



# Migration to, from and in the Middle East and North Africa<sup>1</sup>

## Data snapshot

*Prepared by IOM Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, August 2016*

### Highlights

The number of **international migrants**, including registered refugees, in the MENA region reached 34.5 million in 2015, rising by 150% from 13.4 million in 1990. In contrast, global migrant stocks grew by about 60% over the same period. Just over one third of all migrant stocks in the region are of people from other MENA countries. **Emigrants** from MENA account for 10% of migrant stocks globally, and 53% of emigrants from MENA countries remain in the region.

The MENA region is the largest producer of **refugees** worldwide, with over 6 million refugees originating in MENA at the end of 2015. Now reaching nearly 4.9 million, refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic make up 30% of refugees globally. The MENA region hosts 18% of the world's refugees, with about 60% of refugees in the region hosted by Lebanon and Jordan.

In addition to refugees, there are roughly 16.4 million **internally displaced persons** (IDPs) in the MENA region. At the end of 2015, internal displacement in MENA accounted for roughly 40% of all internal displacement due to conflict and violence worldwide. New displacement in 2015 in Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq accounted for over half of all new displacement due to conflict and violence globally.

### International migrants in the MENA region, 2015

- 34.5 million international migrants, including registered refugees, were residing in the MENA region in 2015, according to the latest data on international migration stocks published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division; this represents 14% of the global migrant stock.<sup>2/3</sup>

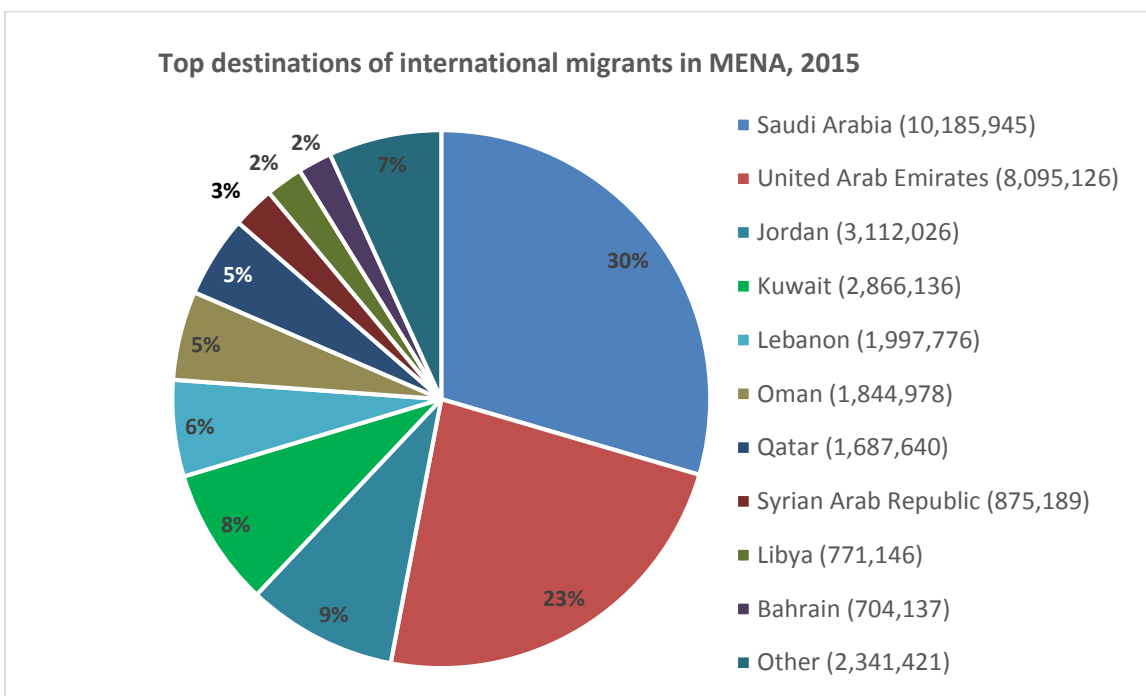
<sup>1</sup> The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region refers to IOM's definition of the region. It includes: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

<sup>2</sup> All data that are not explicitly stated as referring to refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) are elaborated from UN DESA (2015), Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015).

<sup>3</sup> (a) UN DESA estimates international migrant stocks based on place of birth, and when not available on country of citizenship. Most of the statistics used for the UN DESA estimates were obtained from population censuses.

## Destinations of international migrants in the MENA region

- The top destinations of international migrants in the MENA region are Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Kuwait and Lebanon in that order.
- Nearly three quarters (74%) of international migrants in the MENA region are in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.<sup>4</sup> This includes over 10 million in Saudi Arabia and 8 million in United Arab Emirates, which together host over 50% of all international migrants in the MENA region.
- The Mashreq countries<sup>5</sup> host 19% of international migrants in MENA, while North Africa<sup>6</sup> hosts 6%.
- Of migrants coming from outside the MENA region, 91% can be found in the GCC.



Additionally, population registers and nationally representative surveys provided information on the number and composition of international migrants. (b) Stocks refer to the number of international migrants in a country at a particular point in time; they should not be confused with data on flows of migrants, which measure entries and/or exits in a particular time period. (c) For the majority of countries in the MENA region, the number of registered refugees, as provided by UNHCR, has been included in the totals for migrant stocks in 2015. Refugee populations are included in UN DESA figures for all MENA countries except: Bahrain, Libya, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Oman, Qatar and Tunisia. It is not known precisely when refugee data was shared with UN DESA and thus how recent the data are. Unless specified, the term “international migrant” is used to encompass all groups counted by UN DESA.

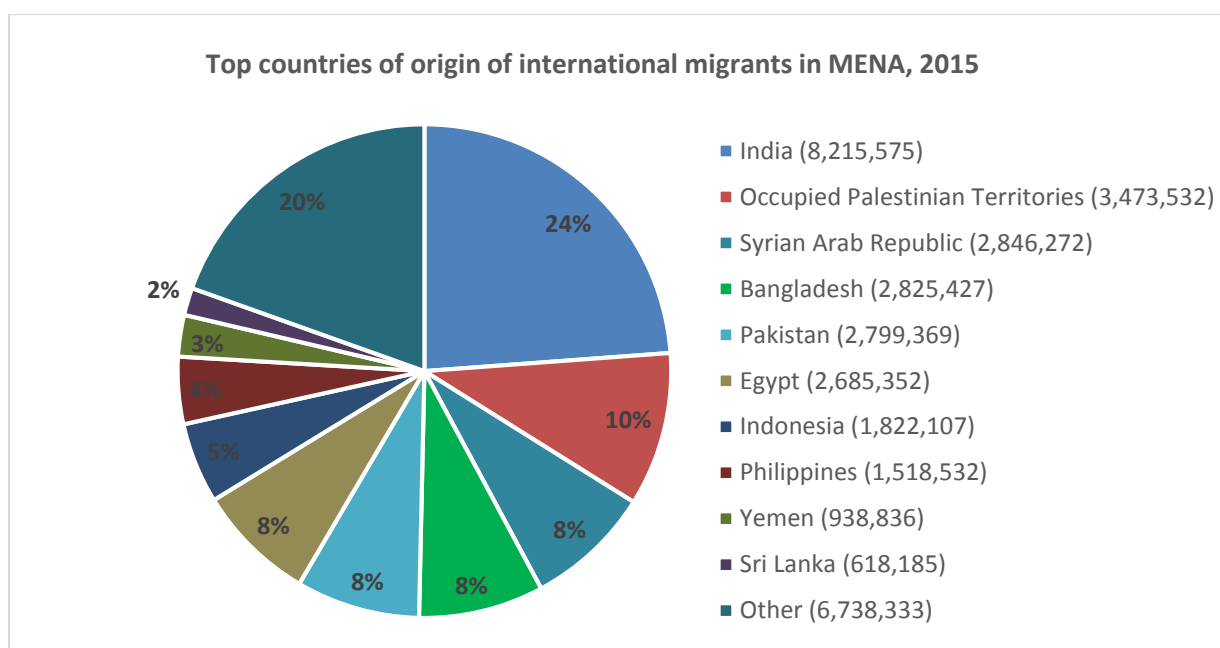
<sup>4</sup> Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates.

<sup>5</sup> Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Syrian Arab Republic.

<sup>6</sup> Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia.

## Origins of international migrants in the MENA region

- 64% of international migrant stocks in the MENA region originate from outside the region (extra-regional), while 36% are from other countries in the MENA region (intra-regional).
- According to the UN DESA data, the share of intra-regional migration (from MENA to MENA) has fluctuated, but remained roughly the same since 1990 (36% in 1990 to a peak of 39% in 2005).
- Intra-regional migration is most concentrated in the Mashreq: 90% of all international migrants<sup>7</sup> in the Mashreq are from MENA, and 85% are from other countries in the Mashreq.
- In contrast, nearly 80% of all international migrants in the GCC originate from outside the MENA region. 21% of international migrants in GCC are from other areas of MENA, while migrants from the GCC in the GCC make up less than 1%.
- In North Africa, about 55% of international migrants are from the MENA region, although just 11% are from other North African countries.
- Top countries of origin of international migrants moving from one MENA country to another (intra-regional) are the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Syrian Arab Republic and Egypt.
- As regards migration to MENA from outside the region (extra-regional), India is the primary country of origin, followed by Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia and the Philippines. Migrants from India alone account for nearly one quarter of migrant stocks in MENA. Migration from these countries is almost entirely concentrated in the GCC.



<sup>7</sup> Keep in mind a large share of which are refugees.

### **Sex of international migrants in the MENA region**

- Roughly two thirds of international migrants in the MENA region are male, according to the 2015 data.
- Male migrants are more concentrated in the Gulf States, ranging from a low of 66% male in Kuwait, to a high of 84% male in Qatar.
- Females represent at least half of international migrants in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (56%), Lebanon (52%) and Jordan (50%).

### **International migration from countries in the MENA region, 2015**

- Nearly 24 million (23.9) people from the MENA region, including registered refugees, were living outside their country of birth in 2015<sup>8</sup>; migrants originating in the MENA region account for 10% of the international migrant stock.

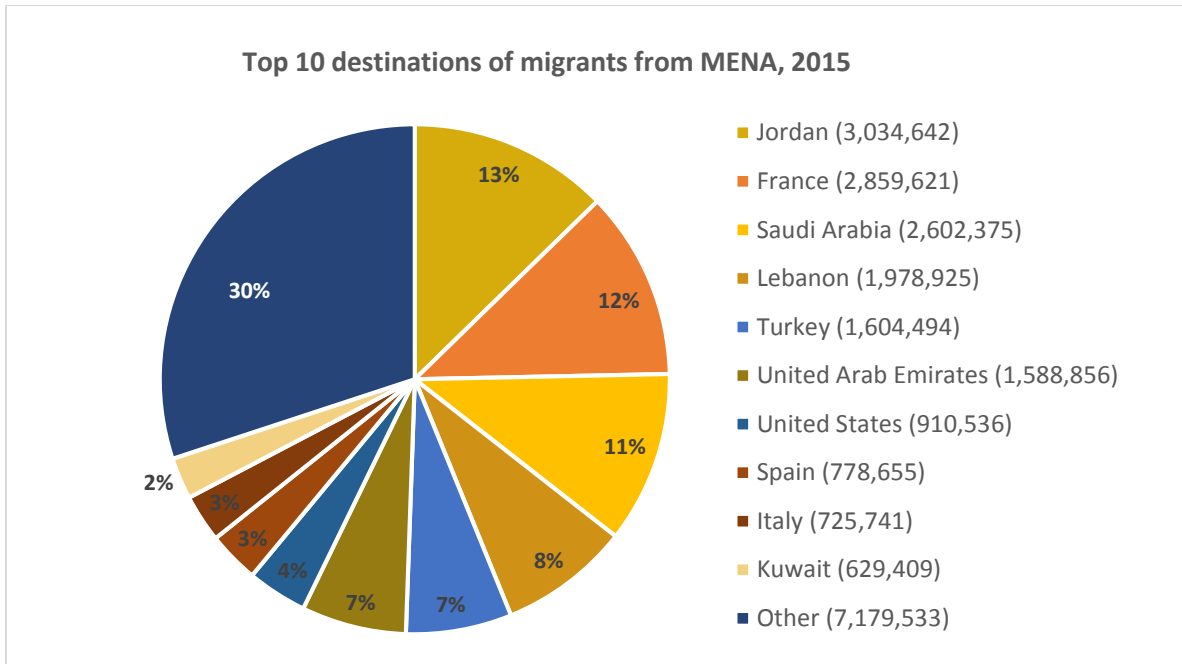
### **Destinations of international migrants from MENA**

- Of the 24 million international migrants from MENA countries, just over half remain in the MENA region (53%). This is an increase from 1990, when just 46% of migrants from MENA remained in the region.
- Following the MENA region, Europe is the primary destination of migrants from MENA countries, hosting about one third of all people migrating from MENA countries. North America is host to another 6%. Note that “Europe” in this case includes Turkey which is the destination of a substantial 7% of migrants from MENA.
- Jordan, France and Saudi Arabia are the top destinations of migrants from the MENA region. The top ten countries of destination host 70% of all migrants from MENA (see chart below)
- The destinations of migrants from MENA countries vary by sub-region. For instance, 50% of migrants from North African countries go to Europe, while just 22%<sup>9</sup> of migrants from the Mashreq do so and 17% from the GCC.

---

<sup>8</sup> In some cases, country of citizenship is used in place of country of birth to determine international migrants in this dataset.

<sup>9</sup> If Turkey is removed from the definition of Europe, then only 8% of migrants from the Mashreq are in Europe.



### Origins of international migrants from MENA

- The vast majority of international migrants from countries in MENA are originally from either the Mashreq or North Africa (93%), with very few originating in the GCC.
- Most migration to Europe is undertaken by North Africans, with North Africans accounting for 65% of all migrants from MENA in Europe; this increases to 82% if Turkey is excluded from the Europe region.
- Over 60% of international migrants from MENA are originally from the Syrian Arab Republic (21%; 5 million), the Occupied Palestinian Territories (15%; 3.5 million), Egypt (14% - 3.3 million), and Morocco (12% - 2.9 million).
- About 56% of migrants from MENA are male.

## Forced migration in the MENA region, 2015

### Refugees

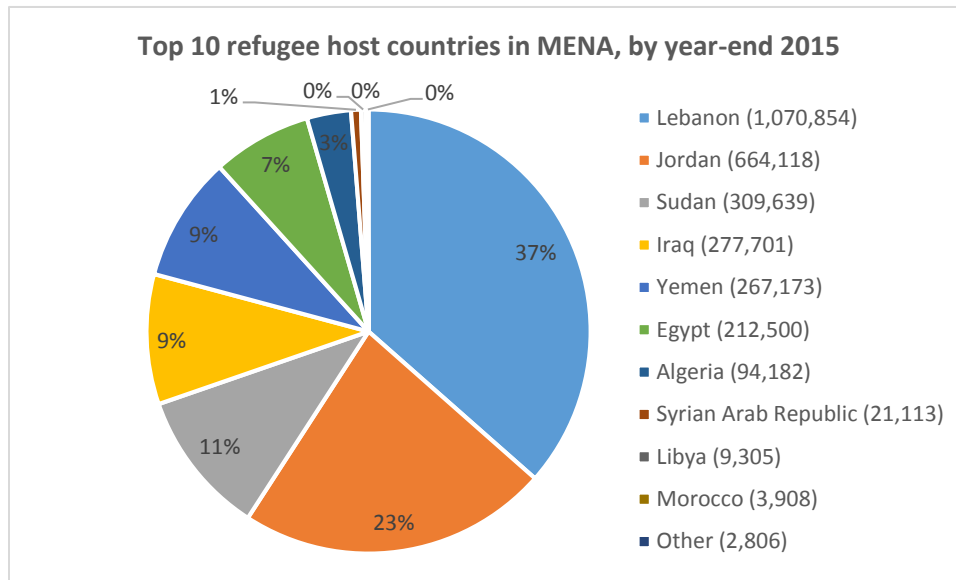
Note on data: For the majority of countries in the MENA region, the number of registered refugees is included in the UN DESA data on international migrant stocks presented in the first half of this data brief (see footnote 3 for full explanation of the data). Data from UNHCR are presented below to provide disaggregated and most up-to-date data on refugee populations in the region.

#### *In MENA*

- As of the end of 2015, UNHCR reported just over 2.9 million refugees in the MENA region (18% of global total), with an additional 5.2 million Palestinian refugees registered by

UNRWA.<sup>10</sup> Lebanon is the third largest refugee hosting country in the world, with over 1.1 million refugees at the end of 2015 – the vast majority of which are Syrian. The ratio of refugees to residents is higher in Lebanon than in any other country.

- With over 650,000 refugees, Jordan is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest refugee-hosting country in the world.<sup>11</sup>
- At the end of 2015, there were nearly 148,000 pending asylum claims in the MENA region, with the greatest number in Egypt (38,000).



Source: UNHCR 2015 Global Trends Annex Tables. Data extracted: 10.08.2016. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-2015.html>.

Notes: (a) Jordan: Includes 33,300 Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR in Jordan. The Government estimates the number of Iraqis at 400,000 individuals at the end of March 2015. This includes refugees and other categories of Iraqis. According to results from Jordan's 2015 National Population and Housing Census, the country hosts 1.26 million Syrians. (b) Syria: refugee figure for Iraqis and Stateless persons in the Syrian Arab Republic was a Government estimate. UNHCR has registered and is assisting 18,300 Iraqis at the end of 2015.

#### *Originating in MENA*

- By the end of 2015, over 6 million refugees originated in the MENA region, accounting for over one third of all refugees in the world (37%).<sup>12</sup>
- The Syrian Arab Republic is by far the largest producer of refugees in the region, and the top refugee producing country in the world,<sup>13</sup> with the refugee population rising dramatically from under 20,000 at the end of 2010 to 4.9 million by the end of 2015. Over 1 million Syrian refugees were newly registered in 2015, constituting the largest number of new refugees in 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Data from UNHCR 2015 Global Trends Annex Tables. Data extracted: 10.08.2016. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-2015.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Includes 33,300 Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR in Jordan. The Government estimates the number of Iraqis at 400,000 individuals at the end of March 2015. This includes refugees and other categories of Iraqis. According to results from Jordan's 2015 National Population and Housing Census, the country hosts 1.26 million Syrians.

<sup>12</sup> This excludes the vast majority of Palestinian refugees.

UNHCR 2015 Global Trends Annex Tables. Data extracted: 10.08.2016. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-2015.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Note again that this ranking does not include the 5.1 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA.

- Other main refugee producing countries in the region are Sudan (nearly 630,000) and Iraq (264,000). There are nearly 18,000 registered refugees from Egypt, and over 15,000 from Yemen are registered with UNHCR. In June 2016, UNCHR estimated over 178,000 people had fled Yemen for neighbouring countries since March 2015, including both Yemenis and migrants of other nationalities.<sup>14</sup>

### Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

- There are more people internally displaced by armed conflict and generalized violence in the MENA region than in any other region of the world. At approximately 16 million people by the end of 2015, internal displacement in MENA accounted for about 40% of the global total.<sup>15</sup>
- In 2015, more people were newly displaced by conflict and generalized violence in MENA than in the rest of the world combined (4.9 million in MENA). Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq alone accounted for over half of new conflict-related displacement globally.<sup>16</sup>
- Based on data from IDMC, over 40% of the IDPs in the MENA region are in the Syrian Arab Republic, which has the largest number of IDPs in the world (6.6 million as of end 2015). Iraq and Sudan each have over 3 million IDPs, and displacement in Yemen has led to over 2 million IDPs based on data from the Task Force on Population Movement (TFPM).<sup>17</sup>

### Internally displaced persons in MENA, by country and source

Country	Stock IDPs	Source <sup>18</sup>	Stock IDPs <sup>19</sup>	Source
Syrian Arab Republic	6,600,000	IDMC Dec 2015		
Iraq	3,290,000	IDMC Dec 2015	3,369,252	IOM DTM July 2016
Sudan	3,182,000	IDMC Dec 2015	3,200,000	OCHA March 2016
Yemen	2,509,000	IDMC Dec 2015	2,053,093	TFPM May 2016
Libya	500,000	IDMC Dec 2015	348,372	IOM DTM Aug 2016
Palestine	221,000	IDMC Dec 2015		
Egypt	78,000	IDMC Dec 2015		
Lebanon	12,000	IDMC Dec 2015		
Total	16,392,000			

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR Regional Update #40: Yemen Situation. Accessed 10.08.2016.

[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20Yemen%20Situation%20Update%20\\_40.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20Yemen%20Situation%20Update%20_40.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Calculation based on data compiled by IDMC gathered from a variety of sources. See IDMC Global Internal Displacement Database <http://www.internal-displacement.org/database/>. Data accessed 14.08.2016. Note countries included in the MENA region follow IOM's classification, not IDMC's.

<sup>16</sup> IDMC [Global report on internal displacement 2016](#). Note countries included in the MENA region follow IOM's classification, not IDMC's.

<sup>17</sup> The TFPM, a technical working group of the Protection Cluster and is co-led by IOM and UNHCR.

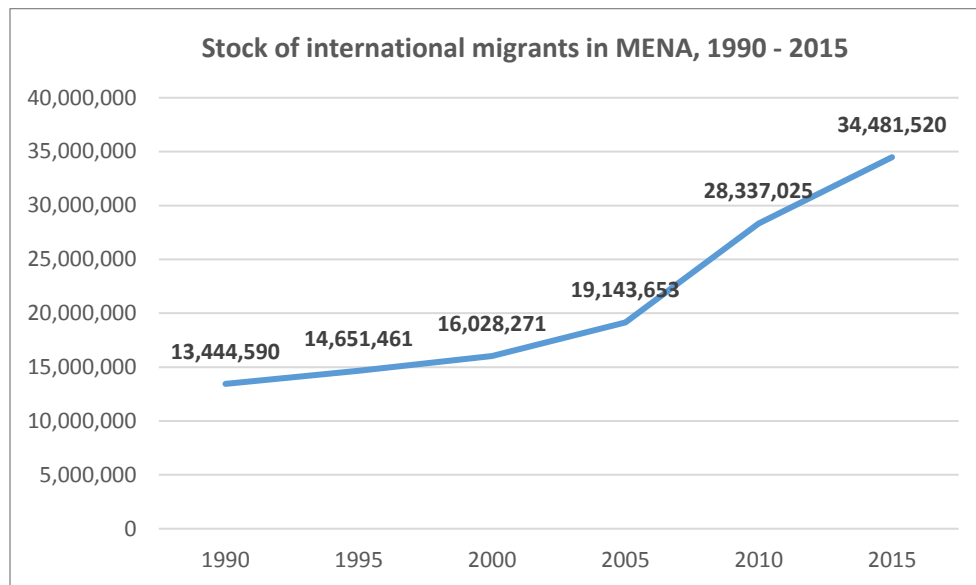
<sup>18</sup> IDMC estimates based on a variety of sources. See IDMC Global Internal Displacement Database <http://www.internal-displacement.org/database/>. Data accessed 14.08.2016

<sup>19</sup> Data accessed 14.08.2016. Iraq DTM Round 50 <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>; Sudan: OCHA 2016, see Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin, Issue 11 <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-humanitarian-bulletin-issue-11-7-13-march-2016-enar>; Yemen: Task Force on Population Movement, 9<sup>th</sup> Report <http://www.globaldtm.info/yemen/>; Libya IOM DTM Round 5 Report <http://www.globaldtm.info/libya/>.

Note: IDMC data refer to displacement due to armed conflict and generalized violence. They exclude people displaced due to natural disasters.

## Migrants in the MENA region, 1990 – 2015<sup>20</sup>

- The stock of migrants in the MENA region has grown by 156% since 1990. This is more than double the growth of migrants globally, with the global migrant stock increasing by 60% over the same period of time.
- In parallel, the share of the world's migrants who are in the MENA region has grown from 9% in 1990 to 14% in 2015.



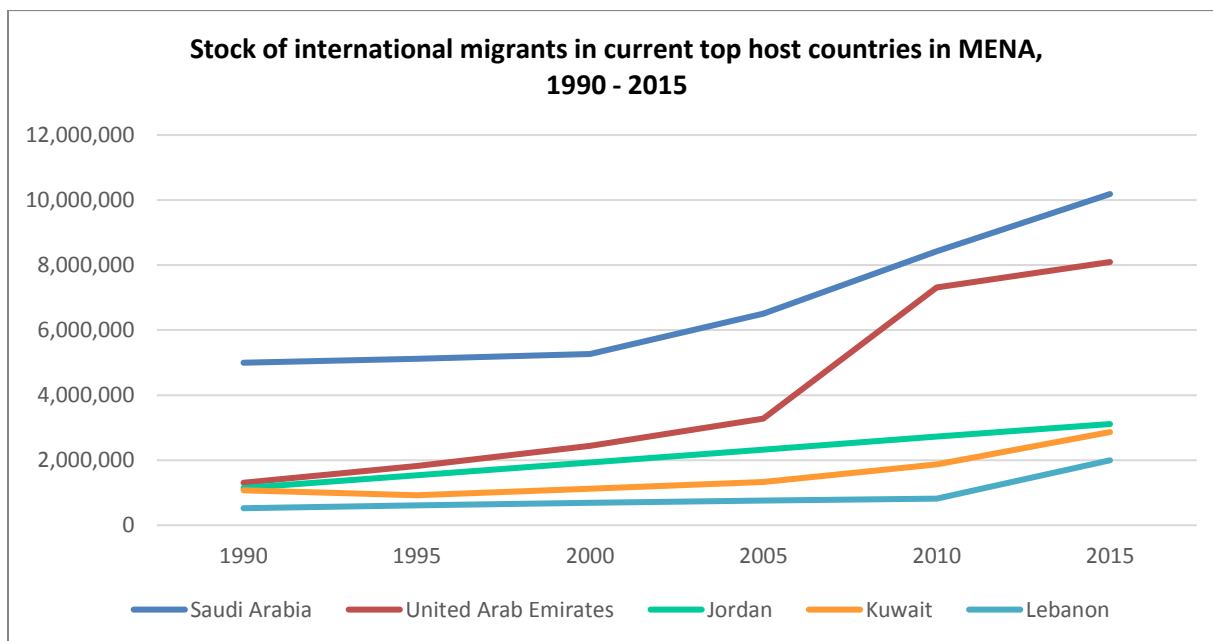
- Among the current top 5 destinations for migrants in MENA – Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Kuwait, and Lebanon – the stock of migrants grew most dramatically in the United Arab Emirates, increasing by over 500% from 1.3 million in 1990 to over 8 million in 2015. While in 1990 the United Arab Emirates hosted just 10% of all international migrants in the MENA region, in 2015 it hosted 23%.
- Among these current top five destinations, growth of the international migrant population was lowest in Saudi Arabia, although even here stocks of international migrants have more than doubled since 1990 (increase of 104%).
- Growth in the stocks of migrants in the MENA region has been uneven across the sub-regions – with main labour migration growth experienced in the GCC, while growth due to refugees has been borne primarily by the Mashreq. The number of migrants in North Africa actually decreased from 1990 to 2015, although this is mainly driven by a large reduction in the number

<sup>20</sup> Based on UN DESA data only.



of migrants in Sudan.<sup>21</sup> The stock of migrants also declined in Algeria from 1990. Egypt, in contrast, saw 183% growth in migrant stocks from 1990 to 2015.

- Since 1990, between 36% and 39% of international migrant stocks in the region have originated in other MENA countries.



<sup>21</sup> Note that from 1990 to 2005, stocks of migrants in Sudan included migrants in what is now South Sudan and Sudan.