better place—disqualify African states from being seen as viable alternatives to richer and more stable destinations. The relative tranquillity and diaspora's self-organisation, like in Côte d'Ivoire for the Lebanese or the particularly welcoming policies in Sudan for Syrians between 2015 and 2019,

<sup>31</sup> Y. Yuma, "Somaliland says will not receive more Yemen refugees," *Andalou Agency*, 24 May 2015, <https://www.aa.com.tr>.

<sup>32</sup> "Treasury Sanctions Hizballah Operatives in West Africa," 06 November 2013, U.S. Department of the Treasury, <https://www.treasury.gov>.

<sup>33</sup> "Treasury Designates Prominent Lebanon and DRC-Based Hizballah Money Launderers," 13 December 2019, U.S. Department of the Treasury, <https://www.treasury.gov>.



# PISM STRATEGIC FILE

both of which encouraged permanent settlement, represent exceptional cases that cannot be easily reproducible elsewhere. Therefore, European policymakers should not consider “streaming” Middle Eastern migrants to Africa as part of easing migration pressure on Europe. Instead, the scope of potential EU soft support for Syrian or even Lebanese reception in Sub-Saharan Africa can help the EU push forward with the much-needed de-securitisation of the migration agenda within the Khartoum and Rabat processes as well as the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

## Conclusions

Emigration from Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, jointly representing biggest non-African (and non-Chinese) settlement influx into the continent in decades, is determined by the availability of certain destinations, relative improvement, and perspective for cultural accommodation. The newcomers contribute to host countries’ economies with a skilled workforce. However, the political and economic fragility of African states make the prospects for immigrants’ and refugees’ integration uncertain. Still, out-of-camp policies adopted by Ethiopia, Sudan and other states can inspire the EU towards policy approaches to the refugee crisis in the Middle East itself.

The EU could also pay greater attention to the implications of the presence of the Yemeni refugees’ and African returnees from Yemen in the Horn of Africa. While currently not part of the irregular movements along the Mediterranean route addressed by the Khartoum Process, their future is determined by options to stay in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Somaliland, or Sudan until the situation in Yemen stabilises. Cultural proximity and receptive policies proved vital for their initial settlement, but particularly high unemployment in the region, dire conditions at the Markazi camp and political turbulences in Ethiopia or Somalia present risks for maintaining the status quo. Successful projects that support their livelihoods, such as the job-matching app SIRA for returnees developed by the International Labour Organisation and 251 Communications, could potentially be applied elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> H. Abebe, “Escaping conflict: Yemeni refugees in Addis,” *The Report Ethiopia*, 29 February 2018, <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com>.