

MIGRATION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN: Country Report and Migration Profile for Egypt

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Economic Collapse and Poverty Crisis

Egypt's economy is struggling, with inflation set to reach 35.7% by 2024 and multiple currency devaluations. The Egyptian pound has lost over 500% of its value since 2016, leading to rising food prices and increased poverty. Over 32 million Egyptians were living below the poverty line in 2018, and austerity measures such as cuts to fuel and bread subsidies have exacerbated the situation.

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Increase in Irregular Migration and Departures to Europe

Economic hardship has fuelled a surge in irregular migration, with 20,000 Egyptians arriving in Italy from Libya in 2022, almost triple the number from the previous year. Egyptians now account for 12% of arrivals in Greece and 6% in Italy. Many are departing via Libya due to Egypt's increased coastal security measures, and smuggling routes are shifting to the Greek islands of Crete and Gavdos.

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Egypt's Growing Role in EU Migration Agreements

The EU has intensified cooperation with Egypt on migration management, signing a €7.4 billion deal in 2024, including €200 million for border security. Egypt has also negotiated labour migration agreements with Italy and Greece, which aim to provide legal migration pathways while preventing irregular departures. However, Egypt faces pressure from the EU to tighten migration controls while balancing its domestic economic and political challenges.

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Refugee Influx and Stricter Asylum Policies

Egypt hosts over 800,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Sudan, Syria, South Sudan and Eritrea. The Sudanese refugee population has increased significantly as a result of the conflict in Sudan, reaching 519,000 by October 2024. However, new restrictions on Sudanese refugees, including fines for those who enter illegally, have led to 800 deportations this year. Public attitudes towards refugees have also turned negative, with increased reports of discrimination and social tensions.

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