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**INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE ARAB REGION:
TRENDS AND POLICIES***

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*The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

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hand, and national statistical sources in the Palestinian Territory and Jordan, on the other.

According to the UN database, Jordan is a major receiver of migrants, with 2,224,890 immigrants representing 39% of its 5,703 million inhabitants (mid-2005). According to the national population census (1994) Jordan is a much smaller receiver, with 314,965 foreigners representing 7.6% of its 4,139,458 inhabitants at the time of the census, and 5.3% if only the 220,739 foreigners born outside Jordan, i.e. first-generation migrants, are counted. The difference is the result of refugees being all taken as immigrants by the UN. According to the UN database Jordan would count 1,801,115 refugees (mid-2005). Most of them are Palestinians (1,780,701 Palestinian refugees were registered in Jordan with the UNRWA on 31 March 2005). However,

countries will be estimated as stocks of immigrants in destination countries, i.e. in the rest of the world.

Data on immigrants can be collected by institutions of the host country (statistical offices, Ministries of the Interior, and a few other agencies), and by institutions of the origin country (consulates).

Data collected by institutions of the host country should ideally meet four conditions in order to provide a reliable picture of emigration from Arab countries.

Firstly, all countries in the world are potential places of destination for migrants from every single Arab country, so that statistics from all over the world are needed. In practice, only a few countries publish statistics on their foreign residents of Arab origin by 'detailed country of origin'. In particular, to date almost nothing has been published by statistical offices of the major Arab countries of immigration (Gulf States and Libya).

Secondly, statistics from different countries of destination should refer to standardised categories thus making it possible to aggregate data across countries, and across time. In practice however, categories in use in national statistics are not always constructed with a view to international comparison and aggregation.

Thirdly, because migration is a rapidly changing phenomenon, statistical sources need to be regularly updated. This condition is met only by 'population registers', a system of continuous recording of vital events and changes of residence for all individuals in the resident population. This system is only in use in a few European countries: Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, and to a certain extent

countries of origin or all countries of destination, and are subject to great variations according to sources.⁸

From what precedes, it emerges that Arab states might be origin countries to some 10–15 million first-generation emigrants today, representing some 3.3–4.9% of their aggregated population,¹⁰ or just over a world average estimated at 3.2%.

The following features emerge from Tables 1 and 2, and a few other sources.

1.2.1 Most Arab emigrants are bound either for Europe or the Arab region

According to data provided by five origin countries, Europe is the single largest destination of first-generation Arab emigrants, and hosts 59% of all such emigrants worldwide (4,897,462 out of 8,347,869; see Table 2). The Arab oil countries, i.e. the Gulf States and Libya, constitute the second largest destination, with the rest of the world, mainly North America, ranking far behind. This is a partial result, established on the basis of data from five countries which do not represent the others. Considering that most emigrants from the missing countries are bound for destinations outside Europe, mainly the Gulf States (Yemen, Syria, Jordan) and Libya (Sudan), the actual share bound for Europe is much lower.

Destination varies with origin. Migrants from the Maghreb are predominantly destined for Europe. According to data from destination countries (see Table 1), France is the largest single destination country for Arab first-generation emigrants (1,733,441 end-1999), followed by Spain (566,967 at end-2005), Italy (347,156 in 2003), and Germany (222,807 in 2002). Morocco is the first country of origin of Arab immigrants into the EU (1,812,510 according to destination countries data (see Table 1), and 2,616,871 in 2004 according to Moroccan consular registers (see Table 2). Algeria ranks second (789,459; 991,796), Tunisia third (358,926; 695,765), and Egypt fourth (127,060; 436,000).

which are integration-oriented in Europe and North-America, but generally not in Arab countries (see Section 2.2).

1.2.2 Three Arab countries with over 2.5 million nationals currently abroad

The Palestinian Territory, Morocco and Egypt have more than 2.5 million of their nationals currently residing abroad. Algeria (possibly Yemen, Sudan?) counts more than one million nationals abroad, and Tunisia and Lebanon (possibly Iraq?) more than half a million. If emigrants are expressed as a percentage of the total population in the country, the Palestinian Territory ranks higher than all other countries, with more nationals abroad than at home. Lebanon ranks next, with nationals abroad representing 16% of its population. All the other countries report less than 10% of nationals abroad.

Populations of nationals abroad shown in Tables 1 and 2 are all the result of recent migration movements: with the passing of time, descendents of migrants no longer keep the nationality of their migrant ancestor, even though part of them could still reclaim it. If ancient migration were taken into account, Lebanon and Syria could claim much larger ‘expatriate communities’, but these consist of individuals with a Lebanese, Syrian or Ottoman ancestry rather than actual citizenship.

Algeria is another case of a country with high emigration rates in the 1960s, followed by their drastic reduction during the successive two decades. Despite the resumption of Algerian emigration during the 1990s—a period of civil unrest in the country—the

On the destination side, the comparison between an ‘old’ destination country (the Netherlands), and a ‘new’ one (Spain) provides additional information. In the Netherlands over the period January 1996 to January 2005, the total population originating from MENA countries has increased by 199,337, from 529,566 in 1996 to 728,933 in 2005, i.e. an annual growth rate of 3.6%. Two thirds of the increase are due to second-generation dual citizens (i.e. non-migrants born in the Netherlands), but one third to additional first-generation migrants.¹⁵ In Spain the number of Arab nationals has been multiplied by a record 4.6 during the last seven years, representing an annual rate of growth of 21.9%, with Morocco ranking average (see Table 7).

(Table 7: Nationals from selected Arab countries residing in Spain 31/12/1998–31/12/2005)

A combination of internal factors (demographic pressure at working ages, unemployment and low return to skills) and external factors (call for migrant workers in other parts of the world, particularly Europe), makes a continuation of migratory pressures a likely scenario in the coming years. However, it is not certain that pressure will transform into actual migration, since the destination countries of Arab migrants, whether within, or outside the Arab region, are all tightening barriers to migration.

1.2.4 A majority of low-skilled migrant workers

Economic migrants from Mediterranean Arab countries in Europe and North America are predominantly semi-skilled or unskilled workers, as illustrated below by their distribution according to occupation (see Table 8):

- Legislators, senior officials and managers: 11.4%
- Professionals: 4.4%
- Technicians and associate professionals: 8.1%
- Clerks: 10.7%
- Service workers and shop and market sales workers: 18.0%
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even though the exact nature of data collection, processing, adjustment and publication of these estimates is rarely clarified and thus cannot be validated.

Looking at the most recently published data, one can assume that trends in migration have not changed notably since the aftermath of the 1990–1991 Gulf War, which had provoked considerable disruption among migrant communities in the Gulf region. The overall dependency in immigrant labour is still unchanged, as is the predominance of men, of low-skilled workers, and of non-Arabs, mostly Asians, among migrants.

In Saudi Arabia, the very same proportion of non-nationals was found at the two population censuses of 1992 and 2004, 27.4% and 27.1% respectively,¹⁷ as well as the same proportion of women among immigrants (29.6% and 30.5% respectively) indicating that there has not been any significant feminisation of migration, contrary to previous expectations. Domestic work remains the single most important profession among women migrants in the GCC region (as in other countries of the Mashreq, such as Lebanon and Jordan).¹⁸

The Saudi Labour Force Survey of 2002 found that the bulk of immigrant workers still have low levels of skills (54.1% with no education or only primary education, compared with 32.9% among Saudi workers), and particularly women immigrant workers (66.7% with no education or only primary education and only 9.6% with university education, compared with respectively 6.4% and 51.1% among Saudi working women).¹⁹

In all GCC countries Arabs are currently a minority of migrants: 38% in Saudi Arabia and 46% in Kuwait,²⁰ around 25% in Qatar and 10% in the UAE, and less than 10% in

in an illegal situation until the second broker finds that worker a job.²⁸ In the United Arab Emirates, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs reports that the number of illegal immigrants in the country may be as high as 300,000,²⁹ and in Saudi Arabia, some 700,000 deportations of irregular migrants would take place every year.

Illegal immigration is not only occurring in traditional countries of immigration, but also in most traditional countries of emigration, which are currently turning into new countries of immigration. They are still major senders while at the same time they have become significant receivers of migrants. The immigration they receive is largely made of 'transit migrants',³⁰ i.e. persons who were initially trying to reach a more distant destination—in particular, Europe—but found themselves stuck at the gate of their intended destination because of restrictive policies regarding the admission of aliens and reinforced border controls. This immigration is commonly considered unwanted, because it challenges local economies that are already plagued by unemployment and labour surpluses, and puts pressure on administrative systems that are better adapted to deal with the emigration of nationals than with the

and Libya, every country now has two policies at the same time, one a regarding its expatriates and the other regarding immigrants.

In what follows we argue that there is less contrast between Arab countries with regard to either immigration or emigration policies, than between policies dealing with emigration on one hand, and those dealing with immigration, on the other. Schematically, all Arab countries that have significant expatriate communities are willing to mobilise these communities for national purposes and have a positive vision of emigration. At the same time, all Arab countries, whether predominantly senders or receivers, are developing increasingly restrictive policies of immigration. At the risk of being too schematic, one can say that, whatever the country, emigration is predominantly viewed as part of the solution, and immigration as part of the problem

2.1 Emigration policies

Yemen is another country where emigration has constantly been promoted in recent

important the emigration of highly-skilled workers has become (Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan) no specific public policies have been designed to tackle the issue.

positions. Arab governments are willing to channel the progressive economic empowerment of their expatriates and global élites.

Because remittances and in-kind transfers are sent to migrants' families, they often reach the same regions that migrants come from, i.e. those most in need of development resources. All ministries or state agencies dedicated to developing links with emigrant communities work to maximise the financial flows received from migrant communities, as a way to help them contribute to the economic and human development of their region or community of origin, by facilitating financial transfers made by emigrants and inciting them to invest at home.

A range of banking and investment reforms have been adopted by most countries with a view to stimulating the growth of remittances, to sustaining the expansion of the private sector, and to favouring the inflows of direct investments made by nationals residing abroad. In several countries, exchange controls were relaxed and current accounts in convertible local currencies were allowed; banks of origin countries set up branches in major receiving countries.

To date, neither the impact of these institutions on the volume of remittances, nor the role played by remittances on the development of local recipient economies, or the

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trends that the Saudi government formulated a policy of 'saudisation' in the mid-1990s.⁴⁰

Saudisation consists in banning the employment of foreigners in certain professions, in requiring private firms to increase the share of Saudi nationals among their

and Tunisia in 2004,⁴⁵ have adopted new laws on the entry, residence, and exit of foreigners, in response to illegal migration from and through their territory. These laws prescribe severe punishments for smugglers and illegal migrants, but contain no provision for the protection of foreign migrants against mistreatment by employers or the administration. These laws have sparked off a heated public debate and attracted harsh criticism from human rights organisations. It was argued that they do not provide a sustainable solution to the problem of illegal migrants from Sub-Saharan countries) and that they marginalise and repress illegal migrants, at the risk of aggravating their humanitarian plight. It was also argued that these laws were only adopted in response to pressure from Europe/the EU.

However, good relations with Europe are not the only reason that the governments of the Maghreb participate into the Euro-Med efforts to prevent illegal migration.⁴⁶ This participation also addresses their concerns regarding domestic employment and security. The agreement between the European Union and its Mediterranean partners is only partial insofar as only the latter consider that illegal and legal migration need to be linked. For governments of the Maghreb, development is the best preventive policy to combat illegal migration. They insist that illegal migration is a result of underdevelopment combined with closed borders, and that legal labour migration works for development, through the financial and non-tangible transfers made by migrants. These governments consider that their best approach would be global, whereby preventing illegal migration and reopening channels of legal economic migration are two inseparable and complementary facets of any coherent migration policy.

2.2.2 Absence of integration projects

Migration often starts as a temporary move, but ends up in a permanent settlement. When guest workers become settlers, the question of their integration in host societies arises. Integration can be broadly defined as the process by which migrants are able to participate in the building of a cohesive society respectful of comparable rights and obligations. For example, the European Commission has recommended that immigrants in European countries gradually acquire core rights and assume obligations, so that they be treated in the same way as nationals of their host state, even if they are not naturalised. In this vision, integration includes the right to family reunification, access to work and equal treatment in the workplace, the promotion of ‘civic citizenship’ guaranteeing a number of rights and obligations, the protection of immigrants by anti-discrimination legislation and policy tools and, in many cases, the opportunity to acquire citizenship of the host country.

No modern Arab country has any project of this sort. Integrating foreigners into society, be they Arabs or non-Arabs, is not on any agenda. The unwillingness to integrate migrants has become particularly clear in the Gulf after the crisis of 1990–91.

The 1990-91 Gulf War was the first large-scale military conflict to take place at a major crossroads of international labour migration. It threw millions of legal migrants on the road of return. It was an opportunity for major labour importing countries to

de synthèse CARIM-AS 2004/01, http://www.carim.org/Publications/CARIM-AS04_01-Elmadmad.pdf

⁴⁵ Hafidha Chékir and Farah Ben Cheik (2005), *Tunisie: la dimension juridique des migrations internationales*, in Fargues (ed.) 2005a.

⁴⁶ Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2005), *Europe’s Migration Policy in the Mediterranean: An Overview*, REF

affirm policies of indigenisation for their labour force. After the political crisis these countries were faced with an economic crisis. The price of oil, which had only increased slightly during the war, then fell progressively until 2000. The bill of post-war reconstruction had to be paid with oil income on the decline. For the first time, GCC nationals were faced with a drop in purchasing power and the emergence of unemployment among graduates. Young generations of the oil bust were entering the labour markets armed with diplomas but with no guarantee of being hired, while their fathers, the first oil boom generation had mostly ignored labour markets. This is the context in which policies for transferring jobs from non-nationals to nationals were formulated.

The entire concept of labour was affected. During the first oil boom, labour was seen as a means for transforming oil income into welfare and capital. Work was assured by non-nationals, but the capital it produced was kept by nationals, through the sponsorship system: in other words, labour imports were responding to a strategy of capital accumulation. Revealing the vulnerability of economies built on imported labour, the crisis of 1990–91 has led to a political reappraisal of national labour.

Table 1: Emigrants from Mediterranean Arab countries in the EU member states and in some other countries, according to statistics of destination countries - Most recent data*

Country of Destination	Definition**	Country of Origin								
		Algeria	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Palestine	Syria	Tunisia	Total
Austria	B	330	4721	291	382	515	118	583	1194	8134
Belgium	B	7221	793		1045	83631		815	3263	96768
Cyprus	A	19	2609	222	1386	33	182	1638	19	6108
Czech Rep.	B	366	130	134	191	105	72	315	196	1509
Denmark	B	456	637	652	5361	3226	0	1037	508	11877
Estonia	B	1	1		1	1				4
Finland	B	225	210	132	95	613	10	134	183	1602
France	C	685558	15974	933	33278	725782	468	10826	260622	1733441
Germany	B	17308	14477	10435	47827	79838		28679	24243	222807
Greece	B	267	7448	672	1277	526		5552	231	15973
Hungary	B	216	178	131	90	23		487	23	1148
Italy	B	15750	40879	2011	3333	223661	389	2505	58628	347156
Ireland										
Latvia	A	8	8	9	88	6		16		135
Lithuania	B	2	3	14	119					138
Luxembourg	B	103	27	2	36	252	1	1	138	560
Malta										
Netherlands	A	4013	10982	833	2861	168400		6663	4117	197869
Poland										
Portugal	B	135	115	88	187	778	11	81	54	1449
Slovakia										
Slovenia	B									
Spain	B	46278	2501	1297	1442	511294		2579	1566	566957
Sweden	B	531	662	594	2238	1475		4801	871	11172
UK	A	10672	24705	3105	10454	12351	2490	4167	3070	71014
EU		789459	127060	21555	111691	1812510	3741	70879	358926	3295821
Algeria	B		5943	1496	391	18661	3791	723	8389	39394
Jordan	B	205	124566		2818	370	92131	31805	208	252103
Morocco	B	14392	780	401	560		392	1054	1860	19439
Tunisia	B	9612	672			6363	652	416		17715
Med-Arab		24209	131961	1897	3769	25394	96966	33998	10457	328651
Armenia	A				90			246		336
Australia	A		33370	2390	71310		2660	6730		116460
Canada	A	19095	35975	4880	67230	24640	5455	15680	4780	177735
Iceland	B	9	9	9	4	63		10	10	114
Iran	B									0
Japan	B	98	754	89	42	195		98	128	1404
New Zealand										

Table 1. (continued)

* This table contains only those countries which provide census data on foreign residents by detailed country of

Table 3: Comparison between numbers of migrants counted by their origin country in the Arab region

Table 4: Numbers of Moroccan migrants according to which country counts

Country of Destination	Country where migrants are counted	
	Destination Country	Difference (Origin - Destination)
	n = 10,015,685	28,154,725 - 10,015,685 = 18,139,040

Table 5: Refugee population by country of asylum / origin

Country \ Year	by country of asylum		by country of origin	
	1994	2003	1994	2003
Algeria	219.1	0.0	20.7	11.7
Bahrain	0.0	0.3		
Djibouti	33.4	234.0	18.1	0.5
Egypt (1)	7.2	0.0	0.5	5.7
Iraq (2)	119.6	134.2	749.8	368.6
Jordan	0.6	1.2		
Kuwait (3)	30.0	1.5		
Lebanon	1.4	2.5	15.7	24.9
Libya	2.0	11.9		
Mauritania	82.2	0.5	68.0	30.5
Morocco	0.3	2.1		
Palestinian Territory			82.6	427.9
Qatar	0.0	0.0		
Saudi Arabia (4)	18.0	240.8		
Somalia	0.4	0.4	631.4	402.3
Sudan	727.2	138.2	405.1	606.2
Syria	40.3	3.7	7.1	20.3
Tunisia	0.0	0.1		
United Arab Emirates	0.4	0.2		
Yemen	48.3	61.9		
Arab Countries	1,330.3	833.5	1,999.1	1,898.7
World Total	15,733.7	9,680.3	15,733.7	9,680.3

Table 6: Moroccan population residing abroad according to consular records 1993-2004

Country of registration	1993	2004	Annual rate of growth %
Europe			
France	678917	1113176	4.50%
Spain	65847	423933	16.93%
Netherlands	164546	300332	5.47%
Italy	91699	298949	10.74%
Belgium	145363	293097	6.38%
Germany	85156	102000	1.64%
United Kingdom	25000	35000	3.06%
Switzerland	5517	11500	6.68%
Sweden	5500	10000	5.43%
Russia	-	8687	-
Denmark	4622	6300	2.82%
Norway	3400	6300	5.61%
Other	-	7597	-
Total Europe	1279558	2616871	6.50%
Arab Countries			
Libya	102413	120000	1.44%

Table 7: Nationals from selected Arab countries residing in Spain 31/12/1998 - 31/12/2005

Table NUMBER: Nationals from selected Arab countries residing in Spain - January 2006	1998	2005	Change 1998- 2005	Annual rate of growth %
Algeria	5,924	46,278	40,354	29.4
Egypt	799	2,501	1,702	16.3
Morocco	111,043	511,294	400,251	21.8
Tunisia	528	1,566	1,038	15.5
Jordan	696	1,297	601	8.9

Table 8. (continued)											
Jordan	6	143	6		235	96			1262		1748
Spain	118	35	101	76	115	28	114	35	0	2	624
Tunisia	84	78	28	22	18	3	24	9	8		274
USA	10665			2600	7785	30	2045	3940			27065
Total	12363	1361	970	3278	9803	1342	2203	4589	1355	2	37266
Canada	470	1070	270	305	655	275	25	105	10		3185
France	5304	5862	14357	13737	21443	319	646.27.8(47)17e	80.1(14)15.8(0)15.8(4).9(2)-8133	

Table 9: Migrant population aged 15 and over originating from Mediterranean Arab countries, according to country of residence, country of origin and level of education

Country of origin	Country of residence	Level of Education	
		Below primary or primary	

Table 10: Numbers of immigrants in Arab countries according to national sources and UN estimates

	National data (most recent census / survey)		Difference UN / National
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