

# **MIGRATION IN MENA COUNTRIES; CHALLENGES OF POST “ARAB SPRING” WARFARE, REPRESSION AND INTERVENTION IN CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZED MIGRATION**

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## **Introduction**

The political and economic crisis situation across the ‘Arab world’ has had a major impact on migrant workers and, more generally, labour forces. Migrant workers comprise large portions of the populations in nearly all countries of the Gulf region and generally in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Given that nearly all foreigners in these countries are economically active, their proportion of the work force is substantially higher than figures showing portion of total population. For example foreigners comprise around 93 per cent of work forces in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In the 3 years since the “Arab Spring” turmoil broke out, foreign migrant workers alongside national workers –and the economies-- in countries concerned have been hugely affected by conflict. This most dramatically in Libya and Syria, but also in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Yemen. The effects, particularly harassment, violence and repression directed against foreigners, constituted widespread and pervasive human rights violations. These factors provoked humanitarian emergencies of immense scale, most dramatically displacement of more than 1 million persons --mostly foreigners, out of Libya.

International organizations –notably UNHCR and IOM-- responded immediately and appropriately to meet immense needs for humanitarian protection and assistance as people poured across borders from Libya into Egypt, Tunisia, Niger, Algeria and elsewhere. Most of those leaving were not Libyan nationals. Distinctions as to whether persons were refugees, in refugee like situations, in need of which kind of protection were wisely set aside to provide all in need with humanitarian assistance and to arrange repatriation of the large majority of displaced who agreed to 'go home.' However, certain distinctions had to be made with certain groups: migrant workers in Libya from Eritrea and Somalia in particular could be presumed to fear persecution or warfare situations if repatriated; a considerable number were known to UNHCR to be in refugee or refugee-like situations.

This massive displacement of working people significantly impacted social, political and economic stability in transit and, especially, home countries, where mass arrivals of tens of thousands of suddenly unemployed raises huge social welfare and governance challenges. Another serious consequence was sudden and dramatic loss of huge remittance flows that supported welfare, security and stability at home. And as is now apparent, the loss to Libya of a large portion of its skilled work force poses large constraints on economic recovery and reconstruction. Meanwhile, the further increased unemployment in “Arab Spring” countries whose economic activity is seriously curtailed provide further impetus to what is less than voluntary displacement. To keep in perspective, only about 3% of all the cross border displacement has directly affected Europe.

Resolution of these huge economic, social and political challenges require active and appropriate intervention by governments and other stakeholders. Ensuring the rule of law and obtaining democratic governance means responses based on international legal standards and proven 'good practice.'

## **I. THE SITUATION:**

### **1. Migrant Workers in Arab Countries**

The table below summarizes the most recent available data on the presence of migrants in Middle East countries and the importance of their work indicated by financial remittances of earnings to countries of origin. This foreign presence, mostly economically active, exceeds 21.5 million persons for the ten

countries. A partial total of remittances in 2009, not including (huge) figures from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, shows nearly 50 billion dollars. Given highly controlled access and police supervision in many of these countries, the number and proportion of foreigners in irregular situations is presumed to be low.

**Table 1: The 'Gulf' and Middle East: Stocks of Migrants and Remittance Outflows**

Countries	Stock of migrants, in 2010	Stock of migrants, as percentage of total population, in 2010	Remittance outflow in 2009 (in USD millions)
Bahrain	315,000	39.1	1,391
UAE	3,293,000	70	NA
Saudi Arabia	7,289,000	27.8	25,969
Kuwait	2,098,000	68.8	9,912
Qatar	1,305,000	86.5	NA
Oman	826,000	28.2	5,313
Yemen	518,000	2.1	337
Jordan	2,973,000	45.9	502
Lebanon	758,000	17.8	5,749
Syria	2,206,000	9.8	212

Sources: World Migration Report 2010/IOM (data for 2010) drawing on data from UN DESA Population Division. Remittance figures from World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, 2011. NA = Not applicable

Foreign workers, skilled and lower-skilled, have also become an increasingly substantial part of working populations in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia (Table 2). Their proportion and importance in workforces of these countries is considerably greater than the percentages of total population. However, the number and proportion of foreigners in irregular situations in Maghreb countries may be quite substantial; the authors did not find credibly reliable estimates.

**Table 2: North Africa: Stocks of Migrants and Remittance Outflows**

Countries	Stock of migrants, in 2010	Stock of migrants, as percentage of total population, in 2010	Remittance outflow in 2009 (in USD millions)
Algeria	242,000	7	NA
Egypt	245,000	3	255
Morocco	53,000	2	61
Tunisia	34,000	3	13

Sources: World Migration Report 2010/IOM (data for 2010). drawing on data from UN DESA Population Division. Remittance figures from World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, 2011

## 2. Libya

When the crisis broke in Libya, migrant workers from many origins comprised a large part of the country's labour force (see Table 1.A in Annex). The Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) estimated the foreign population in Libya in 2010 as approximately 682,000 or 10.4 per cent of the total population. However, earlier this year, international agencies responding to the crisis estimated the number of foreign workers in Libya at up to 2.5 million, including one million Egyptians.<sup>1</sup> Specific reliable data on migrants in Libya were not available then, and are now impossible to estimate. The large presence of migrant workers in Libya was reflected in outflows of remittances; according to IOM estimates, remittance outflows from Libya in 2008 comprised 945 million (nearly one billion) USD,<sup>2</sup>

## 3- Migrant Workers from Arab Origin Countries

Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia are major source countries for migrant workers deployed elsewhere (Table 3); over one million Algerians and 3 million Moroccans. Many migrant workers from these countries find work in other Arab States (see Table 2.A in Annex regarding Algerian nationals). Nearly four million Egyptians are counted abroad; in addition to the million estimated in Libya, another one million are shown as employed in other Arab countries, including the Gulf States (see Table 3.A in

<sup>1</sup> UN, *Regional Flash Appeal for the Libyan Crisis*, 5 March 2011.

<sup>2</sup> IOM, *World Migration Report 2010 –The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change*, Geneva, IOM, 2010.

Annex). The following chart includes data indicative of their economic importance, with aggregate remittance inflows of more than \$44 billion in 2008 for these five countries.

**Table 3: Emigrants from Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco in 2010 and Remittance Inflows**

Source countries	Stock of emigrants	Stock of emigrants as percentage of population	Principal destination countries	Remittance inflows in 2010 (in USD millions)	Remittances inflows in 2008 (as a percentage of GDP)
Algeria	1,211,100	3.4	France, Spain, Israel, Canada, Italy, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Tunisia, United States	2,031	1.3
Morocco	3,016,600	9.3	France, Spain, Italy, Israel, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, United States, Canada, Saudi Arabia	6,447	8
Egypt	3,739,100	4.4	Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Libya, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates (UAE), United States, West Bank and Gaza, Italy, Qatar, Republic of Yemen	7,681	5.3
Lebanon	664,100	15.6	United States, Australia, Canada, Germany, Saudi Arabia, France, Sweden, Brazil, West Bank and Gaza, United Kingdom	8,177	25.1
Tunisia	651,600	6.3	France, Italy, Libya, Germany, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Belgium, Canada, United States, Switzerland	1,860	4.7

Source: World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, 2011; World Migration Report 2010/ IOM -data for 2010).

### Transit Migration

Adding to the complexity, the North African countries from Egypt to Morocco and Mauritania have been important 'transit countries' for intending migrant workers from sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere to make their way towards Europe.

However, an increasing majority of apparently intending transit migrants have remained in North African countries. Many if not most are economically active, although often in informal, unregulated work. In 2007, one researcher noted that "an estimated 65,000 to 120,000 sub-Saharan Africans enter the Maghreb yearly overland, of which only 20 to 38 percent are estimated to enter Europe".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Hein de Haas, "The Myth of Invasion: Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union", IMI Research Report, October 2011, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, p. iii.

## II. THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZED MOBILITY

To put the MENA region in context, ILO calculated that 105 million of the 214 million people living outside their countries of birth or citizenship in 2010 are economically active. That is to say: employed, self-employed or otherwise engaged in remunerative activity. That is about half of the total number and a very high proportion of those of working age. Given an estimate of one accompanying dependent for each active adult, over 90 per cent of migration today is bound up in labour and employment.

These figures undercount migrant labour since they do not account for short-term temporary or seasonal migrants, such as Uzbek workers in Kazakhstan, Guatemalans in Mexico, Mozambicans in South Africa, Poles in Portugal, Jamaicans in Canada, to cite a few examples of workers who go by tens of thousands in each of these and many other cases to usually nearby countries for a few months each year.

For the record, ILO estimated that, globally, migrants in irregular situations represent 10% to 20% of global numbers of migrants (stocks). A detailed study funded by the EU recently concluded that migrants in irregular situations ranged from 6% to 12% of total numbers of foreign born across 25 EU Member States.

For a majority of countries today, migration –international labour and skills mobility-- has become the key factor to sustaining and renovating essential processes of development: production and distribution of goods, services and knowledge, notably constructing and servicing housing, education, healthcare and transportation.

Economic contributions and the employment characteristics of migrants are central to labour markets and labour force composition, in more than 100 countries today. For example, foreign born workers now comprise about 10% of labour forces in Western European countries and 15-20% in immigration countries of Australia, Canada and the USA. Taking account of the first and second generation offspring of immigrants since the 1960s gives figures of around 20% of work forces “issue de l’immigration” in a number of Western European countries.

Migration serves as instrument to adjust the skills, age and sectoral composition of national and regional labour markets. Migration provides responses to fast-changing needs for skills and personnel resulting from technological advances, changes in market conditions and industrial transformations. In countries of aging populations, migration is replenishing declining work forces and injecting younger workers, in turn contributing to increased dynamism, innovation and mobility in those work forces.

Labour circulation has become a crucial and recognized key to regional integration and development, among the members of the European Union, in the East African Community or in South America’s Mercosur. It is key in more than 12 regional integration processes involving more than 100 countries, where it is being regulated and harnessed in regional, interstate spaces of economic and social integration.

New evidence based on more accurate forecasting suggests that the world may be on the eve of far greater international mobility as factor of viable economic activity. New forecasting data shows that China alone will face a decline of its work force by between 126 to 190 million workers by 2030. The Russian Federation is currently losing annually some 1 million workers in its domestic labour force. The German work force will decline by 5 million in the next ten years. By current trends, the Japanese labour force will shrink 37% over the next 25 years. A recent study suggests that Switzerland will need 400,000 additional workers by 2030.

Meanwhile, Tunisia reached a fertility/birth rate of zero population growth six years ago. Mexico and Colombia reach it in the next year or two. They will soon become net recruiters of foreign skills and labour, as is already the case with most Western and Asian industrialized countries and other Latin American countries.

While not the only solution, migration is already the single response able to provide a major portion of workers and skills required to maintain sustainable economic activity in many countries –and regional integration spaces.

### III. MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS CHALLENGES

Across a region where migrant workers are a predominant feature, migration is an inescapably large factor in political transitions taking place. Migrant labour – and push factors for labour mobility – are necessarily central considerations to the economies of affected countries; and therefore key factors to address in efforts to re-establish post-revolution economic and labour activity.

Major international emergency evacuation, repatriation and migration containment efforts were launched following the revolution in Tunisia and outbreak of warfare across Libya. A huge international humanitarian emergency response evacuated and repatriate nearly one million people who fled Libya, the large majority of whom were foreigner workers from across Africa, Asia, Maghreb countries and Europe.

However, these operations did not intend to stop people from moving. Nor did they address supporting the returnees and their countries, despite overwhelming numbers of tens of thousands repatriated to homelands in a matter of weeks. These efforts driven by a huge, immediate humanitarian emergency could do little to address the impact on bordering countries facing huge influxes of “mixed flows” of persons, including large numbers of their own nationals –notably back to Algeria, Egypt, Niger and Tunisia.

Only specific, deliberate attention to the absence-of-work issues driving displacement, and to immediate reintegration and/or redeployment measures for those arriving in homelands elsewhere will impede this displacement crisis from becoming prolonged and itself a provocation to instability and international conflict.

#### **1. Worker Displacement**

The scale of unemployment combined with repatriation of displaced overseas workers hugely exacerbates crises of unemployment and economic paralysis in Egypt, Tunisia and now Libya, where unemployment was huge and now even more so. Recent figures from Tunisian authorities estimate current unemployment at over 800,000 persons –in a country whose entire population is less than 6 million.<sup>4</sup> This includes some 50,000 Tunisians who fled conflict in neighboring Libya plus 300,000 workers in the hotel, restaurant and tourism sectors whose jobs were lost as a consequence of reduced tourism following outbreak of the “Tunisian revolution” in January 2011.

No surprise then that outmigration of workers – would be migrant workers – became an early consequence of the “Arab Spring.” Significant numbers of youth and workers tried to leave Egypt and Tunisia, where turmoil stalled economic activity – and stopped work for many of those fortunate enough to have been working.

In the aftermath of the historic popular uprising that ousted the government of former President Ben Ali in January 2011, Tunisia saw several thousand citizens undertake a mass exodus to the Italian island of Lampedusa, spurring the Italian government to declare a state of emergency on the island. Italy's response, which included proposing to send police to Tunisia to help stem the flow of migrants, underscored the long-standing ties between the two countries on migratory matters.<sup>5</sup>

#### ***Libya***

A most immediate concern was the tens of thousands of foreign workers trying to escape the killings and carnage in Libya, and the mortal violence targeting African migrant workers stranded in that country.

As nations evacuate their citizens from the violence gripping Libya, many African **migrant workers** are targeted because they are suspected of being mercenaries hired by Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan leader. Dozens of workers from sub-Saharan Africa are feared killed, and hundreds are in hiding, as angry mobs<sup>6</sup> of anti-government protesters hunt down “black African mercenaries,” according to witnesses.

<sup>4</sup> Figures provided to author by Tunisian Labour Ministry officials in Tunis, 16 July 2011

<sup>5</sup> Global Detention Project, “Tunisia Detention Profile”, February 2011, <http://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/africa/tunisia/introduction.html>

<sup>6</sup> “African migrants targeted in Libya”, Aljazeera, 28 February 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2011/02/201122865814378541.html>

At that time, IOM Director-General William Lacy Swing stated : “Those managing to get out [of Libya], in particular Sub-Saharan Africans, are recounting to us terrible stories of targeting, physical violence and of being held back from leaving” (IOM Press Release, 7 March 2011). In his Statement on Libya, ILO Director General Juan Somavia noted: “Of grave concern to the ILO is the plight of domestic and migrant workers and their families caught in the midst of this deepening humanitarian, social and political crisis.”<sup>7</sup> Abusive treatment of Sub-Saharan African migrant workers in Libya in terms of their labour rights has long preoccupied the ILO; particular concerns were raised by the ILO treaty supervisory Committee of Experts on Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) about non-payment of wages in the aftermath of large-scale expulsions from the country.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Emergency Movements: UN Action***

A major humanitarian operation comprising emergency evacuation efforts was mounted over the ensuing months. From the outset, the UN Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was clear:

As these (needs) crystallize, and assuming that they will go beyond the mandate and capacity of any single agency, it will be preferable for the IASC to organize these initial responses in a concerted action plan sooner rather than later, even if such a plan is incomplete because of the larger uncertainties.<sup>9</sup>

The initial UN Regional Flash Appeal on 7 March amounted already to USD 160 million and focused on alleviating the immediate humanitarian crisis over a three-month period (March – June 2011). This and subsequent appeals and activity brought together UN and non-UN agencies as well as NGOs.

## **2. Repatriation and Redeployment**

Countries of origin face challenges of accommodating sudden and large-scale return of migrant workers. In addition to transport home and initial reception, planning and support will be necessary for finding employment for them, which will clearly be difficult given the scale of return, high unemployment and remaining post-global financial crisis effects in many countries. It can be anticipated that reception and adaptation locally will pose particular challenges to workers being suddenly repatriated after many years abroad. Given high unemployment as well as the likelihood that skills of returned migrant workers may not be in demand in local economies, exploration of short and medium-term redeployment abroad options may be a sole alternative.

## **3. Movement to Europe**

In February, March and April of this year, press reports and commentary by government officials across Europe spoke of “unprecedented flows of migrants seen to be arriving on the EU’s southern shores” following the upheaval across North Africa and “there is a fear that more will come.” Deterrence and control measures were dramatically stepped up in the Mediterranean, notably interception at sea, “containment” and return efforts. (See European Policy Centre (EPC) Commentary, “Migratory flows from North Africa: challenges for the EU,” 7 March 2011). As the EPC put it, the situation posed three challenges the EU and its Member States had to cope with: the capacity to protect their borders; the capacity to respect the human rights of those fleeing persecution; and the capacity to exercise solidarity.

While there is already evidence of a capacity to react when it comes to securing borders, the ability to respect human rights and to provide meaningful solidarity with countries in North African and with other EU Member States was strikingly less evident. As noted elsewhere, Tunisia (with total population of 6

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<sup>7</sup> Statement by Juan Somavia, DG of the ILO on the situation in Libya, 24 February 2011  
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/speeches/somavia/2011/libya.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, International Labour Conference, 91<sup>st</sup> Session, 2003, Report III(1B), Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, *General Survey of the reports concerning the Protection of Wages Convention (No. 95) and the Protection of Wages Recommendation (No. 85), 1949*, ILO, Geneva, 2003, para. 391.

<sup>9</sup> Email broadcast alert 27 February 2011 from Robert Smith, Chief, Consolidated Appeal Process Section, UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

million) received nearly one million arrivals, Egypt 200,000, Niger 100,000. In contrast, some 44,000 arrived to European shores over three months, about 3% of total cross border displacement.

#### 4. Addressing Causes

While migratory implications for Europe have certainly been exaggerated, it does not require a crystal ball to anticipate that unless urgent measures are taken to provide for employment for millions of workers in Egypt and Tunisia, the pressures for outmigration will multiply. While justification for rapid employment recovery is on its own merits, it is neither accurate nor advisable to ignore the international displacement features and implications.

As noted above, unemployment in Tunisia has nearly tripled since January. With economies in tourist origin and export destination countries getting worse rather than better, the outlook for reversing this trend is not optimistic.

Already last February, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström indicated that EU assistance would target development efforts to support income and jobs in Tunisia. She noted that action would also include the possibility for Tunisians to come legally to the EU (see below).

However, the reality of recent efforts suggests a large emphasis in immediate assistance offered is on enhancing border policing and sea-side control of maritime departures of would-be emigrants.

#### IV. MIGRATION, CRISIS AND THE RULE OF LAW

The combination of generalized economic crisis and political upheaval has exacerbated abuse, violent violations of human rights, and more generally, acute exploitation of migrants.

History tells us that migration has been an essential ingredient of growth and development of many countries. However, unless regulated by appropriate laws and regulations, it entails high costs in violations of rights, in social disruption, in reduced productivity, and lost opportunities for economic development and welfare.

##### Law and policy framework

Migration will remain a central aspect of crisis response as well as construction of democratic governance and viable economies able to provide decent work and well-being.

It will have to be governed under the rule of law, with involvement of key stakeholders in government and civil society –particularly employers and worker unions since it is all about work and employment.

Central elements of the agenda include:

- Anchoring a ***standards-based approach to migration***, in national law and practice, to ensure equality of treatment in law, to protect migrant –and national–workers, and to set accountable means for international cooperation.
- Consolidating ***institutional mechanisms for policy formulation and administration of labour migration***
- Putting in place ***informed and transparent labour migration systems*** to meet measured, legitimate labour needs –in context of a vision for integration and development
- Ensuring labour and skills mobility to achieve implementation of the ***global employment agenda***.
- Providing ***vocational education and training*** to meet national needs and international demand.
- ***Enforcing minimum decent work standards in all sectors of activity***, to suppress abuse of workers and reduce incentives for irregular employment.
- ***Enacting and implementing a plan of action against discrimination and xenophobia***.

Grappling with governance of the huge and complex migratory aspects of the Mediterranean region means addressing humanitarian, human rights, refugee, labour, and economic dimensions. It also may involve addressing trafficking of migrants and rescue at sea. Each of these has legal dimensions and

sets of applicable international standards and practices. Governing, regulating, responding cannot be based on one area of international law. Rather, effective responses require reference to several areas of international law: Humanitarian Law, Human Rights instruments, the Refugee Convention, International Labour Standards. As well, elements of Protocols on Trafficking and Smuggling of migrants and the Maritime Law are called to bear.

Evidently, considerable urgent work is on the agenda to utilize these standards and their complementarities as well as recognizing distinctions among them and constraints of each. Certainly in each country concerned, but also at the regional and international levels. Identifying applicable law and working out complementarity and actual application remains a tall task, one this Institute and actors here may be well placed to take on.

## **V. ARENAS AND OPTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION**

An outline of urgent issues to address illustrates both the points above and suggests an agenda for urgent practical action, both in and among countries concerned. The ILO, OHCHR, UNHCR as well as IOM and other institutions should be fully implicated, alongside, in full cooperation with and supported by member States.

UN agencies concerned have: protection mandates invoked by these circumstances; (2) expertise and experience to offer guidance and support for rule of law, democratic construction and economic reconstruction measures in affected countries (e.g. ILO expertise in employment and decent work crucial to reducing displacement pressures); and (3) extensive experience in recent crisis situations in joint UN/international approaches to recovery and reconstruction in "complex emergencies".

### **1. Violence and Abuse of Migrant Workers**

Need remains to prevent violence and abuse against migrant workers, to support good practice in emergency evacuations, and to plan for post-evacuation reintegration, employment and/or redeployment.

**Action should include:**

- contributing expertise to joint emergency response and advocacy to stop violence targeting migrants
- joint UN-coordinated emergency response to support planning and preparation for post-evacuation protection and accommodation measures.

### **2. Responding to Spontaneous "Mixed Flows" of displaced workers/Migrant Workers to Neighbouring Countries:**

- special circumstances of countries bordering Libya: Egypt, Niger, Tunisia
- neighboring countries/regions receiving substantial flows:
  - Turkey
  - Greece, Italy, Malta, Cyprus
  - Other European Union/Schengen countries

**Action should include:**

- coordinating with concerned international agencies and contributing expertise to assessments, planning, emergency resolution and advocacy with concerned governments.
- devising response modules in employment competencies:
  - assessment and processing of displaced worker skills and qualifications
  - research and identification of employment or redeployment possibilities:
    - In arrival countries/regions, home countries, other regions
  - identifying temporary work options locally when and where rapid redeployment is impossible

### **3. Post-evacuation Integration and Redeployment**

Egypt, Tunisia and Niger – faced with huge cross-border arrivals and returns need urgently integration and employment measures to reintegrate or redeploy tens of thousands of displaced workers. This is especially acute for newly established and disorganized transitional governments with weak legitimacy, capacity and resources. Similar issues arise now in Libya and additional challenges can be anticipated in coming months in Syria and Yemen, if not elsewhere.

Measures to employ or redeploy tens of thousands of returnees are still few in countries such as the Philippines and Sri Lanka that received huge influxes of repatriated workers and families without preparation.

International agencies, ILO in particular, have as yet non-deployed standards, knowledge, experience and models as well as access to qualified personnel to advise and support affected governments and their constituents on return migrant worker assessment, reintegration, employment and/or redeployment.

**Action** components would include:

- compiling data, expertise and practical experiences into reintegration advisory modules
- fielding rapid assessment teams (as and where welcomed by member governments)
- delivering advisory services – likely primarily to labour ministries and social partners – addressing job identification/placement, seeking redeployment options, and operations planning, organization and coordination.

#### **4. Guidance and Support for Medium-term Economic and Employment Stabilization in Post-“revolution” Transition Situations**

The repatriation of displaced overseas workers exacerbates crises of unemployment and economic paralysis in Egypt and Tunisia; this is a dimension compelling application of knowledge, standards and experience only ILO can bring. EU Home Affairs Commissioner Malmström’s earlier perspective on Tunisia may be instructive:

*A medium-term strategy must also be further developed. ... Looking at a more structural intervention, we should explore the possibility of better targeting EU assistance, for example by promoting projects able to support income and job generating activities in the regions of Tunisia. ... More broadly, a coherent approach to supporting the political and economic development in Tunisia needs to include possibilities for these people to come to the EU legally, as well as the exchange of goods, services, and know-how.<sup>10</sup>*

**Action** on this aspect should include:

- compiling data, expertise and practical experiences regarding the international mobility aspects and dimensions – import of remittances, current deployment, repatriation numbers and skills, etc.
- identification of options for external as well as internal worker deployment, particularly of repatriated migrant workers
- fielding rapid assessment teams on the above tasks
- delivering advisory services to labour ministries and social partners addressing job identification/placement, redeployment options, and planning, organization and coordination.

## **VI FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

The “Arab Spring,” now perhaps better characterized as an Arab wintergter erupted across the part of the world where labour mobility and migrant labour comprise the vast majority of the workforce in many countries. Migrant workers are also a very significant part – whether inside or abroad – of the workforces and economies of virtually all other countries in the region.

<sup>10</sup> Cecilia Malmström, Immigration flows – Tunisia situation, European Parliament Plenary Session Strasbourg, 15 February 2011, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/106&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

This crisis – or crises – reflect “maturation” of tensions, inequalities and exploitation that have been accentuated in this stage of globalization. Processes leading to the *revolutions* in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya have matured in other countries in the region, particularly Bahrain, Syria and Yemen, where migrants number in the millions or comprise a huge proportion of the workforce.

These crises with labour mobility features at the forefront are the substance of core challenges today in the world of work. The emergency responses as well as measures for transition and reconstruction will define the future conditions of work, of industrial relations and of social protection across the Arab world. A large component is bound up with labour mobility and migrant workers.

Responses that build the rule of law, enhance democracy and ultimately stimulate conditions for economic and social well-being can only be guaranteed by application of principles and standards of humanitarian, human rights, refugee and labour law. Together and complementarily.

An immediate step is analysis of applicability, complementarity and implementation of these areas of law to support governments in achieving viable, effective and sustainable governance. This is especially so regarding the crucial migration dimensions of crises... and their resolution.

In the spirit and model of convening this important Seminar, the International Institute for Humanitarian Law could take next steps of facilitating ongoing dialogue and analysis, and convene a subsequent working seminar-- next time on another side of the Mediterranean!

The importance of UN and civil society involvement cannot be underestimated; fortunately it has been at least symbolically represented here.

In contrast, lack of full engagement on these migration aspects under the rule of law –by governments- - will diminish hopes for achieving a democratic future throughout the Mediterranean and MENA regions.

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**This paper reflects the professional specialist perspective of the authors.**

## ANNEXES

**Table 1.A: Estimates of Migrants in Libya by Countries of Origin (as at early March 2011)**

Source countries	Estimated stock of migrants
Egypt	1.5 million
Thailand (workers and students)	325,000
Pakistan	80,000
Sudan	59,000
Bangladesh	more than 50,000
China	more than 30,000
Tunisia	30,000
Philippines	26,000
Turkey	25,000
India	18,000
Viet Nam	about 10,000
Italy	6,000
Ukraine	about 3,000
Nepal	2,000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1,500
Republic of Korea (South Korea)	about 1,300
United States	600
France	500-550
Russian Federation	more than 500
United Kingdom	500
Canada	344

Sources:

- “PH, other nations seek int'l help for trapped workers in Libya”, Agence France Presse / ABS-CBNnews.com, 2 March 2010, <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/global-filipino/03/02/11/ph-other-nations-seek-intl-help-trapped-workers-libya>
- Embassy sources in Cairo, cited in UN, *Regional Flash Appeal for the Libyan Crisis*, 5 March 2011
- “Libya protests: Evacuation of foreigners continues”, BBC News, 25 February 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12552374>

**Table 2.A: Departures of Algerians to Arab countries, registered at the borders, by country of destination, 2008**

Arab country of destination	Stock	Percentage of the total registered Algerian migrants in Arab countries
Tunisia	780,079	50.67
Saudi Arabia	111,942	7.27
Morocco	35,246	2.29
Libya	32,248	2.09
Egypt	22,136	1.44
Syria	14,966	0.97
UAE	14,778	0.96
Jordan	2,103	0.14
Lebanon	1,329	0.09

Source: Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM)

**Table 3.A: Employed Egyptians residing in Arab Countries, 2007**

Arab country of destination	Stock	Percentage of the total employed Egyptian migrants in Arab countries
Saudi Arabia	459,493	47.6
Kuwait	193,185	20.0
Jordan	148,671	15.4

UAE	110,095	11.4
Qatar	32,473	3.4
Oman	9,817	1.0
Lebanon	6,990	0.7
Bahrain	2,814	0.3
Yemen	860	0.1
Algeria	853	0.1
Syria	665	0.1

Source: Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM)

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