

Egyptians Risk All in Deadly Sea Crossing to Europe

CAIRO (Middle East Eye) – Romany, a former wood supplier in Egypt, found himself boarding an unseaworthy boat measuring eight meters in length along with 48 others when he crossed the most dangerous sea border in the world: the Central Mediterranean.

After his business went bust, and with a family of five children to feed, he sold everything he owned before crossing the border to Libya and then headed out to sea.

Middle East Eye spoke to Romany and two other men who had recently made the dangerous crossing from Egypt to Libya, and then to Italy.

They spoke from a small migrant shelter in Milan via Shukri, an interpreter and Egyptian migrant himself.

“There was a moment when the waves were too high and then people really lost hope... they were saying their prayers,” Romany told MEE.

“And now I’m in a shelter and looking for work... I have to work to get money to send to my children.

The two other men, Mohamed and Ahmed, had met in a detention centre in Musaid, Libya, in August 2022. They had both come from the city of Abnub on the east bank of the river Nile in southern Egypt. Mohamed said he was fleeing a tribal vendetta,



Migrants rescued in international waters off Libya watch crew members of civil sea rescue ship Sea-Watch 4 help other migrants, on 29 August 2020.

with blood feuds common in the poor, rural south.

Mohamed had managed to get a visa for Libya, while Ahmed resorted to a smuggling route and crossed the border by foot.

There was no respite on the Libyan side of the border, as the streets were lawless, gunshots filled the air and the threat of kidnapping loomed over them constantly. Mohamed threw his lot in with a smuggling network to get across the channel.

Prior to his departure, Mohamed was held for three months at a centre in the Libyan border town of Musaid, run by smugglers, and that is where he met Ahmed. The wait was excruciating, as it was haunted by the pervasive fear of police raids.

After months of waiting, they boarded a boat from Musaid in the dead of night. The rising sun revealed a decrepit shell measuring 25 meters in length, its rotten frame barely containing the 620 people aboard.

When they were far out at sea, the boat’s motor failed and panic set in. Some of the passengers demanded they return, others that they push on. Fights broke out. Finally, the decision was made to turn back and drop 100 people back on the shores of Libya.

“There was mayhem,” Mohamed recalled, “lots of us had been waiting for months in detention. People were shouting, I don’t care if I die, I’m not getting out.”

These men’s stories are not isolated incidents but part of a surge

in Egyptians fleeing their country via smuggling routes, into the war-torn streets of Libya and across the Central Mediterranean in flimsy dinghies.

In February 2022, Egyptian arrivals in Italy peaked, accounting for around every 1 in 3 disembarkations in Italy.

According to the most recent data from the European Union’s border agency Frontex, Egyptians were the most common nationality detected crossing the Central Mediterranean, accounting for 20 percent of the nationalities along the route over the first five months of 2022.

The three men sitting around an iPhone in a shelter in Milan were among the lucky ones who made it over a heavily militarized border and then across the deadly waters of the Central Mediterranean.

According to an IOM survey conducted between December 2021 and January 2022, most Egyptian migrants in Libya came from the country’s northeast, mainly originating from the Governorates of Minya, Assiut, Fayoum, and Beheira.

Dire poverty ran through the stories like a thread. A cost of living crisis has eroded an already threadbare safety net in Egypt, plunging an estimated 60 million people below the poverty line and forcing many of them over the border into Libya.

Iran...

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exchange and talks to return Washington back to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal.

Amir-Abdollahian said on Sunday that Iran believes an agreement on reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the nuclear deal is formally known, is “within reach”, but Tehran wants ongoing issues with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolved as a “red line” it will not cross.

Thousands...

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Expertise, blames the European Union for soaring energy prices. Inflation slightly dropped to 16.7% in Czechia in February from 17.5% a month earlier.

PRO also wants the Czech government to stop taking actions that are intended to reduce misinformation and fake news.

Ukraine was a key issue at Saturday’s demonstration, where the crowd called for a peaceful solution to the war. Some people had the letter “Z,” a symbol of the Russian military, on their bags. “Stop the war, stop NATO,” they chanted.

The Czech Republic has staunchly supported the government in Kyiv. The country has provided weapons for the Ukrainian military and taken in a half-million refugees.

Crisis...

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sector, with a dynamic start-up and scale-up ecosystem. The government recognizes that, given the importance of SVB to its customers, its failure could have a significant impact on the liquidity of the tech ecosystem.”

On Saturday, around 210 start-up founders and leaders signed an open letter to Hunt, warning that “the majority of us as tech founders are running numbers to see if we are potentially technically insolvent”.

The signatories said they employed more than 10,000 people and had raised venture funding totaling £3.5 billion.

“The majority of the most exciting and dynamic tech businesses bank with SVB and have no or limited diversity in where their deposits are held,” the letter said.

“This is a real moment of crisis for British start-ups,” said Dom Hallas, executive director of Coade, a lobby group representing UK-based tech companies. “Without a clear way forward by Monday the risk will grow — it’s critical that government has a plan in place by then.”

Signatories to the letter include executives from Tessian, Beamery, Curve and bit.bio, companies that have each raised funding in excess of \$100mn, as well as several smaller groups.

Daniel Shakhani, founder of Salary Finance and an investor in a series of companies that have received SVB funding, said: “This is a crisis that requires UK government involvement as it’s not clear what the outcome is going to be for the UK entity, which could be left orphaned if SVB US gets sold.”

Hephzi Pemberton, founder of data consultancy Equality Group, said that 90 per cent of its funds were frozen in SVB UK. “We are scrambling to make payroll for March and it will involve a lot of maneuvering to make it happen,” she said.

Post...

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Islamic Republic’s clout in West

Asia.

The American news agency called the deal a “breakthrough” which exposed the occupying regime’s divisions.

The agreement is one of the most “striking shifts” in Middle Eastern diplomacy over recent years and stirred “cautious optimism” in the region, it said.

The agreement has caused “disappointment” and “finger-pointing” in Israeli political circles, the report said.

The AP said while Netanyahu had made foreign policy boasts about the so-called “normalization deals” with United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan in 2020, and advertised them as part of a wider push to stand up against Iran’s influence in the region, Saudi Arabia’s decision to engage with Iran has “thrown cold water on those ambitions.”

The agreement rapprochement has left the occupying regime of Israel “largely alone” in its futile attempts for diplomatic isolation of Iran and threats of a unilateral military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities, it added.

Yoel Guzansky, an expert on the Persian Gulf at the Institute for National Security Studies, an Israeli think tank, said that the restoration of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia is “a blow to Israel’s notion and efforts in recent years to try to form an anti-Iran bloc in the region.”

“If you see the Middle East as a zero-sum game, a diplomatic win for Iran is very bad news for Israel,” he added.

Danny Danon, a Netanyahu ally and former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations who recently predicted a peace agreement with Saudi Arabia in 2023, said the agreement with Iran “is not supporting our efforts”.

Former prime minister Yair Lapid said the agreement marked “a full and dangerous failure of Israel’s foreign policy.”

Opposition lawmaker Gideon Saar mocked Netanyahu’s goal of formal ties with the kingdom. “Netanyahu promised peace with Saudi Arabia,” he wrote on social media. “In the end (Saudi Arabia) did it ... with Iran.”

Court...

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saying he had been provided with a device that would alert Swedish security officials to rescue him whenever he was in danger.

Chaab was arrested in November 2020 on the back of a set of “specialized and combined measures” by Iranian intelligence forces.

The Harkat al-Nazal terror outfit has been pushing to separate the southwestern province of Khuzestan — home to the country’s Arab population — from the rest of Iran by engaging in an armed conflict against the Iranian government.

In September 2018, it claimed responsibility for an attack on a military parade in Ahvaz, Khuzestan’s provincial capital, which martyred 25 people, including members of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and civilian bystanders, and injured more than 270 others.

France...

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demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of French people pressuring the government to back down.

Paris police said they had made 32 arrests after some protesters threw objects at their forces, with rubbish bins burned and windows broken.

“Human rights lectures of the self-proclaimed rights advocates are for others. They are stranger to them (their own human rights lectures). There are many of these examples in the US and Europe!” Kanaani wrote.

UK Persian Gulf War Veterans to Launch Compensation Claims

LONDON (Arab News) – British veterans of the Persian Gulf War suing the government over alleged anti-chemical weapons vaccine side effects have discovered a letter that could grant them the legal right to launch a major lawsuit against the UK Ministry of Defence, the Daily Telegraph has reported.

Members of the veteran group say they continue to suffer from the Persian Gulf War Syndrome, which causes chronic fatigue, joint pain, headaches and memory loss, among other symptoms.

About 17,000 of the 51,000 UK personnel who served

in the conflict have suffered symptoms associated with the syndrome, which veterans say began after they were administered vaccines designed to lessen the effects of chemical and biological weapons.

The veterans have sought to launch legal action against the government since the end of the war in 1991.

In 2004, more than 2,000 veterans launched a case for millions of pounds in compensation for Persian Gulf War Syndrome, but the case collapsed due to a lack of scientific evidence surrounding the disorder.

However, the newly uncovered letter by advisers to former prime minister John Major’s government could give the green light to new legal action.

The letter states that no time limit was to be placed on any court case launched following the conflict.

Several retired civil servants who served in Whitehall at the time of the war are also coming forward to help the veterans group launch the legal action.

The veterans’ legal team, led by Hilary Meredith-Beckham, founder of Hilary Meredith Solicitors, is set to file more than 200 compensation claims.

Meredith-Beckham, who has represented Persian Gulf War veterans since the end of the conflict, discovered the letter in her own archives.

She told the Telegraph: “We have a letter from the treasury solicitor dating back to 1997 in which they confirm that limitation — a legally specified period beyond which an action may be defeated — will not be raised as a defense.

“A legal remedy for those affected so long ago and still suffering is long overdue. It is time for the Ministry of Defence to honor its responsibilities to those who gave so much.”

Netanyahu Postpones Decision on Illegal Outpost

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has postponed a decision on the fate of an illegal outpost until after the fasting month of Ramadan.

Ramadan, the holiest month in Islamic calendar, is set to start later this month.

Israeli public broadcaster KAN, citing informed sources, said Netanyahu decided to postpone a decision on legalizing Evyatar outpost in the northern West Bank until after the Ramadan month.

According to the sources, Netanyahu’s decision was related to his

pledge to the U.S. administration not to build new settlements in the West Bank amid fears of escalating tensions with the Palestinians.

The outpost was built by Zionist settlers in May 2021 near the West Bank city of Nablus.

Zionist and Palestinian estimates

indicate that about 650,000 settlers are living in 164 settlements and 116 outposts in the West Bank, including in occupied East Al-Quds.

Under international law, all settlements in occupied territories are considered illegal.

Iraq Seizes Three Million Captagon Pills

BAGHDAD (MEMO) – Iraqi authorities say they have seized three million pills of Captagon, an amphetamine-type stimulant that has been sweeping the Middle East for years, near the Syrian border.

The pills had been hidden in apple crates “loaded onto a refrigerator truck” and discovered at the al-Qaim crossing between Syria’s Dayr al-Zawr province and western Iraq’s Anbar desert region, the Iraqi border authority said.

The truck driver had been arrested, the agency added in a statement.

A border authority official told AFP on

condition of anonymity that the shipment from Syria into Iraq contained Captagon pills produced by several manufacturers.

Iraqi security forces have intensified narcotics operations in recent months, with several high-profile drug seizures reported.

Iraq has served as a major conduit for traffickers of Captagon, which has its largest market in Persian Gulf Arab states.

The sale and use of drugs in Iraq has soared in recent years.

In June, Iraqi security forces said they had forced down a microlight aircraft near

the Kuwaiti border headed to the emirate with one million Captagon pills.

Weeks earlier, Iraqi police announced they had seized more than six million pills of the stimulant in a major drug bust.

Areas in central and southern Iraq have become major narcotic trafficking routes for drugs, including crystal methamphetamine.

The interior ministry’s anti-drug unit in December 2021 named the neighboring provinces of Basra and Maysan as the “leading southern provinces in terms of trafficking and consumption”.