



# International Migrants Day 2014

## IOM Calls for Action to Save Migrants' Lives

December 18—Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in Morocco say that migration, to them, means adventure and discovering new experiences. Tunisian fishermen associate migration with Italy's Mare Nostrum rescue programme, while for three generations of Burkinabe women in Tunisia, migration means hope for a new future. International Migrants Day on 18 December recognizes the contributions and rights of migrants worldwide. This year, it also marks the culmination of IOM's [#MigrationMeans](#) social media campaign which has sought to put a human face on the global migration debate.

IOM's theme for this year's Migrants Day is "Saving Migrants' Lives". 2014 has been a record-breaking year for migrant deaths. In "[Fatal Journeys](#)", a report released earlier this year, IOM documented the number of migrants who have lost their lives as they attempt to reach their desired destinations. The final figure for 2014 will likely surpass 5,000, more than twice the 2,378 deaths reported last year.

The call to "Save Migrants' Lives" echoes around the Middle East and North Africa: an estimated 3,500 migrants have died in shipwrecks in the Mediterranean in 2014. Many of them were refugees fleeing the violence in Syria, but migrants originated from many parts of the region, including Egypt and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as from sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. The Gulf of Aden is another hotspot, where in 2014 over 250 migrants perished on their way from the Horn of Africa through Yemen to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. Ongoing crises and instability have led to new and protracted situations of displacement, while desperate social and econom-

ic conditions in parts of the region and beyond add to the unprecedented number of people on the move.

In response to displacement, complex, irregular migration, and human trafficking and smuggling in the region, IOM has continued throughout 2014 to implement a variety of programmes to make migration safer and more protected. IOM assists vulnerable migrants, such as those who have been trafficked, exploited or who have become stranded. Internally displaced people and other populations affected by conflict receive humanitarian assistance, while IOM also supports governments throughout the region through capacity-building, technical assistance, policy development and research.

IOM Director General William Swing has spoken out, urging the international community, "to take more responsibility for saving the lives of the thousands of migrants - men, women and children who undertake the perilous journeys on land and sea. It is unacceptable that anyone fleeing for their life be denied safe haven or rescue. Migrants fleeing war, religious extremism and natural disasters deserve empathy and protection."

IOM offices throughout the region are marking Migrants Day: In Morocco, a week of events under the slogan "[Living together – more than a slogan](#)" contributes to ongoing Moroccan migration reforms, while in Yemen there will be music, a football match and screening of a film about plight of Ethiopian migrants in Yemen. In Egypt, IOM is launching "[Crossroads](#)", a multimedia platform and documentary featuring migrants' stories, while IOM Sudan screens a documentary about the lives of African migrants

in Europe. IOM Tunisia will launch its awareness campaign on irregular migration "[20 Youth, 20 views on Migration](#)".



People from around the world participate in the [#migrationmeans](#) campaign. © IOM 2014

For more on IOM MENA's Migrants Day events, visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/IOM.MENA> or contact Karoline Popp [kpoppp@iom.int](mailto:kpoppp@iom.int)

## IOM MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: Flash Report

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