

Migration Radar T3

Summary

September – December 2019

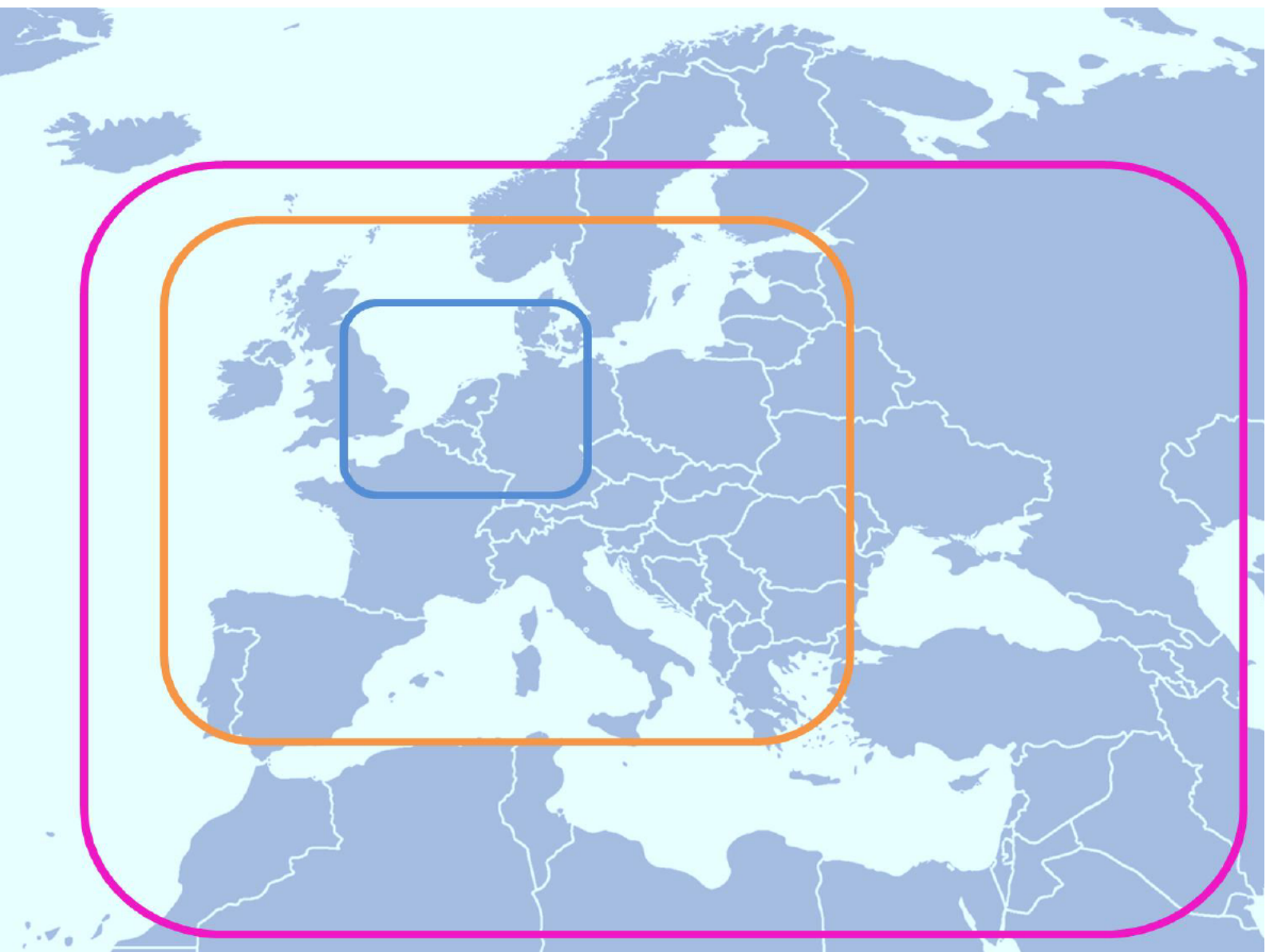
Development of
Asylum-related Migration



Koninklijke Marechaussee



Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst
Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid



Publisher's Information

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| Title | Migration Radar T3 Summary. Development of Asylum-related Migration. September-December 2019. |
| Contents | The migration radar summary is an analysis product that focuses on monitoring asylum-related migration to the Netherlands. For each issue, on the basis of a survey, five significant nationalities are selected that are discussed in more detail. For comparison, the data from the most recent four months have been supplemented with data from the previous four months and from the same period a year earlier. |
| Report | The Migration Radar summary is based on data from various databases (IND METis, IOM, UNHCR), media reports, public Frontex information and public country information from IND/TOELT. The Migration Radar summary is published once per quadrimester. |
| Summary | <p>The Migration Radar is an analysis product of the Research & Analysis Centre of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND/SUA/O&A), and was prepared through cooperation with the service centre TOELT (IND), the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (KMar), the Coordination and Crisis Management Department for the Organisations Cooperating in Migration (DRM), Migration Policy Department (DMB), Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V), Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ) and the Police.</p> <p>IND Research & Analysis Ministry of Justice and Security Immigration and Naturalisation Service Rijnstraat 8 2515 XP The Hague Postbus 16275 2500 BG The Hague</p> |

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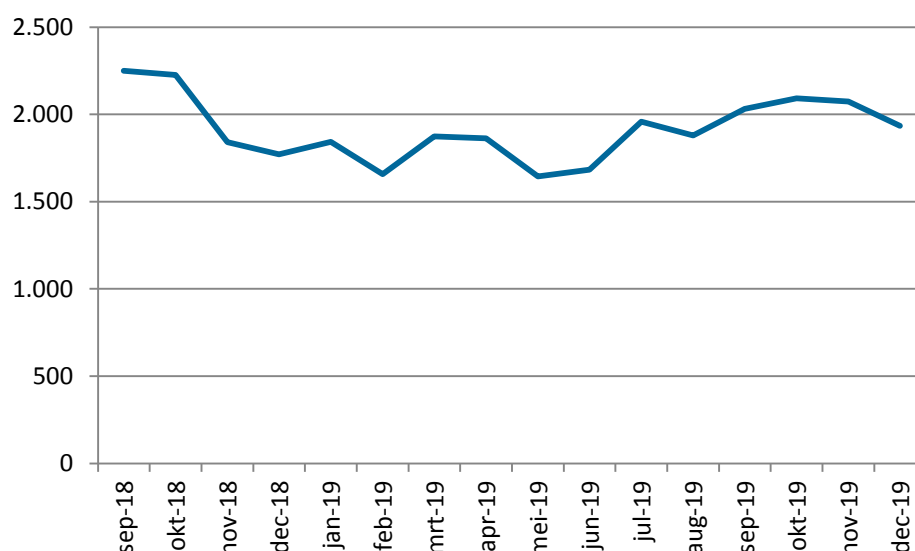
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1. Asylum applications

1.1 First asylum applications in the Netherlands

In the third quadrimester of 2019, 8,131 first asylum application were submitted in the Netherlands. The number of applications is therefore comparable to last year in the same period (+46, +0,6%) and has risen in comparison with the previous quadrimester (+965, +13%). Figure 1.1 shows that the influx increased slightly from September, but decreased again in December to the level of the beginning of the quadrimester.

Figure 1.1 Course of the total number of first asylum applications in the Netherlands from September 2018 to December 2019 inclusive.

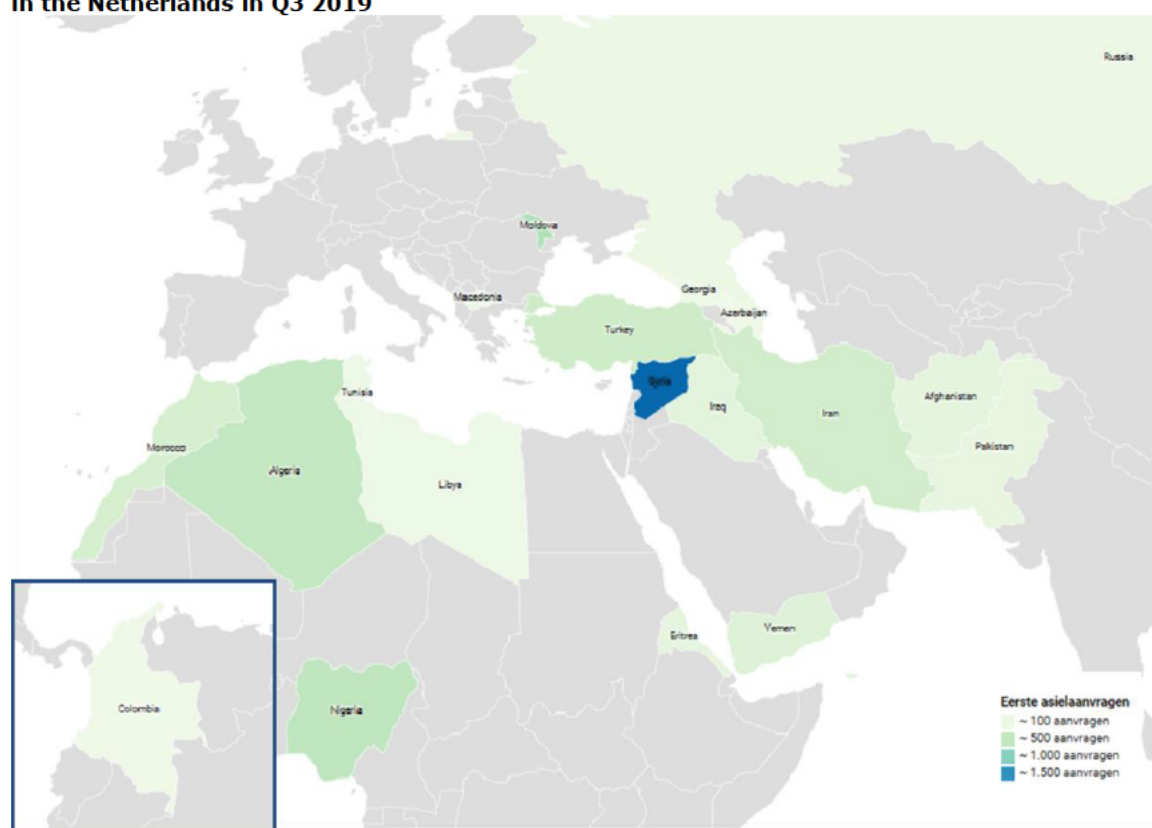


Source: Metis data extraction Sep 2018 to Dec 2019 inclusive, reference month Dec 2019. These data are exclusive of resettlement and relocation.

Figure 1.2 gives a visual representation of the influx of the top 10 nationalities. Most asylum applications in quadrimester 3 were submitted by [Syrians](#) (1,730), see Figure 1.3. This is a notable increase, compared with the last quadrimester (+607, +54%), as well as with last year in the same period (+731, +73%). The applications by [Moldovans](#) rose sharply in comparison with last quadrimester (+464, +265%) and last year in the same period (+241, +61%). The influx of Moldovans was exceptionally high mainly in October and November.

Applications by [Algerians](#) were lower last quadrimester, but in the third quadrimester again show the level from before (485). [Turkish](#) applications show a fairly stable influx since the beginning of 2019 (Q3 390 applications), but a decrease in comparison with last year in the same period (-143, -27%). [Nigerians](#) show a decrease in the third quadrimester for the first time in 2019, but the number of applications is still higher than last year in the same period (+235, +79%).

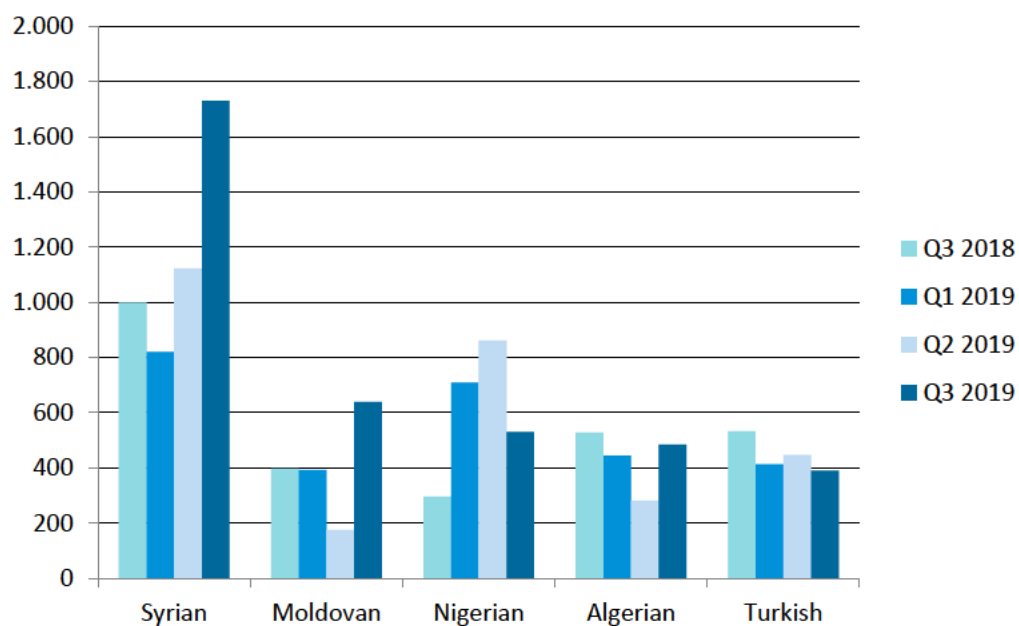
Figure 1.2 Visual representation of the top 20 nationalities that submitted first asylum applications in the Netherlands in Q3 2019



Source: Metis data extraction Sep 2018 to Dec 2019 inclusive, reference month Dec 2019. These data are exclusive of resettlement and relocation.

The figure below shows the development per quadrimester of the top 5 nationalities of first asylum applications in the Netherlands.

Figure 1.3 Development per quadrimester of the top 5 nationalities of first asylum applications in the Netherlands



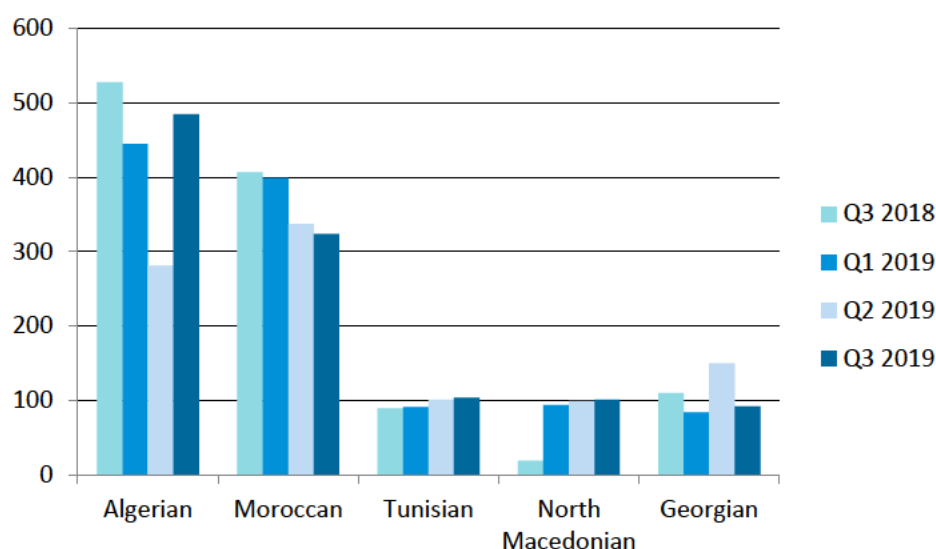
Source: Metis data extraction Sep 2018 to Dec 2019 inclusive, reference month Dec 2019. These data are exclusive of resettlement and relocation. Top 5 based on Q3 2019.

1.1.1 Asylum applications by persons coming from “safe countries of origin”

In the third quadrimester of 2019 two of the ten largest groups of asylum seekers came from countries on the list of safe countries of origin, *Algeria* and *Morocco* (see Figure 1.4).

The total number of first asylum applications in quadrimester 3 of nationals from safe countries (1,443) rose slightly in comparison with the preceding (+91, +7%), but decreased in comparison with a year ago in the same period (-392, -21%). The number of asylum applications by Algerians (485) shows an increase in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (+204, +73%), but a slight decrease in comparison with last year in the same period (-43, -8). The number of applications by Moroccans (324) is comparable to last quadrimester (-15, -4%) and less than last year in the same period (-83, -20%). The number of applications by *Tunisians* (104) remained almost the same in 2019, but shows an increase compared to last year (+15, +17%). The number of applications by North Macedonians (101) is comparable to last quadrimester (+2, +2%), but rose sharply in comparison with last year in the same period (+82, +432%). The number of applications by Georgians (92) decreased in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (-58, -39%) and in comparison with the preceding year in the same period (-18, -16%).

Figure 1.4 Development per quadrimester of the top 5 nationalities of first asylum applications in the Netherlands by nationals of safe countries of origin

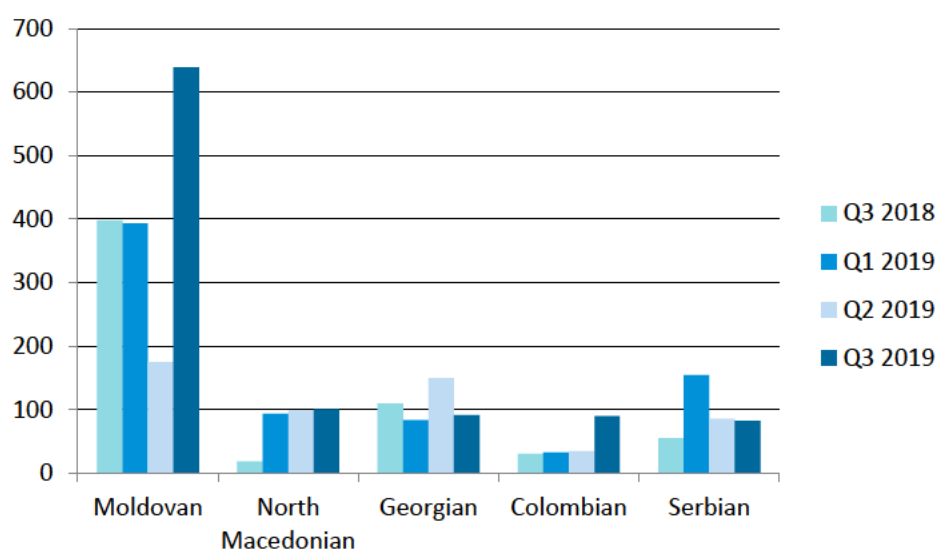


Source: Metis data extraction Sep 2018 to Dec 2019 inclusive, reference month Dec 2019. These data are exclusive of resettlement and relocation. Top 5 based on Q3 2019.

1.1.2 Asylum applications by citizens of visa-free countries

In the third quadrimester of 2019 one nationality was in the top ten nationalities coming from a visa-free country, namely *Moldovan* (see Figure 1.5).

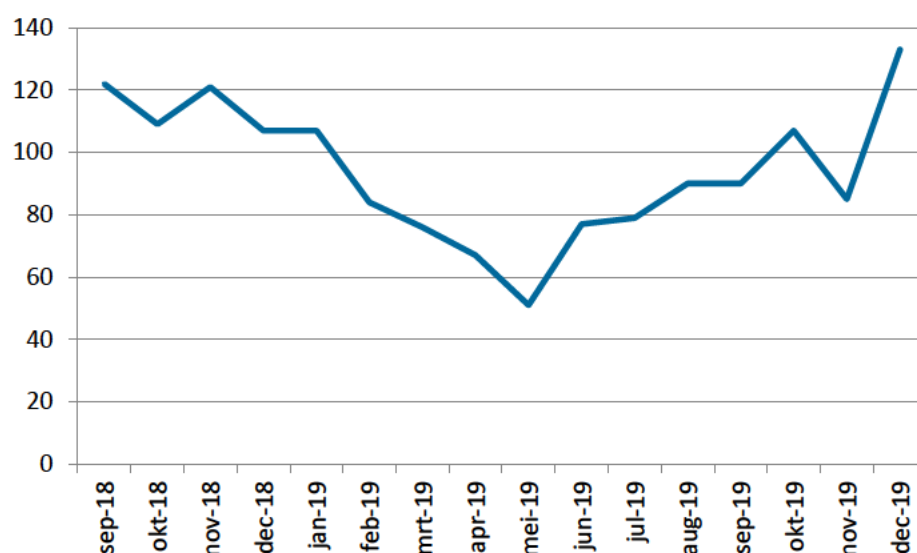
The number of first asylum applications by citizens from visa-free countries in the third quadrimester (1,236) rose in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (+426, +53%). This is mainly to blame on the increased number of applications by Moldovans and *Colombians*. The applications by Moldovans (639) rose sharply in comparison with last quadrimester (+464, +265%) and the preceding year in the same period (+241, +61%). The influx of Moldovans was exceptionally high mainly in October and November. The applications by Colombians (90) rose sharply in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (+55, +157%) and in comparison with the preceding year in the same period (+59, +190%). The number of applications by North Macedonians (101) rose slightly in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (+2, +2%), but increased sharply in comparison with last year in the same period (+82, +432%). The number of applications by Georgians (92) decreased in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (-58, -39%) and in comparison with the preceding year in the same period (-18, -16%). The number of applications by Serbians (83) is comparable to the preceding period (-3, -3%), but rose in comparison with last year in the same period (+27, +48%).

Figure 1.5 Development per quadrimester of the top 5 nationalities of first asylum applications in the Netherlands by citizens from visa-free countries

Source: Metis data extraction Sep 2018 to Dec 2019 inclusive, reference month Dec 2019. These data are exclusive of resettlement and relocation. Top 5 based on Q3 2019.

1.1.3 Asylum applications by unaccompanied minors (UAMs)

In the third quadrimester UAMs submitted 410 first asylum applications. The total number of asylum applications by UAMs decreased in comparison with a year ago in the same period (-49, -11%), but rose in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (+120, +41%). In Figure 1.6 the course of the number of first asylum applications by UAMs can be seen. In the first five months of 2019 a decrease in the number of first asylum applications by UAMs is noticeable. From June the number rose again and is now at the level of a year earlier.

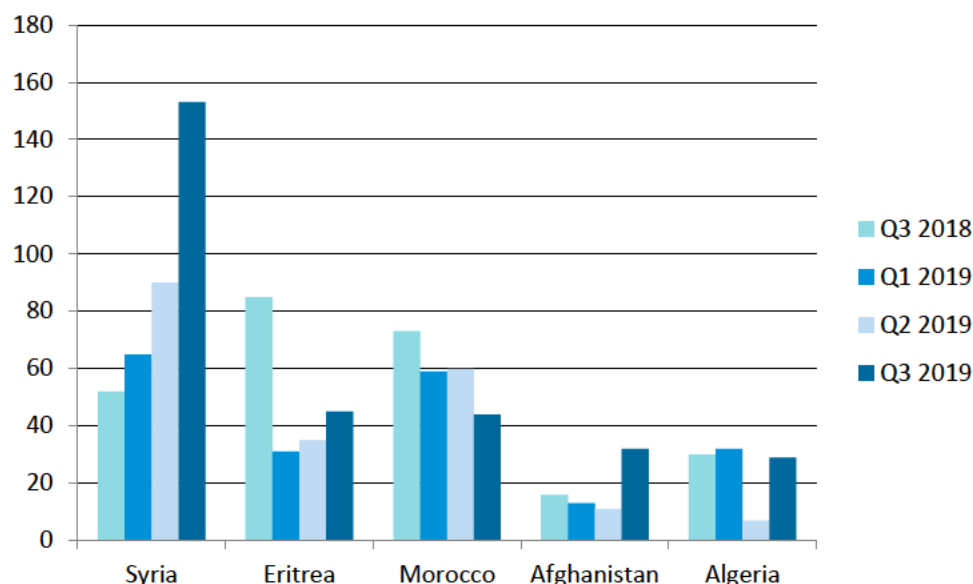
Figure 1.6 Course of the total number of first asylum applications in the Netherlands by UAMs.

Source: Metis data extraction Sep 2018 to Dec 2019 inclusive, reference month Dec 2019. These data are exclusive of resettlement and relocation.

In the third quadrimester *Syrians* are the largest group of UAMs (37.3%), followed by *Eritreans* (11%) and *Moroccans* (10.7%). The number of applications by Syrian UAMs (153) is (just as the total number of applications by Syrians) rose sharply in comparison with last year in the same period (+101, +194%) and also in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (+63, +70%). The number of applications by *Afghan* UAMs (32) rose in comparison with last year in the same

period (+16, +100%) and in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (+21, +191%). The number of applications by Eritrean UAMs (45) is lower than a year ago (-40, -47%). Applications by Moroccan UAMs (44) show a gradual decrease. The number of *Algerian* UAMs (29) shows an increase compared to the preceding quadrimester (+22, +314%), but is comparable to a year ago in the same period (-1, -3%).

Figure 1.7 Development per quadrimester of the top 5 nationalities of first asylum applications by UAMs



Source: Metis data extraction Sep 2018 to Dec 2019 inclusive, reference month Dec 2019. These data are exclusive of resettlement and relocation. Top 5 based on Q3 2019.

2. Notable nationalities

In this section some nationalities are singled out further in order to provide insight into the background characteristics of certain groups of asylum applicants. The selection of these nationalities was made by way of a survey held among the readers of the Migration Radar. Reasons to single out a certain nationality had to do with an increased influx. Developments in the country of origin or signs of trouble. Subsequently, in consultation with the focus group, the Migration Team made a selection of the nationalities mentioned in the survey. The information about developments in countries of origin is based on public sources.

2.1 Algeria

2.1.1 Explanation of figures

In total in the third quadrimester 485 first asylum applications were submitted by Algerians. This is more than a quadrimester earlier, but somewhat less than a year ago in the same period. Most of the applications were submitted by men between the ages of 20 and 29. In total 29 applications were submitted by foreign nationals who said they are UAMs. That is 78% of the total number of Algerian minors¹ who have entered and 6% of the total number of Algerian first asylum applicants. The asylum applications in Europe show a comparable course as in 2018. The Netherlands was the third country in EU+ in receiving Algerians in September 2019.

Decisions were taken on 380 cases in total in the Netherlands in the third quadrimester. Not a single application that was decided on in the third quadrimester was allowed. The vast majority

¹ This means the total number of Algerian minors, thus also minors who come to the Netherlands within a family

were not handled (Dublin) and a third were declared manifestly unfounded (e.g. a safe country of origin).

Somewhat more than half of the Algerian cases that were disposed of in the third quadrimester were disposed of in Track 1.

2.1.2 Developments: presidential elections won by former Prime Minister, protests against elections, new government inaugurated, army commander Salah died, conviction of brother of former president, return to Niger

Massive protests broke out in February, causing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to resign in April. Since then the demonstrations have continued without interruption, during which it was demanded that the ruling elite should resign. The demonstrators demanded a new government, more reforms and that the elections should be postponed so that the opposition would have more time to organise themselves. In the weeks prior to the elections, the security measures were intensified and roads and social media were blocked to prevent people from taking part in the demonstrations.²

The elections were held on 12 December 2019, after being postponed a number of times. Former Prime Minister Abdelmajid Tebboune emerged as the winner and obtained 58% of the votes. The official turnout figure was 40%. On the day of the elections, thousands of people took to the streets in the centre of Algiers and in many other cities, arguing for a boycott of the elections. In the Berber regions, including in Bejaia, polling stations were stormed by the opposition. They closed various polling stations and broke ballot boxes open, during which ballots were also destroyed.³

The police and security troops took increasingly harder action against the demonstrators, using tear gas and billy clubs. Activists stated that innumerable arrests were made in the days before the elections. The protest movements nevertheless remained largely peaceful.⁴ After the elections the protests still continued, during which new elections were demanded with actually new politicians who were not members of the old guard.⁵

On 2 January 2020 the new government was inaugurated with Abdelaziz Djerad as Prime Minister. Various posts remained the same as under the former government. The position of Deputy Minister of Defence, traditionally a major role in a country in which the top-ranking generals had great political power, has not yet been filled.⁶

On 23 December army commander Gaid Salah suddenly died of a heart attack. After the departure of former President Bouteflika, Gaid Salah was one of the most powerful men in the country. He decided during massive protests in February of this year to turn against his leader. It was this military commander who announced on 26 March that Section 102 of the Constitution -allowance of removal of the president on the basis of poor health - had to be applied, which resulted in the resignation of Bouteflika.⁷

² Middle East Monitor, Algeria: Presidential election held despite protests, 12-12-2019 <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191212-algeria-presidential-election-held-despite-protests/>

³ Deutsche Welle, Algerians protest, boycott presidential vote, 12-12-2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/algerians-protest-boycott-presidential-vote/a-51648226>; Observers France 24, Protesters in the Algerian city of Béjaïa break ballot boxes and close polling stations, 13-12-2019, <https://observers.france24.com/en/20191213-protesters-algerian-city-bejaia-break-ballot-boxes-close-polling-places>

⁴ France24, Bouteflika-era PM Tebboune declared winner of Algeria's presidential election, 13-12-2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20191213-bouteflika-era-pm-tebboune-declared-winner-of-algeria-s-presidential-election>; The Guardian, Mass boycott and police clashes as Algeria holds disputed election, 12-12-2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/12/algeria-stages-presidential-vote-amid-fierce-protests>

⁵ BBC News: Algeria election: Fresh protests as Tebboune replaces Bouteflika, 13 December 2019 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-50782676>

⁶ Reuters, Algeria appoints new government amid worst political crisis in decades, 2-1-2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-algeria-government/algeria-appoints-new-government-amid-worst-political-crisis-in-decades-idUSKBN1Z11CU>

⁷ BBC, Algeria's powerful military chief Ahmed Gaid Salah dies, 23-12-2019 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-50891741>

The brother of former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Said Bouteflika, two former heads of the security services, Mohamed Mediene and Athmane Tartag and Louisa Hanoune (party leader of the Algerian Labour Party, Parti des Travailleurs) were all four sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for "undermining the authority of the army" and "conspiracy" against the state to bring about a change of regime.⁸

Algeria as a host and transit country

In October 2019, for the first time, the IOM organised a flight for voluntary return from Algeria to Niger. There were 166 Nigerien citizens on board. The flight was organised through close cooperation between the governments of Algeria and Niger. IOM supported the Nigerien government in registering the Nigerien returnees on arrival in Niger. On arrival the groups of Nigerien migrants who returned on flights organised by IOM received aid, such as food and pocket money to cover their primary needs. In addition IOM provided different kinds of support in reintegration. This can include medical assistance, psycho-social support, education, occupational training, setting up an activity that generates income, or support for housing and other basic needs.⁹

2.2 Colombia

2.2.1 Explanation of figures

In the third quadrimester, 90 first asylum applications in total were submitted by Colombians, particularly in October and November. In spite of the fact that the number of applications in 2019 is low in an absolute sense (158), it has nevertheless increased by 259% compared to 2018. The number of applications in EU+ increased sharply in comparison with last year and in comparison with previous months. Almost all asylum applications by Colombians were submitted in Spain. The Netherlands is in the 7th place as a host country for Colombians.

Somewhat more Colombian men (58%) submitted asylum applications than Colombian women (42%). Most asylum applicants are between the ages of 30 and 39. About one fifth of the asylum applicants have minor children who have entered with an adult.

Less than 10% of the 28 asylum applications submitted in the third quadrimester were granted. In 61% of the cases the asylum application was rejected, most of which were subject to decisions not to consider them. In 32% of the cases the third-country nationals withdrew their asylum applications.

2.2.2 Developments: social discontent and demonstrations, government has no grip on the violent situation, reception of large numbers of Venezuelans, many displaced persons

Whereas we wrote in the last Migration Radar that the peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC from 2016 did not result in the long-expected calm and stability in Colombia, in November there was also another flare-up of social discontent, directed against the current President Ivan Duque. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest against the government of Ivan Duque.¹⁰ In the run-up to the local elections at the end of October, seven candidates were murdered, several candidates were attacked and about 100 candidates were threatened, according to the Elections Observatory.¹¹

⁸ France24, Algerian court sentences former president Bouteflika's brother to 15 years , 25-9-2019,

<https://www.france24.com/en/20190925-algerian-court-sentences-former-president-bouteflikas-brother-15-years-prison>

⁹ IOM, IOM organizes first humanitarian charter flight from Algeria to Niger, 15-10-2019 <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-organizes-first-humanitarian-charter-flight-algeria-niger>

¹⁰ The New York Times, *Colombians Fill Streets in Protest, Riding Region's Wave of Discontent*, 21-11-2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/21/world/americas/colombia-protests-duque.html> [accessed 20-12-2019]

BBC, *Colombia protests resume after talks flounder*, 04-12-2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-50664018> [accessed 20-12-2019]

¹¹ Reuters, 28 October 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-politics/bogota-elects-first-woman-mayor-in-colombia-regional-vote-idUSKBN1X60UK>

The president aims to introduce reforms in areas including social and economic facilities and education. He had also promised during his campaign to submit and enact anti-corruption legislation. The population, discontent about the step backwards they had to take in relation to social facilities after a previous period of economic prosperity, and also because of the lack of progress made with the anti-corruption legislation, decided to take to the streets.¹²

In addition, it was evident that the government did not yet have a grip on the violent situations in the outlying and border areas, where FARC was the boss. Armed groups took over the dominant position of FARC and cause death and violence among the native population, social leaders and former guerrillas. A major sore spot in this regard is that to date these crimes appear to remain unpunished.¹³

Colombia as a host country

Colombia assists and accommodates many displaced Venezuelans. There are various reasons why Colombia assists the Venezuelans. First of all, Colombia itself has a history of forced migration. During the years of the armed conflict (related to guerrilla warfare and drug trafficking), many Colombians were assisted and accommodated in Venezuela at the time.¹⁴

The government of Colombia is also unable to close off the border with Venezuela in an effective manner: the border is over 2200 kilometres long and is 'guarded' by guerrillas and other armed groups. They would precisely benefit enormously from a border closure. After all, after such closure, all goods would have to be smuggled through the areas controlled by these armed groups, naturally at a high payment¹⁵.

The question is whether the social unrest in Colombia will have consequences for the Venezuelans in the country. Various sources write about increasing xenophobia aimed against Venezuelans. For the time being the government has not made any amendments to the migration legislation for Venezuelans and the current President Duque is precisely applying the policy of his predecessor even more generously.¹⁶

2.3 Iraq

2.3.1 Explanation of figures

The total number of asylum applications by Iraqis in the third quadrimester (201) slightly decreased compared to the preceding quadrimester and in comparison with last year in the same period. Most of the applications were submitted by men (72%). Most asylum applicants are between the ages of 20 to 29. A quarter of the minors who submitted asylum applications in the third quadrimester say that they entered as UAMs; that is 7% of the total number of Iraqi first asylum applicants. The number of asylum applications at European level is also somewhat lower than last year and about equal to the preceding months. The Netherlands is in 8th place as a host country for Iraqis.

Of the total of 183 cases disposed of in the third quadrimester, 26% were granted. In 69% of the cases the application was rejected, of which most cases were not handled (Dublin).

¹² AS-COA, *Colombia's Iván Duque Marks One Year in Office*, 07-08-2019, <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/colombias-iv%C3%A1n-duque-marks-one-year-office> [accessed 20-12-2019]

¹³ BBC News, *Paro nacional en Colombia: 4 motivos detrás de las multitudinarias protestas y cacerolazos en Colombia contra el gobierno de Iván Duque*, 22-11-2019, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-50503455> [accessed 20-12-2019]

¹⁴ The Conversation, *Latin America shuts out desperate Venezuelans but Colombia's border remains open – for now*, 07-10-2019, <http://theconversation.com/latin-america-shuts-out-desperate-venezuelans-but-colombias-border-remains-open-for-now-123307> [accessed 20-12-2019]

¹⁵ The Conversation, *Latin America shuts out desperate Venezuelans but Colombia's border remains open – for now*, 07-10-2019, <http://theconversation.com/latin-america-shuts-out-desperate-venezuelans-but-colombias-border-remains-open-for-now-123307> [accessed 20-12-2019]

¹⁶ The Atlantic, *This Country Is Setting the Bar for Handling Migrants*, 16-08-2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/08/colombias-counterintuitive-migration-policy/596233/> [accessed 20-12-2019]

2.3.2 *Developments: Displaced persons, protests, resignation of Prime Minister Mahdi, tension between Iran and the US also had impact on Iraq, activities of ISIS, Turkish bombardments in Sinjar, influx of Syrians to Iraq*

Discontent and demonstrations

Unemployment is increasing among young adults. At present the rate is 22 per cent. From September protests took place, mainly by young graduates against government corruption, unemployment and poor basic services. From 1 October, thousands of Iraqis protested in the streets of Baghdad. The protests spread quickly to the provinces Dhi-Qar, Basra, Maysan, Qadisiya, Wasit, Muthanna, Babylon and Karbala. Security troops used water cannons, tear gas, rubber bullets and real bullets to disperse the demonstrators. Armed men, presumably members of militias that were supported by Iran, also used violence against the demonstrators. In addition, the government shut down the internet.¹⁷

On 29 November, Prime Minister Mahdi announced his resignation after the Shia religious leader al-Sistani had called upon the Parliament to reconsider its options for formation of the government. Demonstrations and violence also continued afterwards.¹⁸ At the end of December there were almost 500 fatalities and more than 22,000 injured persons.¹⁹ Iraqis who expressed their support of the protests on social media were arrested. Offices of radio and TV stations were closed, and journalists were threatened or disappeared.²⁰ UNAMI also reported a pattern of abductions and targeted murders of defenders of human rights and demonstrators and unlawful arrests.²¹ In January 2020 demonstrators were still in prison or demonstrators were still missing after being abducted. In January there were also targeted murders and arrests of press staff members, activists and demonstrators.²² On 17 January the protests intensified in the run-up to the deadline of 20 January that the demonstrators had set for the appointment of a new, independent Prime Minister. Government troops used excessive violence to suppress the new protests. From 17 January to 23 January ten demonstrators were killed, 135 were injured and 88 were arrested in Baghdad, Karbala, Basra, Diyala and Dhi-Qar. Demonstrators attempted to block main roads and bridges, whereupon the police was authorised to arrest these demonstrators. Army officers were also injured by stones thrown by demonstrators. On 24 January, 200,000 Iraqis demonstrated in Baghdad on the initiative of political leader Muqtada al-Sadr for the departure of American troops from Iraq.²³

Tensions between Iran and the U.S.

As a result of the tensions between Iran and the U.S., American targets and persons were also hit in Iraq. On 27 December more than thirty missiles were fired at an Iraqi military base in the Province of Kirkuk where American military personnel were also quartered. During this attack an American contractor was killed and several Iraqis and Americans were injured. The U.S. accused Kata'ib Hezbollah, a militia supported by Iran, of being behind the attack. On 29 December the American Air Force attacked various locations of the militia. During this at least nineteen PMF (Popular Mobilization Forces) fighters were killed and other fighters were injured.²⁴

¹⁷ Epic, ISHM: AUGUST 29 – September 5, 2019 up to and including ISHM: DECEMBER 12 – DECEMBER 19, 2019.

¹⁸ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch Iraq November 2019; epic, ISHM: NOVEMBER 21 – DECEMBER 5, 2019. Members of Parliament had previously signed a petition that called for the resignation of the Prime Minister; the bloodshed against demonstrators increased again; epic, ISHM: NOVEMBER 21 – DECEMBER 5, 2019.

¹⁹ Numbers including: Daily Sabah, *56 abducted protesters and activists still missing in protest-hit Iraq*, 29 December 2019.

²⁰ Epic, ISHM: AUGUST 29 – SEPTEMBER 5, 2019 up to and including ISHM: DECEMBER 12 – DECEMBER 19, 2019.

²¹ UNAMI, *Appointment of PM-designate: now is the time to act in the interest of the Iraqi people*, 18 December 2019.

²² Epic, ISHM: JANUARY 9 – JANUARY 16, 2020.

²³ Vox, *Thousands in Iraq called for US troops to leave the country. But there's more to the story. It doesn't look like these anti-US protests will be sustainable, at least for now.*, 24 January 2020.

²⁴ Epic, ISHM December 19 2019-January 2, 2020; CNN, *US strikes 5 facilities in Iraq and Syria linked to Iranian-backed militia*, 29 December 2019; Financial Times, *US bombs Shia group blamed for American's death in Iraq*, 29 December 2019.

On 30 December, the National Security Council of Iraq threatened to reconsider the relations between Iraq and the coalition led by the U.S. This was a response to the air attacks by the U.S. against Kata'ib Hezbollah, without permission from Iraq. These attacks were viewed as a violation of the sovereignty of Iraq. The National Security Council is chaired by the chairman of the PMF. Several Iraqi leaders also viewed the attacks as violation of the sovereignty of Iraq.²⁵ The American attacks led to protests on 31 December at the United States Embassy in Baghdad, in which mainly militia members of Kata'ib Hezbollah as well as high-ranking PMF members took part. Demonstrators penetrated the U.S. compound. Iraqi security troops did not intervene.²⁶ Hereupon, the U.S. sent 750 additional troops to Kuwait.²⁷

On 3 January the U.S. killed the Iranian general Qassim Sulaimani and the high-ranking Iraqi military leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, commander of Kata'ib Hezbollah and Chief of Staff of the PMF by way of an air attack with a drone. On 7 January Iran conducted missile attacks on two Iraqi bases where coalition staff were sheltered in the Provinces of Anbar and Arbil. Iraq was informed of an Iranian attack on locations with American troops, but nevertheless called the attacks a violation of its sovereignty. The U.S. called the attacks a sign that Iran wanted to de-escalate the situation as the precision attack had clearly avoided killing Americans. The value of the Iraqi Dinar with respect to the U.S. dollar fell temporarily by 3%.²⁸ On 12 and 14 January there were missile attacks on two more Iraqi bases which are customarily used by American staff. There were no victims and the attacks were not claimed.²⁹

Remaining ISIS elements

In general, the security situation in Iraq is better than in previous years. Remaining ISIS fighters are mainly located in peripheral rural areas that are difficult for security troops to access, such as mountainous and desert areas, caves, agricultural areas and deserted villages in the part of Iraq south of Province of Nineveh to north of the Province of Diyala, including the Hamrin and Makhul mountains, and in the desert areas of the Jazira and the Province of Anbar in western Iraq and a number of spread-out locations. ISIS fighters maintain themselves by abducting citizens in small groups and extorting them, demanding food under threat and killing them in order to steal their money. Attacks by ISIS fighters also target representatives of local authorities and members of the security troops and checkpoints, owing to which ISIS is a closer reality to the local population than security troops. Given the additional tensions between the U.S. and Iran and the protests in Baghdad and the south of Iraq, an uncertain, unstable situation can arise.³⁰ In the last months of 2019, ISIS activity concentrated on the Province of Diyala. This resulted in flows of displaced persons from several villages. Among other places, ISIS was also active in the area to the northwest of Kirkuk. The fight against ISIS by destroying tunnels, training camps and other locations and killing fighters also continued in January, without American support.³¹

Turkish bombardments in Sinjar

On 15 January the Turkish air force bombarded the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) in the Province of Nineveh. Four people were killed during this, including a commander of the militia. The YBS is affiliated with the PKK, viewed by Turkey as a terrorist organisation, but also registered with the Iraqi Ministry of Defence as part of the PMF. The YBS controls a large part of the Sinjar region. It is allegedly of strategic importance to Turkey.³²

New influx of refugees from Syria

²⁵ Epic, *ISHM December 19 2019-January 2, 2020*.

²⁶ The New York Times, *Protesters Attack U.S. Embassy in Iraq, Chanting 'Death to America'*, 31 December 2019; Epic, *ISHM December 19 2019-January 2, 2020*.

²⁷ Epic, *ISHM December 19 2019-January 2, 2020*.

²⁸ Epic, *ISHM: JANUARY 2 – JANUARY 9, 2020* and Epic, *ISHM: JANUARY 9 – JANUARY 16, 2020*.

²⁹ Epic, *ISHM: JANUARY 9 – JANUARY 16, 2020*.

³⁰ International Crisis Group, Report 207, *Averting an ISIS Resurgence in Iraq and Syria*, 11 October 2019.

³¹ Epic, *ISHM reports*.

³² Al-Monitor, *Turkey bombs Yazidi militia in Iraq affiliated with PKK*, 24 January 2020.

After the Turkish invasion of North Syria, since 14 October more than 17,000 Syrians have fled across the Iraqi border to Kurdish Autonomous Region (KAR). In mid-November, the KAR accommodated about 794 thousand displaced Iraqis and 225 thousand Syrian refugees. There is a lack of funds for the facilities in the camps.³³

2.4 Moldova

2.4.1 Explanation of figures

The number of applications by Moldovans showed a substantial increase in the third quadrimester. This mainly happened in October and November. After the measures of the State Secretary for Justice and Security entered into effect, the number of asylum applications by Moldovans drastically decreased³⁴. Whether this decrease can be ascribed to the measures cannot yet be said with certainty. The decrease in the winter period is nevertheless a huge change with respect to last year in the same period. About as many men as women submitted an asylum application in the Netherlands. A large number of the applicants (38%) were minors and entered with family members.

In Europe the number of asylum applications in September was higher than last year. Moldovans submit asylum applications mainly in the Netherlands, Germany and France. Of the total of 525 cases disposed of in the third quadrimester, not a single case was allowed. In 93% of the cases the application was rejected, whereby not handling (Dublin) and declaring unfounded most frequently occurred. In 7% of the cases the persons concerned withdrew their applications.

2.4.2 Developments: coalition fell apart, negotiations with Russia, economic reasons as the motive for migration

After the parliamentary elections on 24 February 2019 a government coalition was formed of the pro-Russian Socialist Party with the pro-EU bloc named ACUM. This coalition had the ambition to fight corruption and for that reason received financial support from the EU. On 8 November 2019 this coalition fell apart.³⁵ Since then the Socialist Party has formed a government with the Democratic Party which, until shortly before, was led by the oligarch Plahotniuc.³⁶ The first trip abroad of the newly inaugurated Prime Minister, Ion Chicu, was to Moscow. Chicu stated that if the negotiations with the IMF and the European Union do not run as desired, he would accept a loan from Russia.³⁷ Negotiations took place between Moldovagaz (Moldova) and Gazprom (Russia) on extension of the contract for the supply of natural gas to Moldova. The parties state that they are close to an agreement.³⁸

In newspaper interviews Moldovan asylum seekers and former asylum seekers state that they know that they hardly have a chance of obtaining a residence permit but that they are driven by poverty.³⁹

³³ Epic, ISHM: ISHM: OCTOBER 31 – NOVEMBER 7, 2019 ; NOVEMBER 7 – NOVEMBER 14, 2019, NOVEMBER 14-NOVEMBER 21, 2019; NOVEMBER 21 – DECEMBER 5, 2019; DECEMBER 12 – DECEMBER 19, 2019.

³⁴ For a brief description of the measures, see Section 4 on policy

³⁵ Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, Moldovan Government Collapses; EU Calls Development 'Worrying', 12 November 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldovan-parliament-to-consider-confidence-vote-in-sandu-s-cabinet/30265748.html>

³⁶ BalkanInsight, Moldova's Parliament Backs Ion Chicu as new PM, 14 November 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/14/moldovas-parliament-votes-in-ion-chicu-as-new-pm/>

³⁷ Reuters, Moldova, eyeing Russia loan, may 'pause' cooperation with IMF: PM, 26 November 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-moldova-imf/moldova-eyeing-russia-loan-may-pause-cooperation-with-imf-pm-idUSKBN1Y01N1> and BalkanInsight, Moldova mulls Russian loan as leverage with EU, IMF, 27 November 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/27/moldova-mulls-russian-loan-as-leverage-with-eu-imf/>

³⁸ The Economist, Moldova and Gazprom agree on extension of gas supply contract, 20 November 2019, <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=578710441&Country=Ukraine&topic=Politics&subtopic=Forecast&subsubtopic=International+relations&u=1&pid=1968738380&oid=1968738380>, Radio Europa / Libera Moldova, Preşedintele Moldovagaz, Vadim Ceban, spune că în noul contract cu Gazprom va rămâne aceeaşi formulă de calcul a tarifului de import, 17 December 2019, TASS, Moldova negotiated gas supplies bypassing Ukraine with Gazprom, 18 October 2019, <https://tass.com/economy/1083924>

³⁹ NRC Handelsblad, Status noch privacy voor Moldaviërs (Neither status nor privacy for Moldovans), 6 December 2019 [Factiva] and Bilanz.de, Asylbewerber aus Moldau; Wenigstens ein paar Monate Deutschland, 3 January 2019 [Factiva]

2.5 Syria

2.5.1 Explanation of figures and characteristics

The total number of Syrian asylum applications in the third quadrimester (1,730) increased in comparison with the preceding quadrimester and in comparison with the preceding year in the same period. The majority of the asylum applications were submitted by men (78%). The majority of the asylum applicants were between the ages of 20 and 29. Almost half (44%) of the minors say that they entered as UAMs. This is 9% of the total number of first asylum applications. The number of Syrian UAMs (just as the total number of Syrians) increased in comparison with the preceding quadrimester (+63, +70%) and in comparison with the preceding year in the same period (+101, +194%). The number of asylum applications in Europe shows a similar picture in comparison with the preceding year in the same period.

Of the total of 439 cases disposed of in the third quadrimester, 57% were granted. In 40% of the cases the application was rejected. This was mainly because they were declared inadmissible. These are, among others, Syrians who already have protection in another Member State of the EU or a third country. In comparison with the preceding quadrimester this group sharply increased.

2.5.2 Developments: military attack on North Syria, government offensive in Idlib continues, elections possibly in April

On 9 October the Turkish army started Operation Peace Spring, a military attack in the north of Syria for the purpose of creating a thirty-kilometre deep safety zone in Northeast Syria on the border with Turkey. This area was already under control of the Syrian Kurdish Party PYD for a longer time. Turkey hoped to resettle large groups of Syrian refugees in this area who were still staying in Turkey.⁴⁰ Estimates of the number of persons who fled from this military operation in the area range from 130,000⁴¹, 200,000⁴² to 300,000.⁴³ These persons are expected to flee to the south, farther into Syrian Kurdistan, and to the east to Iraqi Kurdistan.⁴⁴

A temporary cease fire resulted in withdrawal of the YPG (the armed branch of the PYD) from the border area, return of the Syrian border police to the Syrian side of the border with Turkey and joint Russian-Turkish military patrols being held in the area.⁴⁵

In the meantime the Syrian government offensive in the Idlib region continues. Since 1 November the bombardments have increased mainly in the southern and eastern parts of the region. An estimated 200,000 persons have fled farther into the area, in the direction of the Turkish border.⁴⁶ The Turkish President Erdoğan states that 50,000 refugees from Idlib 'have come to Turkey'. It is not clear if he means that they have actually crossed the border with Turkey.⁴⁷

The Syrian parliament in office was elected in April 2016. the elections for the new parliament are supposed to be held in April 2020.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Politico, 15-10-2019, Turkey's invasion of Syria explained, 27-12-2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/8-questions-about-turkeys-incursion-into-syria-answered/>

⁴¹ Politico, 15-10-2019, Turkey's invasion of Syria explained, 27-12-2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/8-questions-about-turkeys-incursion-into-syria-answered/>

⁴² Foreign Policy, 21-12-2019, Greenlighted by Trump, Turkey Invades Syria, 27-12-2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/21/turkey-syria-kurds-invasion-trump/>

⁴³ Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 16-10-2019, Turkish military operation east Euphrates kills more than 70 civilians so far and forces nearly 300 thousand people to displace from their areas, 27-12-2019, <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=144078>

⁴⁴ Politico, 15-10-2019, Turkey's invasion of Syria explained, 27-12-2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/8-questions-about-turkeys-incursion-into-syria-answered/>

⁴⁵ Foreign Policy, 23-10-2019, How Turkey and Russia Carved Up Northern Syria, 27-12-2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/23/turkey-russia-northern-syria-erdogan-putin/>

⁴⁶ Al Jazeera, 22-12-2019, Tens of thousands flee as Syrian forces continue Idlib advance, 27-12-2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/tens-thousands-flee-syrian-forces-continue-idlib-advance-191222183301011.html> and The Guardian, 27-12-2019, More than 235,000 people have fled Idlib region in Syria, says UN, 27-12-2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/27/more-than-235000-people-have-fled-idlib-region-in-syria-says-un>

⁴⁷ Aljazeera, 19-12-2019, Erdogan says 50,000 Syrians fleeing Idlib to Turkey, 27-12-2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/erdogan-50000-syrians-fleeing-idlib-turkey-191219110600413.html?utm_source=website&utm_medium=article_page&utm_campaign=read_more_links

⁴⁸ National Democratic Institute: <https://www.ndi.org/2020-syria-parliamentary-election>

3. Routes and developments in other countries of origin

3.1 Routes

Due to problems with generating data it is unfortunately not possible this time to give figures on registered irregular border crossings from third countries to the EU.

3.2 Main socio-political developments in the regions

In this section the main socio-political developments in the other countries of origin are described that could have influence on the number of asylum applications in the Netherlands. This information is based on public sources.

3.2.1 Afghanistan: Negotiations between the US and Taliban carefully resumed after interruption, results of presidential elections, number of civilian casualties in 2019 comparable to 2018, long-term study of migration plans of Afghans. European Commission provides 40 million euros in humanitarian aid

Negotiations between the US and the Taliban on the conditions for the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan by the VS have been discontinued for three months since 7 September 2019, when President Trump made it known that there was no more deal. On 7 December 2019 the negotiations between the two parties were carefully resumed, this time again in Doha, Qatar.⁴⁹ The Afghan presidential elections were held on 28 September 2019. On 22 December the Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced the preliminary results: of the approx. 1.8 million people who had cast their votes, incumbent President Ashraf Ghani obtained more than 50% of the votes and Abdullah Abdullah almost 40%. Other candidates did not play a significant role. The Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) has meanwhile investigated 14,000 of the 16,500 complaints it received about the course of affairs surrounding the elections and assessed 8,500 of those complaints, coming from 31 of the 34 provinces, as 'serious'. Should the handling of the complaints result in Ghani dropping below 50% of the votes case, a 2nd voting round will be necessary.⁵⁰

UNAMA reported 8,239 civilian casualties during the first nine months of 2019 as a result of the conflict, a number comparable to the number of civilian casualties as a result of the conflict in the first nine months of 2018. In July 2019 UNAMA reported the highest number of civilian casualties ever that it had reported for a single month.⁵¹

According to the UNHCR, in the period from 1 January to 30 November 2019, 7,985 registered Afghan refugees in total returned from abroad: 6,048 persons from Pakistan, 1,863 from Iran, and 74 from other countries. This is 49% lower than the number of registered Afghan refugees who

⁴⁹ Al Jazeera. 7 December 2019. First round of resurrected US-Taliban peace talks open in Qatar.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/resurrected-taliban-peace-talks-open-qatar-191207105319486.html>; Voice of America, 12 December 2019. US-Taliban Talks in Qatar Pause for a 'Few Days'. <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/us-taliban-talks-qatar-pause-few-days>

⁵⁰ Independent Election Commission, December 2019. Afghanistan 2019 Presidential Election. <http://www.iec.org.af/results/en/home> (the division of votes per province is displayed on this website: it shows a clear dividing line between provinces that are primarily inhabited by Pashtuns, where the Pashtun Ghani obtained the vast majority of votes, and provinces where non-Pashtuns live, where the Tadjik Abdullah obtained the vast majority of votes); Reuters, 23 December 2019. Afghan election runoff likely amid thousands of complaints: officials. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-election/afghan-election-runoff-likely-amid-thousands-of-complaints-officials-idUSKBN1YR145>; TOLONews, 22 December 2019) Ghani Tops Preliminary Election Results: IEC. <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/ghani-tops-preliminary-election-results-iec>; TOLONews, 4 January 2020. Up to 8,500 Electoral Complaints Are 'Serious' – IECC. <https://tolonews.com/elections-2019/8500-electoral-complaints-are-%E2%80%98serious%E2%80%99-iecc>.

⁵¹ UNAMA, 17 October 2019. Quarterly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict: 1 January to 30 September 2019 https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_-_3rd_quarter_update_2019.pdf; UNAMA, 10 October 2018. Quarterly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict: 1 January to 30 September 2018. https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_3rd_quarter_report_2018_10_oct.pdf

returned in the same period in 2018.⁵² The IOM indicates that in the period from 1 January 2019 to 4 January 2020, 504,977 undocumented Afghans returned from Iran and Pakistan, 485,096 from Iran and 19,881 from Pakistan.⁵³

According to UNOCHA, in the period from 30 August to 26 December 2019, 126,128 people were displaced by the conflict in the country itself. During the whole year 2019 this was 426,504 people.⁵⁴

In August 2019 a report was published on the way in which the Afghan peace process and emotional well-being influence the decision to migrate or not.⁵⁵ Especially optimism about the peace process in Afghanistan and emotional well-being result in plans to migrate being postponed or terminated. It emerges as well from the report that perception of the risks of irregular migration and wishes of the family influence the migration plans. The experiences of returning migrants also influence the decision-making process, and in that case mainly the negative experiences. This study forms part of a long-term study of irregular migration from Afghanistan.

The European Commission has set aside an additional 40 million euros for humanitarian aid to the worsened humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan.⁵⁶

3.2.2 Bangladesh: impunity of security troops, discrimination of Islamic Bengali in India, reception of Rohingya, restricted freedoms and rights of Rohingya

In December 2018 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with her Awami League Party won the elections for a third consecutive term of five years. The elections were not considered free and fair. Irregularities were reported for example, including the filling of ballot boxes and intimidation of polling stations of the opposition and voters. During the campaign prior to the elections, there were reports of intimidation, arbitrary arrests and violence, which made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet one another, hold meetings and conduct free campaigns. International election observers were not granted access, therefore no international observation mission could be conducted.⁵⁷

There were reports of widespread immunity for abuse by security troops. The government took few measures to investigate and prosecute cases of abuse and murder by security troops. The human rights situation in Bangladesh does not seem to have improved in the last few years.⁵⁸

Bengali in India

In September 2019 the Indian government published a list of the residents of the Federal State Assam who have Indian citizenship. Almost 2 million Muslims are not on the list and consequently could eventually be considered stateless.^{59,60} May residents experience this as a deliberate anti-Muslim course of the government. According to estimates, more than two hundred million Muslims reside in India, many of whom cannot prove their citizenship.⁶¹ There were protests against the

⁵² UNHCR, 30 November 2019. Afghanistan: Voluntary Repatriation Response Snapshot 01 January – 30 November 2019. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20Afghanistan%20Voluntary%20Repatriation%20-%20Response%20Snapshot%20-%281%20January%20-%2031%20November%202019%29.pdf>

⁵³ IOM, January 2020. Return of undocumented Afghans, Weekly situation report 29 December 2019 – 04 January 2020. https://afghanistan.iom.int/sites/default/files/Reports/iom_afghanistan-return_of_undocumented_afghans-situation_report_29_dec_2019-4_jan_2020.pdf

⁵⁴ UNOCHA, 5 January 2020. Afghanistan: Conflict induced Displacements (as of 5 January 2020) Actual displacement. <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idps>

⁵⁵ SEEFAR, August 2019, How the Afghan peace process and emotional well-being impact migration decision-making, <https://seefar.org/research/afghan-decision-making/>

⁵⁶ Reliefweb, 21 November 2019, Afghanistan: EU reinforces humanitarian support with €40 million as crisis worsens, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-eu-reinforces-humanitarian-support-40-million-crisis-worsens>

⁵⁷ <https://bd.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/70/HUMAN-Rights-Report.pdf>

⁵⁸ <https://bd.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/70/HUMAN-Rights-Report.pdf>

⁵⁹ BBC, Assam NRC: What next for 1.9 million 'stateless' Indians?, 31 August 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-49520593>

⁶⁰ <http://theconversation.com/a-new-law-in-india-could-put-muslims-at-greater-risk-of-persecution-like-the-rohingya-129075>

⁶¹ Washington Post (the0, India's new law may leave millions of Muslims without citizenship, 13 December 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/12/13/indias-new-law-may-leave-millions-muslims-without-citizenship/>

amendment in various places.⁶² It is assumed that these are largely Islamic Bengali who reside in India. With a view to future attempts to deport these persons, ten deportation centres were under construction in Assam in November 2019.⁶³ It is possible that in the future these persons will be deported to or will return voluntarily to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh as host country

The situation in Bangladesh has worsened since August 2017 owing to the large numbers of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. About a million refugees live in reception camps and host communities. The Bengali government does not recognise the Rohingya as refugees. They are described as “persons forcibly displaced from Myanmar”. In practice however the government does adhere to many of the established UN standards for refugees. A remarkable exception is that the Rohingya do not have complete freedom of movement in Bangladesh. Whereas the refugees can largely move without restriction in the Districts of Ukhia and Tekhaf, the government has established checkpoints to prevent them from moving outside this area. Exceptions are made only for medical treatments.⁶⁴

Human Rights Watch published a report from which it emerges that the Bengali government had denied more than 400,000 Rohingya refugee children access to education.⁶⁵

3.2.3 Eritrea: few domestic changes, notable decrease in the number of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, continued influx of Eritrean refugees to Sudan

The domestic circumstances in Eritrea have not changed much since the last Migration Radar. As worded in the last general official Eritrea notification (of October 2019): The hope that the peace settlement with Ethiopia would also result in changes in Eritrea has gradually disappeared. Mistrust among the population has increased because the expectations of internal political reforms have not been met.⁶⁶ Owing to the fact that the domestic situation in Eritrea has not improved, it cannot be expected either that the flows of refugees from the country will dry up quickly. After all, the main reasons why people flee Eritrea (compulsory military service, endless in practice and the bad human rights situation) still apply fully. The *Mixed Migration Centre* stated in the last regional overview report that there was a noticeable *decrease* in the number of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. For the end of September an official number was mentioned of 146,690. The decrease may be due to a reduced influx because the borders between Eritrea and Ethiopia were closed again and there is better border control, but it is also possible that more people without registration have settled in Ethiopian cities or have left Ethiopia without registration.⁶⁷ The *Mixed Migration Centre* also reported a continuing influx of Eritrean refugees to Sudan. In August 2019 there were 123,413 Eritrean refugees in Sudan, of whom about 6,000 are said to have arrived between January and July 2019. According to the UNHCR, about half of the Eritreans who newly arrived stated that they were planning to travel further in the direction of North Africa.⁶⁸

3.2.4 Ethiopia: reception of refugees, reduction in human rights violation, local ethnic disputes, strong economic growth, noticeable decrease in the number of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia

Although Ethiopia is also a country of origin of refugees on a relatively limited scale, it is mainly a country of reception and transit of migrants. The country has a long history of open and hospitable refugee policy and, with about 700,000 refugees within the national borders, it has the second largest refugee community in Africa (particularly people from Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea). Ethiopia is also one of only 5 African countries with which the UN has agreed the

⁶² See above

⁶³ Hindustan Times, Assam seeks 10 more detention centres to hold ‘illegal foreigners’, 20 November 2019

⁶⁴ <https://bd.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/70/HUMAN-Rights-Report.pdf>

⁶⁵ ECRE, Weekly Bulletin, 6 December 2019, <https://mailchi.mp/ecre/ecre-weekly-bulletin-06122019?e=989a4aebdd>

⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ), AAB Eritrea, October 2019.

⁶⁷ Mixed Migration Centre, MMC East Africa & Yemen QUARTER 3 2019, <http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/qmmu-eay-q3-2019.pdf>, consulted on 6 January 2020.

⁶⁸ Mixed Migration Centre, MMC East Africa & Yemen QUARTER 3 2019, <http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/qmmu-eay-q3-2019.pdf>, consulted on 6 January 2020.

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), a set of agreements to facilitate the reception of refugees and allow it to run smoothly.⁶⁹

From a political viewpoint, major changes have been made in Ethiopia since Prime Minister Abiy took office in April 2018. Since then there has been a noticeable reduction in human rights violations by the Ethiopian government, in protests against the government and in violence in general. Local ethnic disputes have however flared up again, perhaps as a result of the fact that there is a lesser oppressive government.⁷⁰ Prime Minister Abiy recently received the Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to the pacification of his country and the region.⁷¹ Ethiopia has experienced a very strong economic growth in the last 10 years and at present the Ethiopian economy is the strongest growing economy in the world.⁷²

As already stated in the information under Eritrea, the *Mixed Migration Centre* stated in their last regional overview report that there was a noticeable *decrease* in the number of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. For the end of September an official number was mentioned of 146,690. The decrease may be due to a reduced influx because the borders between Eritrea and Ethiopia have been closed again and there is better border control, but it is also possible that more people without registration have settled in Ethiopian cities, or have left Ethiopia without being registered.⁷³

3.2.5 *Gambia: money from diaspora important, economic prospects major push factor, political situation not changed very much since 2006*

In spite of the fact that Gambia is one of the smallest countries in Africa with a population of about 2 million people, migration plays an important role in its society. In the last Migration Radar, Gambians were in the top 5 of asylum applications by UAMs in the Netherlands and in the top 5 nationalities of claims sent on the basis of requests under the Dublin Regulation.

The approximately 90 thousand Gambians living abroad contribute more than 20 per cent to the gross domestic product of the country by transfers of money. These in particular are the economic prospects that mainly induce the young persons in the country to cross over to Europe. Between 2014 and 2018, 35 thousand Gambians reached Europe outside the regular flows of migration. On the other hand, between January 2017 and October 2019, the IOM assisted with the return of 4,800 Gambians to their country.⁷⁴ The country itself has few refugees; about 4,000, most of whom come from the neighbouring country Senegal.⁷⁵

For the rest, the political situation in the country has not changed much since, by an election victory at the end of 2016, Adama Barrow took over the power from Yahya Jammeh, who had ruled the country in an authoritarian manner for 22 years. Although Adama Barrow had promised during his inauguration in January 2017 that he would remain President for only three years. It appears more and more that he will complete the term of 5 years laid down in the Constitution.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ UNHCR, *Ethiopia*, <https://www.unhcr.org/ethiopia.html>, consulted on 9 January 2020.

⁷⁰ ACLED, *Bad Blood: Violence in Ethiopia Reveals the Strain of Ethno-Federalism under Prime Minister Abiy*, <https://www.acleddata.com/2019/07/15/bad-blood-violence-in-ethiopia-reveals-the-strain-of-ethno-federalism-under-prime-minister-abiy/>, consulted on 9 January 2020.

⁷¹ De Volkskrant, *Nobelprijswinnaar Abiy Ahmed is vredesduif en wervelstorm ineen* (Nobel prize winner Abiy Ahmed is a dove and tornado rolled into one), 11 October 2019, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/nobelprijswinnaar-abiy-ahmed-is-vredesduif-en-wervelstorm-ineen~bdab1bf2/>, consulted on 9 January 2020.

⁷² FocusEconomics, *The World's Fastest Growing Economies*, <https://www.focus-economics.com/blog/fastest-growing-economies-in-the-world>, consulted on 9 January 2020.

⁷³ Mixed Migration Centre, MMC East Africa & Yemen QUARTER 3 2019, <http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/qmmu-eay-q3-2019.pdf>, consulted on 6 January 2020.

⁷⁴ IOM, *The Gambia - Overview*, z.d., <https://www.iom.int/countries/gambia>, consulted on 7 January 2020

⁷⁵ UNHCR, *Refugees in The Gambia*, 31 October 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/gmb>, consulted on 6 January 2019

⁷⁶ African Arguments, *The Gambia's president said he'd step down after three years. Will he?*, 12 December 2019, <https://africanarguments.org/2019/12/12/the-gambia-president-barrow-three-years-jotna/>, consulted on 7 January 2019

3.2.6 *Iran: American air attack on Soleimani, violent protests, hard government action, national elections in 2020, Afghan returnees*

In mid-November the petrol prices were suddenly raised, after which protests broke out in several Iranian cities. The protests spread quickly across the country and ultimately took place in about a hundred cities. Besides to peaceful demonstrations, violent protests took place in which petrol stations, bank buildings, government buildings, government vehicles and military bases were the targets. The authorities responded with violence. Estimates of the number of fatalities range from a few hundred to many hundreds, thousands of people injured and many thousands of arrests.⁷⁷ Internal Iranian government sources themselves speak of 1,500 fatalities.⁷⁸

The authorities had shut down the internet for about a week, as customary during large-scale protests. After these blockades were lifted, however, the population posted numerous films in which it could be seen how the authorities suppressed the demonstrations.⁷⁹

The protests started for economic reasons (price of petrol, total poor economic situation because of sanctions against Iran), but quickly acquired (as more often) a more political, anti-regime nature.⁸⁰

The exchange rate of the Rial had been recovering slightly again since June and seemed reasonably stable at somewhat less than 120,000 Rials for a dollar, but recently seems to be falling somewhat again.⁸¹

In February 2020 there were national elections for the parliament. As usual, candidates were screened by the Council of Guardians, which is not elected, which limits the voters' votes to candidates 'approved' by the regime. How many reform-minded candidates may ultimately declare themselves as candidates is not known for the time being.

Up to and including the first week of December, according to the figures of the IOM, in 2019 about 450,000 undocumented Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Iran. Almost 200,000 of them returned spontaneously and about 250,000 were forced to return. In addition there was a smaller group of assisted returnees: almost 4,500 of them returned voluntarily and almost 25,000 involuntarily.⁸² The reason for voluntary return seems mainly to be the poor economic situation in Iran.⁸³

On 3 January the Iranian general Soleimani, head of the Qods Force of the Sepah Pasdaran, was killed at Baghdad Airport by a US air attack.⁸⁴ His funeral went along several cities and attracted many onlookers. The petrol and other protests of November seemed to have been forgotten for a moment. At the ultimate burial in his home city, dozens of people died in the crowding.⁸⁵

⁷⁷ The New York Times, 03-12-2019, With Brutal Crackdown, Iran Is Convulsed by Worst Unrest in 40 Years, 27-12-2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/01/world/middleeast/iran-protests-deaths.html>

⁷⁸ Voice of America, 23-12-2019, US Confirms Report Citing Iran Officials as Saying 1,500 Killed in Protests, 27-12-2019, <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/voa-news-iran/us-confirms-report-citing-iran-officials-saying-1500-killed-protests>

⁷⁹ BBC News, 27-11-2019, Iran protests: Videos reveal crackdown regime tried to hide from world, 27-12-2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50562584>

⁸⁰ BBC News, 27-11-2019, Iran protests: Videos reveal crackdown regime tried to hide from world, 27-12-2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50562584>

⁸¹ BBC News, 09-12-2019, Six charts that show how hard US sanctions have hit Iran, 27-12-2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48119109>

⁸² IOM, 01-07 December 2019, RETURN OF UNDOCUMENTED AFGHANS, 30-12-2019, https://afghanistan.iom.int/sites/default/files/Reports/iom_afghanistan-return_of_undocumented_afghans-situation_report_01_-_07_dec_2019.pdf

⁸³ Aljazeera, 07-12-2019, Afghans leave Iran in thousands as economy worsens, 30-12-2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/afghans-leave-iran-thousands-economy-worsens-191207111012876.html>

⁸⁴ BBC News, 03-01-2020, Qasem Soleimani: Iran vows 'severe revenge' for top general's death, 22-01-2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50986185>

⁸⁵ Business Insider, 07-01-2020, Photos of Iranians flooding the streets for Soleimani's funeral show how much he was revered, and hint at how hard Iran may strike back, 22-01-2020, <https://www.businessinsider.nl/iran-soleimani-funeral-crowds-indicate-force-revenge-2020-1?international=true&r=US> en Time, 07-01-2020, 56 Killed in Stampede at Funeral for Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, 22-01-2020, <https://time.com/5760392/qasem-soleimani-funeral-stampede/>

Iran responded to the American attack on Soleimani on 8 January by shooting off missiles on two US bases in Iraq. According to the Americans no one was injured and according to Iran dozens of Americans were killed or injured in the retaliatory action.⁸⁶ After some time the US reported that fifty American soldiers had suffered brain injuries during the attack, most of whom went back to work after treatment⁸⁷. Shortly after this Iranian action, a Ukrainian passenger plane crashed soon after takeoff from Teheran Airport. All 176 passengers, mostly Iranians and Iranian Canadians, died. Iran first wanted to blame the accident on a technical problem, but admitted after a few days that two Iranian missiles had accidentally shot down the plane.⁸⁸

Out of anger about withholding the truth about the plane crash, protests broke out at Iranian universities that quickly spread across the country. During the demonstrations, the students called upon spiritual leader Khamene'i to resign. There seemed to be little left of the unanimity during the burial of Soleimani.⁸⁹ According to Amnesty International violence was used in crushing the protests which resulted in injuries.⁹⁰

3.2.7 Yemen: Drone attacks on Saudi oil installations, after some peace and quiet, violence flared up again, increasing interference by Saudi Arabia, withdrawal of UAE troops conflict gives Al-Qaeda opportunities, major humanitarian crisis, grain storage facility accessible again

Since September 2019, the war in Yemen between the Houthis on the one hand and the internationally recognised government supported by the Saudi coalition on the other, has extended further across the region. The reason for this is the drone attacks on oil installations in Saudi Arabia. The attacks were initially claimed by the Houthis, but because of the precision of the attacks, the distance from which and the direction from which the drone attacks were carried out, however, Iran is viewed as the responsible party. In a joint statement drawn up by France, Germany and the United Kingdom, Iran is held responsible for the attacks on the Saudi oil installations.

The Houthis announced in September that they would cease the attacks on Saudi Arabia and expected that Saudi Arabia would stop the attacks on the Houthis. At the end of November 2019 Saudi Arabia announced that it would release 200 Houthi prisoners of war in response to the release by the Houthis of 290 prisoners of war in October. Despite these mutual steps towards de-escalation, the violence between the parties increased again.⁹¹

In December 2019, in the south, after a relatively calm period, the battle between the StC supported by the UAE and the troops of Hadi flared up again. Saudi Arabia is interfering to an increasing extent in this region. This resulted in the UAE withdrawing troops for the rest of 2019. The conflict in the south of Yemen and the withdrawal of the UAE troops has seen to it that Al-Qaeda again has more opportunity that could enable it to gain more control in the region.⁹²

The conflict in Yemen has led to one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world. About 24 million citizens (80% of the Yemenite population) need aid, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. According to UNICEF, 2 million children can no longer go to

⁸⁶ The Guardian, 08-01-2020, Iran launches missiles at Iraq airbases hosting US and coalition troops, 22-01-2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/08/suleimani-assassination-two-us-airbases-in-iraq-hit-by-missiles-in-retaliation>

⁸⁷ RFE/RL, 29-01-2020, Pentagon Says 50 U.S. Troops Diagnosed With Brain Injuries After Iran Strike, 03-02-2020, <http://www.payvand.com/news/20/jan/1037.html>

⁸⁸ Deutsche Welle, 21-01-2020, Iran confirms two missiles shot at Ukraine airliner, 22-01-2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/iran-confirms-two-missiles-shot-at-ukraine-airliner/a-52082407>

⁸⁹ BBC news, 18-01-2020, Why Iran plane disaster protests mark most serious test yet, 22-01-2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51147191>

⁹⁰ Amnesty International, 15-01-2020, Iran: Scores injured as security forces use unlawful force to crush protests, 22-01-2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/iran-scores-injured-as-security-forces-use-unlawful-force-to-crush-protests/> and The Guardian, 13-01-2020, Iranian police fired live rounds to disperse protesters, say witnesses, 22-01-2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/13/iran-protests-witnesses-live-ammunition-fired-disperse-crowds-tehran>

⁹¹ Security Council Report, January 2020 Monthly Forecast, Middle East, Yemen, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2020-01/yemen-14.php>

⁹² Critical Threats, The Yemen File is a biweekly analysis and assessment of the Yemen conflict and the Salafi-jihadi movement in Yemen, Yemen File: December 2019, <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/yemen-file>

school.⁹³ In the Province of Sa'ada, on the border with Saudi Arabia, the mutual air attacks and shootings have made many citizens the victim of the violence. Some of the victims are Somalians, Ethiopians and other migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Many children are among the civilian victims.⁹⁴

On 26 December 2019 the grain stores of the World Food Program (WFP) in the port of the city Hodeidah were damaged by shootings. The grain stores had already been inaccessible for about 6 months because of the battles in Hodeidah and the supplies of grain were going to rot, which would threaten the population with starvation. Thanks to negotiations by the WFP, among others, to gain access again to the grain stores, it became possible once again on 30 December 2019 to clean up the damaged grain stores again and restart the production of flour.⁹⁵

3.2.8 Jordan: the number of registered Syrian refugees is stable, widely shared support for Syrian refugees, return to Syria

On 1 December 2019 about 650,000 Syrian refugees were registered in Jordan. Of them, 19% stayed in camps and 81% outside camps. From mid-2016 the number of registered Syrian refugees was between 650,000 and 670,000 persons. Between mid-2014 and mid-2016 this number was between 600,000 and 650,000 persons.⁹⁶ Unofficial estimates however mention about 1.3 million Syrian refugees in Jordan.⁹⁷

In Jordan, notwithstanding the pressure put on the economy and infrastructure by the Syrians, there still seems to be widely shared support for the accommodation of Syrian refugees.⁹⁸ Many of the more than 87,000 registered non-Syrian refugees in Jordan (Somalians, Sudanese, Yemenites, Iraqis) have difficulty in obtaining humanitarian aid, work, education and food. Most of them do not obtain a Jordanian work permit, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation on the labour market.⁹⁹

There are contradictory reports on the number of returnees to Syria. On the one hand it appears that a group of Syrians want to return to Syria for financial reasons, in spite of the uncertainties awaiting them there.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, it is asserted that proportionately few Syrians have returned since the border was opened at the end of 2018. The Jordanian authorities mention 33,000 returnees, the UNHCR 20,000. Reasons not to return are compulsory military service, arrests, poor living conditions, no electricity, healthcare and drinking water and financial means, destroyed homes to rebuild.¹⁰¹

3.2.9 Lebanon: economic crisis, protests against Syrians increasingly larger (forced) return of Syrians

On 30 November 2019 about 900,000 Syrian refugees were registered in Lebanon, divided across about 200,000 households. Since mid-2015 (1.1 million registered) there has been a slow

⁹³ UN News, *A year on from Yemen talks breakthrough, top UN Envoy hail's 'shift' towards peace, despite setbacks*, 13 December 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/12/1053431>

⁹⁴ OCHA, Humanitarian Update, Issue 13/01 November – 18 December 2019, *Attacks on civilians in Sa'ada a cause for concern*, source: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Humanitarian%20Update_13_Final_0.pdf

⁹⁵ Reuters, *U.N. resumes grain milling in starvation-threatened Yemen*, 6 January 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-wfp/u-n-resumes-grain-milling-in-starvation-threatened-yemen-idUSKBN1Z51HV>

⁹⁶ UNHCR, 01-12-2019, *Syria Regional Refugee Response Jordan*, 24-12-2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36>

⁹⁷ World Food Program USA, 14-11-2019, *10 Facts About the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan*, 24-12-2019, <https://www.wfpusa.org/stories/10-facts-about-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-in-jordan/#>

⁹⁸ Syria Direct, 14-11-2019, *'No place for hate': Eight years later, Syrians still feel welcomed in Jordan*, 24-12-2019, <https://syriadirect.org/news/%E2%80%98no-place-for-hate%E2%80%99-eight-years-later-syrians-still-feel-welcomed-in-jordan/>

⁹⁹ The Jordan Times, 24-07-2019, *Report says non-Syrian refugees struggle to obtain aid, income*, 27-12-2019, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/report-says-non-syrian-refugees-struggle-obtain-aid-income>

¹⁰⁰ The New Humanitarian, 19-11-2019, *Weighed down by economic woes, Syrian refugees head home from Jordan*, 24-12-2019, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/11/19/Syrian-refugees-return-Jordan>

¹⁰¹ Al-Monitor, 11-10-2019, *Why Syrians in Jordan refuse to return home*, 24-12-2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/10/syria-nassib-jaber-crossing-jordan-borderrefugees-return.html>

decrease in the number of registered Syrian refugees.¹⁰² The Lebanese authorities estimate the number of Syrians in the country at 1.5 million.¹⁰³

Just as the Lebanese themselves, Syrian refugees are also faced with the economic crisis in Lebanon, which has resulted in falling salaries and rising prices. The protests against the presence of Syrians in politics and the media are becoming increasingly larger.¹⁰⁴

Recently, somewhat more than two hundred Syrians are said to have returned to Syria, which puts the total number of returnees at about 27,000 in the past two years.¹⁰⁵ The Lebanese authorities (General Security) assert that they removed 2,731 Syrians in total between May and August. Human Rights Watch states that at least three of them were arrested on arrival in Syria.¹⁰⁶ Recent reports of forced removal of Syrians by the Lebanese government are scarce. An NGO reported in mid-October that Lebanon removed five Syrians after they had served their prison sentences in Lebanon.¹⁰⁷

3.2.10 Libya: battle for Tripoli, civilian casualties as a result of the conflict, agreements between GNA and Turkey, no permanent cease fire, still large numbers of migrants in Libya, MoU between Italy and Libya renewed

The battle for Tripoli continued

The offensive for Tripoli, the seat of the Government of National Accord (GNA) recognised by the UN, by troops of the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by General Khalifa Haftar and supported by the government in the east of Libya, continued in the past months. The LNA was able to approach the capital Tripoli more closely in the past months. The LNA received new military support from Russian military contractors. Turkey has promised to give the GNA more military support. At the end of December 2019 the LNA had taken neighbourhoods including the Zuhur neighbourhood of the District of Salah al-Din in Tripoli and the motorway to Tripoli Airport. The troops of the LNA approached the city centre up to a distance of 4 kilometres.¹⁰⁸

At the end of November the LNA also took control of part of the border with Niger after taking the Tummo border crossing from Tubu militias.¹⁰⁹

Bombardments increase in December

Amnesty International stated in a report at the end of October that they had visited places hit by the conflict in and round Tripoli, Tajura, Ain Zara, Qasr Bin Ghashir and Tarhouna and concluded that civilian casualties and injuries occurred because both parties in the conflict use all kinds of weapons, from old, unguided missiles from the period of Qadhafi to modern guided missiles launched by drones in attacks that can result in war crimes.¹¹⁰ The number of bombardments increased in December.¹¹¹

Civilian victims

According to the UN, in 2019 up to mid-December there were at 284 civilian deaths and 363 injured civilian victims as a result of the armed conflict in Libya. Most of the civilian victims were

¹⁰² UNHCR, 30-11-2019, Syria Regional Refugee Response Lebanon, 24-12-2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>

¹⁰³ Voice of America, 03-12-2019, Facing Harassment in Lebanon, Syrian Refugees Ponder Dismal Options, 24-12-2019, <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/facing-harassment-lebanon-syrian-refugees-ponder-dismal-options>

¹⁰⁴ Voice of America, 03-12-2019, Facing Harassment in Lebanon, Syrian Refugees Ponder Dismal Options, 24-12-2019, <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/facing-harassment-lebanon-syrian-refugees-ponder-dismal-options>

¹⁰⁵ AP, 03-12-2019, Hundreds of Syrian refugees in Lebanon return home, 24-12-2019, <https://apnews.com/a99312e8d6fc4a5da827459f4af5f955>

¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch, 02-09-2019, Syrians Deported by Lebanon Arrested at Home, 24-12-2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/02/syrians-deported-lebanon-arrested-home>

¹⁰⁷ Access Center for Human Rights, 17-10-2019, Lebanon's continues its forced deportation policy of Syrian refugees, 30-12-2019, <https://www.achrighs.org/2019/10/17/lebanons-continues-its-forced-deportation-policy-of-syrian-refugees/>

¹⁰⁸ Polgeonow, *Libyan Civil War Map & Timeline - December 2019*, 28 December 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Polgeonow, *Libyan Civil War Map & Timeline - December 2019*, 28 December 2019.

¹¹⁰ Amnesty International, *Libya: Civilians caught in the crossfire as militias battle for Tripoli*, 22 October 2019.

¹¹¹ UNSMIL, SRSG Ghassan Salame condemns continued airstrikes causing deaths and injuries among civilians in western Libya, 28 December 2019

hit by bombardments; 182 dead and 212 injured.¹¹² In 2019 more than two thousand fighters died.¹¹³ More than 149,000 people from South Tripoli have been displaced by the battle for Tripoli since 4 April 2019. In the last few weeks the District of Salah al-Din has been hit to an increasing extent.¹¹⁴

GNA deals with Turkey and cease fire on the initiative of Russia and Turkey

At the beginning of December, the Turkish parliament backed a maritime deal Turkey and the GNA had concluded. This deal recognises Turkey's claim on economic rights in parts of the Mediterranean Sea. Turkey and Libya agreed that the maritime zones of Libya and Turkey meet each other in the middle. The agreement has encountered objections by Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and the Libyan parliament in Tobruk, that may have their own claims¹¹⁵. The UN also has objections.¹¹⁶

Turkey and the part of Cyprus allied to Greece have a dispute over oil and gas sources in the sea that are claimed by North Cyprus which is supported by Turkey. The deal may block the construction of a gas pipeline to Europe by Egypt, Cyprus,¹¹⁷ Greece and Israel.¹¹⁸ The interests of Turkey in supporting the GNA could include certainty of energy and the possibility to discover hydrocarbonates in the sea.¹¹⁹ On 2 January 2020, the Turkish parliament approved a military incursion to support the GNA in Libya.¹²⁰ On 5 January the deployment of Turkish soldiers in Libya was said to have started and the LNA took Sirte.

On 8 January Turkey and Russia, who faced each other by their support of two different combating parties in Libya, called for a cease fire from 12 January. On 11 January the LNA agreed and then the GNA agreed to the cease fire.¹²¹ On 13 January both camps were in Moscow for meetings.¹²² Al-Saraj, leader of the GNA, signed a cease fire agreement. General Haftar (LNA) requested postponement until the next morning in order to think about it.¹²³ Germany had announced on 12 January that it would organise a new peace conference.¹²⁴ This conference was supposed to take place on 19 January. On 17 January tribal leaders in the east and south of Libya closed oil fields and ports prior to the peace conference and as a protest against the payment for foreign fighters by the GNA from oil revenues.¹²⁵ The oil facilities were still closed on 23 January.¹²⁶ During the peace conference on 19 January world leaders agreed to stop interfering in the fight in Libya and to comply with an arms embargo. No possible sanctions were discussed however for violation of an international arms embargo. Nor did any dialogue take place between the fighting Libyan parties and no permanent cease fire was signed.¹²⁷ A proposal was however made to form a military committee composed of five GNA loyalists and five Haftar delegates, who will attempt to

¹¹² UNSMIL, *SRSB Ghassan Salame condemns continued airstrikes causing deaths and injuries among civilians in western Libya*, 28 December 2019.

¹¹³ France24, *Chronicle of a nine-month offensive to seize Libya's capital*, 13 January 2020.

¹¹⁴ IOM DTM, *Tripoli Update*, 9 January 2020.

¹¹⁵ Polgeonow, *Libyan Civil War Map & Timeline - December 2019*, 28 December 2019.

¹¹⁶ The Soufan Center, *Turkey Enters The Conflict in Libya*, 13 January 2020.

¹¹⁷ Polgeonow, *Libyan Civil War Map & Timeline - December 2019*, 28 December 2019.

¹¹⁸ The Soufan Center, *Turkey Enters The Conflict in Libya*, 13 January 2020.

¹¹⁹ The Soufan Center, *Turkey Enters The Conflict in Libya*, 13 January 2020.

¹²⁰ France24, *Chronicle of a nine-month offensive to seize Libya's capital*, 13 January 2020; NOS, *Aanval op militaire academie in Libië eist 30 levens (Attack on military academy takes 30 lives)*, 5 January 2020.

¹²¹ France24, *Chronicle of a nine-month offensive to seize Libya's capital*, 13 January 2020; NOS, *Staakt-het-vuren in Libië afgekondigd (Cease fire announced in Libya)*, 12 January 2020.

¹²² BBC News, *Libya conflict: Warring sides meet in Moscow for talks*, 13 January 2020.

¹²³ The Telegraph, *Russian-brokered Libya ceasefire agreement 'close' in diplomatic coup for Putin*, 13 January 2020; Al-Jazeera, *Libya's Haftar leaves Moscow without signing ceasefire agreement*, 14 January 2020.

¹²⁴ NOS, *Cease fire announced in Libya*, 12 January 2020.

¹²⁵ Reuters, *Eastern Libyan protesters entered Zueitina oil port and announced its closure -port engineer*, 17 January 2020; *Libya's oil output to drop to 72,000 bpd in a few days- NOC*, 19 January 2020; National Post, *Libyan tribesmen say they have closed El Shahara and El Feel oilfields*, 19 January 2020.

¹²⁶ Bloomberg, *Oil Tankers Dawdle Off Libya's Coast as Warlord Halts Exports*, 23 January 2020.

¹²⁷ AFP, *World powers agree new push for Libya peace*, 20 January 2020; Reuters, *Berlin summit on Libya did not discuss any sanctions – Merkel*, 19 January 2020.

consolidate the cease fire.¹²⁸ On 2 January the only functioning airfield in Tripoli was closed for one day after missiles had been fired on it. According to the LNA, Turkey used the airfield for military purposes, as a base for Turkish soldiers who were sent to support the GNA. According to the LNA, they had also shot down a Turkish drone in South Tripoli that day. The LNA threatened to destroy all military and civil air traffic above the capital. They allegedly considered those flights a violation of the cease fire that had been in force since 12 January.¹²⁹

Libya as a transit and host country

Migrants in Libya come from a large number of countries of origin, most of which are neighbouring countries of Libya. Research shows that more than eighty per cent of the migrants have Libya as their final destination. They came to Libya to work. Most of these migrants find work in Libya, Most of them want to return to their countries of origin when they leave Libya.¹³⁰

In 2019 less than fourteen per cent of the total migration across the Mediterranean Sea still took place via the central Mediterranean Sea route that mainly leads from Libya and Tunisia to Italy and Malta. On the other hand, more than half of the deaths of migrants who crossed the Mediterranean Sea occurred on this central route. An estimated 516 migrants died between Libya and Italy/Malta (227 migrants from Tunisia). In total an estimated 3.4% of the people died who took the central route across the Mediterranean Sea.¹³¹

Last autumn Italy renewed the Memorandum of Understanding with Libya to support the Libyan Coast Guard with training and vessels. The Libyan Coast Guard says that in 2019 it intercepted almost nine thousand people on the way to Europe and brought them back to Libya. According to news reports the conditions in detention centres have not improved and human smuggling is not adequately combated since the 'subsidising' of Libya by the EU for the purpose of curtailing migration across the Mediterranean Sea. On the contrary, as part of the money from the EU allegedly went to interconnected networks of militia members, human smugglers and Coast Guard crews that exploit migrants. Coast Guard crew members are said to have sent some migrants back to detention centres in accordance with deals with militias and receive bribes to allow others to go ahead to Europe. How often this actually happens is not known, according to the new reports.¹³²

3.2.11 Morocco: suppression of criticism push factors mainly economic, crossover to Spain reduced, arrivals in Canary Islands sharply increased, replacement of fencing surrounding enclaves

Morocco as country of origin

There seems to be increasing pressure exerted on persons who express criticism because of the economic and social problems in Morocco.¹³³ For instance, a YouTuber was convicted of criticising the King¹³⁴ and a trial is pending at the moment against a journalist who allegedly insulted a judge by expressing criticism of the sentences enforced in the Hiraq trial.¹³⁵

In another case that has become the symbol of the suppression of women's rights and freedom of opinion in Morocco, the King decided to grant a pardon. This concerned a female journalist sentenced to a year's imprisonment for, among other things, illegal abortion.¹³⁶

¹²⁸ AFP, *Rockets target Libya airport ahead of regional peace talks*, 23 January 2020.

¹²⁹ AlJazeera, *Libya reopens Tripoli's Mitiga airport*, 23 January 2020; AFP, *Rockets target Libya airport ahead of regional peace talks*, 23 January 2020.

¹³⁰ IOM, DTM, *LIBYA - MIGRANT VULNERABILITY AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT*, 20 December 2020.

¹³¹ InfoMigrants, *Migration to Europe in 2019: Facts and figures*, 30 December 2020.

¹³² Associated Press News Brief, *Making misery pay: Libya militias take EU funds for migrants*, 1 January 2020; Boston Globe, *Making misery pay: Libya militias take EU funds for migrants*, 31 December 2019.

¹³³ The New York Times, *Moroccan YouTuber Sentenced to Prison, Journalist Detained*, of 27 December 2019, found on: <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2019/12/27/world/middleeast/ap-ml-morocco-online-freedom.html>

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Morocco: Free Outspoken Journalist Jailed Over Tweet*, dd. 28 December 2019, found on: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/28/morocco-free-outspoken-journalist-jailed-over-tweet>

¹³⁶ The Guardian, *Moroccan journalist jailed for 'illegal abortion' pardoned by king*, dd. 16 October 2019, found on: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/16/moroccan-journalist-hajar-raissouni-jailed-pardoned-abortion>

As indicated in the last edition of the Migration Radar, mainly economic considerations are put forward as push factors for emigration among Moroccans.

Morocco as transit country

It emerges from information from the UNHCR that 55% of the refugees registered in Morocco came from Syria.¹³⁷

IOM figures show that the number of migrants who crossed over to Spain (22,247 on 30 October 2019) has halved in comparison to the number from last year (47,505 on 30 October 2018). It is evident as well that in 2019 (until 1 November) 166 persons lost their lives during the crossover between Nador and Andalusia. During the crossover of the Straits of Gibraltar 52 persons died, and on the dangerous route across the Atlantic Ocean by way of the west coast of Morocco to the coastal city Cádiz 53 persons died.¹³⁸

There are reports about migrants who depart from cities such as Dakhla, Casablanca and Salé to reach the coast of the Canary Islands. The number of arrivals in the islands increased sharply compared to 2018. Migrants of Moroccan origin as well as from Sub-Saharan Africa dare to make the crossover along this route.¹³⁹

The Spanish government is going to assist Morocco with 32.2 million euros to combat illegal migration. In addition, the European Union has promised to support Morocco with 140 million euros for border control.¹⁴⁰

3.2.12 Nigeria: violence in the northern federal states, displaced persons due to the activities of Boko Haram

Continuing lack of safety in the northern federal states Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina has led to further relocation of more than 40,000 people who have fled to Niger.¹⁴¹ Moreover there are about 200 thousand displaced persons in these federal states.¹⁴²

Nigeria still has a large number of displaced persons as well (more than 2.5 million) as a result of the activities of Boko Haram. The neighbouring countries Cameroon, Chad and Niger are also faced with large numbers of displaced persons (more than 550 thousand in total) because of Boko Haram.¹⁴³

3.2.13 Pakistan: Unchanged human rights situation, conflict with India over Kashmir, law for transgenders

The human rights situation in Pakistan has hardly changed in the last few years. There is a lack of freedom of the press and religious freedom, inadequate judicial process, discrimination against religious minorities, corruption, gender-related violence and violence due to sexual orientation, against which limited action is taken. Voluntary sexual relations between persons of the same sex is prohibited. There is also forced labour, human trafficking and serious forms of child labour.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ UNHCR, *Global Focus, Plan Overview 2020*, found on: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/morocco>

¹³⁸ IOM, *Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Reach 87,315 in 2019; Deaths Reach 1,087*, of 1 November 2019, found on: <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-87315-2019-deaths-reach-1087>

¹³⁹ <https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/19811/espagne-plus-de-50-migrants-debarquent-aux-canaries-en-deux-jours>
<https://www.leseco.ma/maroc/80768-migration-irreguliere-sale-dakhla-mehdia-nouveaux-points-de-departs.html>

¹⁴⁰ Reuters, *Seven drown after boat capsizes off Morocco's Atlantic coast*, of 28 September 2019, found on: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-europe-migrants/seven-drown-after-boat-capsizes-off-moroccos-atlantic-coast-idUSKBN1WD0E3>

¹⁴¹ UNHCR, *Brutal violence in northern Nigeria forces thousands into Niger*, 27 September 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2019/9/5d8dc7a44/brutal-violence-northern-nigeria-forces-thousands-niger.html>, consulted on 23 December 2019

¹⁴² UNHCR, *Displacement situation at the Maradi Region frontier*, September 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/71408>, consulted on 23 December 2019

¹⁴³ UNHCR, *Nigeria emergency*, 31 October 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html>, consulted on 23 December 2019

¹⁴⁴ Country report on human rights practices for 2018 United States Department of State, <https://pk.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/76/2018HumanRights.pdf>

In August 2019 the dispute for years on end between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir region reached a new climax when the Indian government amended its legislation to annex the part of Kashmir that is under Indian control.¹⁴⁵ There are signs that Pakistan in turn is planning to appropriate the part of Kashmir it controls.¹⁴⁶

A new law was also passed in May 2018 for the benefit of transgenders in Pakistan. Under the law, citizens of Pakistan may determine their gender themselves and discrimination is prohibited. In applications for official documents, transgenders may have their preferred gender included. Violent and discriminating incidents against transgenders show that the law has not immediately changed the treatment of transgenders in practice.¹⁴⁷

3.2.14 Sudan: new transitional government inaugurated, borders with Libya and the CAR closed, agreement between transitional government and armed groups in Darfur

After the removal of Omar Al-Bashir in the spring of 2019, a new transitional government was inaugurated in the beginning of September 2019 in which both citizens and military personnel have seats.¹⁴⁸ This transitional government closed the borders with Libya and the Central African Republic on 26 September 2019 on further unspecified grounds. The closure of the borders could be a potential danger to migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa who hope to reach North Africa through Sudan.¹⁴⁹

Furthermore, the transitional government also signed an agreement with the armed groups in Darfur on 28 December 2019.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the country is still faced with 8.5 million people who need humanitarian aid and the land also shelters about 3 million displaced persons who come from their own country as well as from the neighbouring countries.¹⁵¹

3.2.15 Tunisia: state of emergency extended, conservative judge Kais Saied wins presidential elections, former president dies, Ennahda Party wins parliamentary elections, new government formed, Erdogan visits Tunisia, registered refugees in Tunisia

State of emergency extended again

The state of emergency was extended again on 30 December 2019 for the duration of one month.¹⁵²

Presidential elections

On 15 September 2019 the first round of the presidential elections was held. Already in the first round, the Tunisians settled scores with the established political class, that was held responsible for years of economic decline. Most of the votes went to Kais Saied and another candidate against the established political class, Nabil Karoui. Nabil Karoui had to conduct his campaign from prison, because he was imprisoned for money laundering practices. On 13 October, the judge Kais Saied won in a convincing manner with about 72% of the votes. He ran as an independent candidate and is known for his conservative ideas.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁵ BBC News, 24 December 2019, Kashmir crisis 2019: Between a rock and a hard place, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-50826419>

¹⁴⁶ DW News, 30 December 2019, Kashmir: Is Pakistan planning to take direct control over its part?, <https://www.dw.com/en/kashmir-is-pakistan-planning-to-take-direct-control-over-its-part/a-51835450>

¹⁴⁷ Amnesty international, 22 January 2019, With transgender rights, Pakistan has an opportunity to be a pathbreaker, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/01/with-transgender-rights-pakistan-has-an-opportunity-to-be-a-path-breaker/>

¹⁴⁸ Aljazeera, African Union lifts suspension of Sudan, 7 September 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/african-union-lifts-suspension-sudan-190907053151400.html>, consulted on 7 January 2020

¹⁴⁹ Mixed Migration Centre, MMC East Africa & Yemen – Quarter 3 2019, October 2019, <http://www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/qmmu-eay-q3-2019.pdf>, consulted on 6 January 2020

¹⁵⁰ UNAMID, UNAMID Welcomes Framework Agreement between Transitional Government and the Darfur Track, 30 December 2019, <https://unamid.unmissions.org/unamid-welcomes-framework-agreement-between-transitional-government-and-darfur-track>, consulted on 6 January 2019

¹⁵¹ European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, Sudan, 11 November 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/sudan_en, consulted on 6 January 2019

¹⁵² Jawhara FM, Prolongation de l'état d'urgence, 30-12-2019 <https://www.jawharafm.net/fr/article/prolongation-de-l-etat-d-urgence/90/72776>

¹⁵³ France 24, Conservative professor Saied wins Tunisia presidential election, exit polls say, 13-10-2019 <https://www.france24.com/en/20191013-live-tunisia-votes-for-new-president>

Former president Ben Ali died

On 19 September 2019, former President of Tunisia, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, died at the age of 83. He was the president of Tunisia from 1987 to 2011. Since his removal on 14 January 2011, he had lived in exile in Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁴

Ennahda wins the parliamentary elections

The Islamic Ennahda Party gained 52 of 217 seats in the parliamentary elections on 6 October 2019. The second place went to the Qalb Tounes Party with 38 seats under the direction of presidential candidate Nabil Karoui, who had been in detention since August 2019 on suspicion of money laundering, and was released on 9 October 2019. The Tayyar Party gained 22 seats and the Karama Party 21 seats. Four other parties each one between 4 and 17 seats.¹⁵⁵

Government

On 1 January 2020 the Prime Minister charged with government information, Habib Jemli, announced that he had formed a government of independent technocrats. Jemli said at a press conference that his government would concentrate on the economy, a subject that has troubled all governments since the revolution of 2011. The departing government had already implemented large cutbacks to reduce the government deficit that led to demonstrations by the population, but the International Monetary Fund and other foreign financiers strove for more tax reforms.¹⁵⁶ On 11 January the Tunisian parliament rejected the government proposed by Habib Jemli. The team of independent technocrats formed by Jemli received only 72 preferential votes of the 213 members of parliament. President Kais Saied had ten days to introduce a new Prime Minister who will be given one month's time to form a new government.¹⁵⁷

Turkish President visits Tunisia

On 25 December 2019 the Turkish President Erdogan paid a visit to Tunisia to discuss cooperation and bring about a cease fire in Libya.¹⁵⁸ Various Tunisian political parties and social organisations expressed their disapproval of this. They feared that Tunisia would become involved in the Libyan conflict.¹⁵⁹ Tunisia has stated that it wants to remain neutral and therefore would not comply with Turkey's request.¹⁶⁰

Tunisia as transit land

UNHCR reported on the basis of data from 30 November 2019 that at the end of November 3,117 refugees registered by them are residing in Tunisia. That is 1044 persons more than on the date of the last Migration Radar. Since the beginning of 2019, 724 persons of a nationality other than Tunisian have been referred to the UNHCR as having been rescued at sea. This is more than double the number in 2018 (290 persons).¹⁶¹ Most of the refugees who entered Tunisia in 2019 came from Sudan (26%), Somalia (16%), Eritrea (16%) and Ivory Coast (9%). Of the group of refugees registered by the UNHCR, 64% state that they want to apply for asylum in Tunisia, 14%

¹⁵⁴ France 24, Tunisie : mort de l'ancien raïs Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, 19-9-2019, <https://www.france24.com/fr/20190919-tunisie-mort-ancien-raïs-zine-el-abidine-ben-ali>

¹⁵⁵ Al Monitor, Will Tunisia's parties come together to form a government? 16-10-2019 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/10/tunisia-legislative-elections-government-ennahda.html#ixzz69t44E2VI> ; Reuters, Tunisia's moderate Islamist party Ennahda to lead fractured new parliament, 9-10-2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-election-results/tunisias-moderate-islamist-party-ennahda-to-lead-fractured-new-parliament-idUSKBN1WO2PD>

¹⁵⁶ Reuters, Tunisia's designated PM says he has formed a government, 1-1-2020 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-government/tunisias-designated-pm-says-he-has-formed-a-government-idUSKBN1Z01Z2>

¹⁵⁸ Deutsche Welle, Turkey's Erdogan talks Libya ceasefire in Tunisia, 25-12-2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-erdogan-talks-libya-ceasefire-in-tunisia/a-51793011>

¹⁵⁸ Deutsche Welle, Turkey's Erdogan talks Libya ceasefire in Tunisia, 25-12-2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-erdogan-talks-libya-ceasefire-in-tunisia/a-51793011>

¹⁵⁹ Agence Tunis Afrique Presse, Plusieurs partis politiques tunisiens ne cachent pas leur appréhension de la visite d'Erdogan en Tunisie, 25-12-2019 <https://www.tap.info.tn/fr/Portail-Politique/12164412-plusieurs-partis>

¹⁶⁰ Al Monitor, Could Turkey's military capacity match Erdogan's ambitions in Libya?, 31-12-2019 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/12/turkey-russia-libya-military-capacity-erdogan-ambitions.html>

¹⁶¹ UNHCR, Operational Update Tunisia, November 2019, <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Tunisia%20Operational%20Update%20-%20November%202019.pdf>

want to stay in Tunisia without applying for asylum, 12% want to continue travelling and 5% want to go back to their countries of origin. Of the refugees in Tunisia, 86% come through Libya. Of this group 97% have suffered under a form of violence in Libya (torture, sexual and gender-based violence, or bad treatment in detention).¹⁶²

Because of the war in Libya, tens of thousands of Libyans are expected to flee to Tunisia in the coming period. The Tunisian Ministries of Defence, the Interior, Public Health and Foreign affairs have therefore prepared an emergency plan together with the UNHCR and the Red Cross in case the situation in Libya worsens.¹⁶³

3.2.16 Turkey: Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister leave the AKP, arrests and detention of Gülen supporters and journalists, reception and return of Syrians

In September 2019, former Prime Minister and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu, formerly a loyal supporter of President Erdoğan, resigned from the AKP. On 12 December 2019 he took steps to establish a new party. Davutoğlu was Prime Minister of the AKP government from 2014 to 2016, but had criticised the economic policy and restrictions of basic freedoms, such as the freedom of opinion. The new party to be established by Davutoğlu was supposed to be called the Party for the Future. In the summer, Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan had already resigned from the AKP Party.¹⁶⁴

On 20 December 2019, arrest warrants were issued against 88 Gülen suspects. The police arrested 52 persons who were suspected of having ties with the Gülen/FETÖ organisation. Among the 88 suspects against whom an arrest warrant had been issued were 40 members of the military and 21 former members of the military (retired or dismissed).¹⁶⁵

On 27 December 2019, 7 journalists of the opposition newspaper Sözcü were convicted on the basis of supporting a network that allegedly had arranged the failed coup attempt. A prison sentence of more than 3 years was imposed on each of the journalists.¹⁶⁶

On 6 January 2020, 11 Gülen suspects were arrested and detained. Prior to these arrests 27 arrest warrants were issued by various Public Prosecutor's Offices of the Public Prosecution Service. The police carried out operations in Ankara, Istanbul, Erzurum, Trabzon and Kastamonu. The other suspects are still being sought.¹⁶⁷

3.2.17 Venezuela: Maduro's position is not changing, Guaidó set aside in votes on parliamentary chairmanship, further shrinking of the economy predicted, regional of the UNHCR and IOM, visa requirement for Venezuelans announced for Caribbean parts of the Kingdom

Despite the fact that the diplomatic net surrounding President Maduro is being pulled increasingly tighter (sanctions by the de EU and the US, diplomats who are being expelled, recognition of Juan Guaidó as the lawful president), he is still clinging firmly to power. As long as he maintains the support of the military personnel in his own country, as well as from China, Russia, Cuba and

¹⁶² UNHCR, Tunisia: Overview of Mixed Movement Profiling, 30-11-2019,

<http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Tunisia%20Mixed%20Movement%20Dashboard%20-%2030NOV19.pdf>

¹⁶³ Kapitalis, Croissant-Rouge: plan d'urgence pour accueillir les réfugiés en Tunisie, "si la situation en Libye venait à se détériorer", <http://kapitalis.com/tunisie/2020/01/06/croissant-rouge-plan-durgence-pour-accueillir-les-refugies-en-tunisie-si-la-situation-en-libye-venait-a-se-deteriorer/>

¹⁶⁴ Reuters, *Former Turkish PM Davutoglu forms new party in challenge to Erdogan*, 12 December 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-politics/former-turkish-pm-davutoglu-forms-new-party-in-challenge-to-erdogan-idUSKBN1YG176> en Financial Times, *New Turkish political party marks split in Erdogan's ranks*, 13 December 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/5f7ccf7e-1d9a-11ea-97df-cc63de1d73f4>

¹⁶⁵ Yeni Şafak, *Arrest warrants out for 88 FETÖ-linked suspects in Turkey*, 20 December 2019, <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/arrest-warrants-out-for-88-feto-linked-suspects-in-turkey-3507889>

¹⁶⁶ Reuters, *Turkish court sentences to jail seven at opposition newspaper*, 27 December 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-journalists/turkish-court-sentences-to-jail-seven-at-opposition-newspaper-idUSKBN1YV0SB> en Deutsche Welle, *Turkey sentences critical newspaper journalists to prison*, 27 December 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-sentences-critical-newspaper-journalists-to-prison/a-51810479>

¹⁶⁷ Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkish police detain 11 FETÖ terror suspects*, 6 January 2020, <http://www.hurriyettailynews.com/turkish-police-detain-11-feto-terror-suspects-150643>

Turkey, not much appears to be changing regarding the position of President Maduro in Venezuela.¹⁶⁸

What is more, on 5 January 2020 Venezuelan security troops prevented Interim President Juan Guaidó from entering Parliament. At that time a vote on its chairmanship was on the agenda, a position Guaidó holds at present. Because his opposition party has a large majority in the National Assembly, Guaidó was expected to be re-elected as chairman by a large majority. During the absence of Guaidó, a pro-Maduro candidate was elected as chairman. Guaidó calls this a parliamentary coup¹⁶⁹.

Economists once again predict a shrinking economy and increasing inflation in Venezuela in 2020¹⁷⁰, owing to which the exit of Venezuelans will also continue in 2020.

According to the UNHCR since the beginning of the crisis in 2014 up to and including November 2019, 4.6 million Venezuelans in total have fled their country. The organisation states that, given the current outflow, a number of 6.5 million refugees will be reached at the end of 2020.

On 13 November 2019, the UNHCR and the IOM presented a regional plan (2020 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP)), with which they aim to ease the humanitarian emergency of the Venezuelans in the region. The organisations focus on aid for the refugees as well as for the surrounding countries. They have set aside 1.35 billion dollars for this.¹⁷¹

On 2 October, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stef Blok, in a letter to the Dutch House of Representatives, announced a visa requirement for Venezuelans who want to travel to the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. The introduction of the visa requirement will be realised in the second quarter of 2020. A maximum of 8000 visa applications will be taken on an annual basis. The introduction of the visa requirement forms part of a broader set of measures to allow the movement of persons from Venezuela to take place in a responsible and regular manner. Other measures being explored are the introduction of an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization), the introduction of pre-boarding checks and a system by which travellers' information is checked in advance (Advance Passenger Information System).¹⁷²

4. Policy developments

4.1 International policy developments

4.1.1 Greece relocates migrants from the islands to the mainland

On 30 August 2019 the Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis held crisis talks on the situation in the Greek Islands off the Turkish coast. The arrival of sixteen boats carrying a total of 650 migrants in Lesbos within a few hours was the immediate reason for these crisis talks.¹⁷³ One of the measures arising from these talks was the relocation of migrants from the Greek islands off the Turkish coast

¹⁶⁸ International Policy Digest, *New Russia-Venezuela Cooperation Deal Opens Door to Putin's Cronies*, 12-10-2019, <https://intpolicydigest.org/2019/10/12/new-russia-venezuela-cooperation-deal-opens-door-to-putin-s-cronies/> [accessed 20-12-2019]
Atlantic Council, *Russia's intervention in Venezuela: What's at stake?* 12-09-2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/russias-intervention-in-venezuela-whats-at-stake/> [accessed 20-12-2019]

¹⁶⁹ CNN, *Guaido blocked from Venezuela's National Assembly vote*, 05-01-2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/05/americas/venezuela-national-assembly-vote-intl/index.html> [accessed 07-01-2019]

¹⁷⁰ Forbes, *Venezuela: another unhappy New Year!* 11-12-2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2019/12/11/venezuela-another-unhappy-new-year/#64878894444d> [accessed 20-12-2019]

¹⁷¹ UNHCR, *US\$1.35 billion needed to help Venezuelan refugees and migrants and host countries*, 13-11-2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/11/5dcdb7284/us135-billion-needed-help-venezuelan-refugees-migrants-host-countries.html> [accessed 20-12-2019]

¹⁷² Letter to the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer), 2 October 2019, Het Nederlands Buitenlands beleid ten aanzien van Latijns-Amerika en de Cariben (Dutch Policy with respect to Latin America and the Caribbean), reference 29653

¹⁷³ NOS, 30 August 2019, *Crisisberaad in Griekenland: 16 migrantenboten binnen een dag op Lesbos* (Crisis talks in Greece: 16 migrant boats in Lesbos in one day), <https://nos.nl/artikel/2299659-crisisberaad-in-griekenland-16-migrantenboten-binnen-een-dag-op-lesbos.html>

to the mainland of Greece.¹⁷⁴ On 2 September 2019 the first group of almost 650 migrants departed from Lesbos on the ferry to the mainland. The migrants were received in accommodations in the north of Greece.¹⁷⁵ In the first weekend of November about 800 migrants were brought from Lesbos to the mainland of Greece. They were accommodated in hotels, where there was room at the time because of the slow season. On Wednesday, 20 November 2019, Greece announced that in the following weeks another 20,000 asylum seekers would be relocated from the Greek islands off the Turkish coast to the mainland of Greece.¹⁷⁶

4.1.2 *Germany: Bavaria wants extension of border controls between Germany and Austria*

With reference to the increased number of migrants in Greece, the Bavarian Minister of Home Affairs, Joachim Herrmann, stated that the external borders of the EU were not adequately controlled. The German federal state therefore wanted an extension of the border controls between Austria and Germany after November 2019. According to the Bavarian Minister, the Bavarian State Police stopped more than 6,000 persons at the border with Austria who wanted to enter the country illegally.¹⁷⁷

4.1.3 *Italian Repatriation Decree*

Deputy Prime Minister Luigi di Maio issued a repatriation decree on 4 October 2019. The decree is intended to accelerate the repatriation procedures and reduce the pressure on the Italian asylum system. The proposal contains a list of 13 safe countries of origin, including Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Future asylum applications from these countries will be handled more quickly, in 4 months at most. According to the Deputy Prime Minister of Italy, this is only the first step towards a better repatriation policy.¹⁷⁸

4.1.4 *Takeover of third-country nationals from Italy and Malta by Germany and France*

In the Migration Radar of the second quadrimester of 2019, there was a reference to the agreement that Germany, France Italy and Malta concluded at the end of September on the reception of migrants who arrive in Italy and Malta. The agreement was presented to the other Member States on 8 October 2019, which only Luxembourg, Ireland and Portugal promised to support.¹⁷⁹

4.1.5 *New Greek asylum law*

On 31 October 2019 the Greek parliament adopted a new asylum law. According to Prime Minister Mitsotakis the law should help to send more asylum seekers back to their countries of origin. Mitsotakis won the elections in the summer of 2019 by promising to reduce the number of migrants. The new law will make it easier to place asylum seekers in detention up to 18 months without much intervention by courts. Furthermore, the definition of "family" has been curtailed, it is more difficult to prove that someone has been the victim of torture and it will be more difficult to obtain a work permit. The list of safe countries has also been increased and there are fewer exceptions for vulnerable groups. Various human rights organisations and a member of the Council of Europe have expressed criticism of the new legislation.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ NOS, 31 August 2019, Griekenland komt met maatregelen na crisisberaad over migranten (Greece takes measures after crisis talks on migrants), <https://nos.nl/artikel/2299745-griekenland-komt-met-maatregelen-na-crisisberaad-over-migranten.html>

¹⁷⁵ NOS, 2 September 2019, Honderden migranten van Lesbos naar vasteland gebracht (Hundreds of migrants taken from Lesbos to the mainland), <https://nos.nl/artikel/2300066-honderden-migranten-van-lesbos-naar-vasteland-gebracht.html>

¹⁷⁶ AP News, 20 November 2019, Greece announces major overhaul of migrant camp system, <https://apnews.com/65d55217dfe44941a09244a5e5fe4593>

¹⁷⁷ Europa Nu, 15 September 2019, Beieren: langer grenscontroles met Oostenrijk (Bavaria: longer border controls with Austria), https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/v1x1lrfc9y9/nieuws/beieren_langer_grenscontroles_met?ctx=vh6ukzb3nnt0&tab=0

¹⁷⁸ ANSA, 4 October 2019, Repatriations in 4 months with new migrant decree – Di Maio, http://www.ansa.it/english/news/2019/10/04/repatriations-in-4-mts-with-new-migrant-decree-di-maio_0b5dbacf-05dc-44e1-abdc-f8a977c7c3e3.html

¹⁷⁹ NOS, 8 October 2019, Argwaan op Lampedusa lijkt bevestigd: weinig landen steunen migratie-akkoord (Mistrust in Lampedusa seems confirmed: few countries support migration agreement), <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2305308-argwaan-op-lampedusa-likt-bevestigd-weinig-landen-steunen-migratie-akkoord.html>

¹⁸⁰ De Volkskrant, 1 November 2019, Griekenland kiest voor veel strengere migratiewet (Greece chooses much tougher migration law), <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/griekenland-kiest-voor-veel-strengere-migratiewet~bd57a9d6/>

4.1.6 *France announces substantial toughening of asylum policy and clearing of migrant camps*

Asylum seekers in France must henceforth wait three months before they are entitled to an allowance for medical treatment, and the French government is going to check more stringently whether asylum seekers who make use of social security are actually entitled to do so. French President Macron hopes that this will limit the influx of asylum seekers from countries the French government considers safe. After Afghanistan, most asylum seekers arrive in France from Georgia and Albania. Asylum applications by Georgians and Albanians are generally rejected, but during the asylum procedure these nationalities often rely on the healthcare financed by the French state. The French government also announced the clearance of the migrant camps on the northeast edge of Paris.¹⁸¹

4.1.7 *Belgium limits accommodation for certain categories of asylum seekers*

The Belgian Minister of Asylum and Migration stated at the beginning of January that from 7 January 2020, certain categories of asylum seekers would no longer be accommodated. This holds for asylum seekers for whom another Member State is responsible for handling the application under the Dublin Regulation, but after submitting an asylum application in Belgium go underground in order to evade transfer to the responsible Member State. It also holds for asylum seekers who have already obtained an asylum residence permit in another Member State. The asylum seekers who are affected by this measure will receive the support they need if they want to return to the EU Member State where they are registered or recognised. The Belgian Minister stated that by doing so he wanted to take action against the overload of the asylum services and the reception network.^{182, 183}

4.1.8 *Assessment of the situation in Syria by other EU Member States*

In Denmark the highest Danish third-country nationals division decided that it was safe for three female *Syrian* refugees to return to Damascus. In the three cases, no asylum can be granted, either because of the general situation or because of an individual assessment. This makes Denmark the first European country to send refugees back to Syria. The argument for their return is that the safety situation in and around Damascus has significantly improved.¹⁸⁴

Sweden has also declared certain parts of Syria safe, owing to which new asylum applicants cannot be granted asylum on the basis of a general risk, but only on the basis of individual circumstances. The regions include in any case Damascus, the southern provinces of Rif Dimashq, Dara'a, Duqyada and Quneitra and Hassakah and Latakia.¹⁸⁵

In Germany, conservative parties continue to insist on returning Syrians who have been convicted of serious crimes or have returned to Syria. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs has declared Syria unsafe, which makes removal impossible.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ De Volkskrant, 6 November 2019, Frankrijk scherpt asyumbeluid fors aan en stelt quota in voor arbeidsmigratie (France substantially toughens asylum policy and sets quota for labour migration), <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/frankrijk-scherpt-asyumbeluid-fors-aan-en-stelt-quota-in-voor-arbeidsmigratie~bb55169d/>

¹⁸² Knack, 4 January 2020, Geen opvang meer voor asyumbzoekers die Dublinregels niet volgen (No more reception for asylum seekers who do not follow the Dublin rules), https://www.knack.be/nieuws/belgie/geen-opvang-meer-voor-asyumbzoekers-die-dublinregels-niet-volgden/article-news-1549561.html?cookie_check=1579707970

¹⁸³ De wereld morgen, 7 January 2020, Federale regering weigert opvang aan bepaalde groepen asyumbzoekers (Federal government denies certain groups of asylum seekers asylum), <https://www.dewereldmorgen.be/artikel/2020/01/07/federale-regering-weigert-opvang-aan-bepaalde-groepen-asyumbzoekers/>

¹⁸⁴ The Washington Post, 18 December 2019, Denmark denied refugees asylum by arguing it's safe for them to go home to Syria, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/12/18/denmark-denied-refugees-asylum-by-arguing-its-safe-them-go-home-syria/>

¹⁸⁵ ECRE Weekly Bulletin, 6 September 2019, Sweden: Migration Agency Declares Part of Syria Safe, <https://us1.campaign-archive.com/?u=8e3ebd297b1510becc6d6d690&id=ca55bfa7e0>

¹⁸⁶ ECRE Weekly Bulletin, 12 December 2019, Germany: Conservatives Keep Pushing for Return to Syria, <https://mailchi.mp/ecre/ecre-weekly-bulletin-13122019>

4.2 Policy developments in the Netherlands

4.2.1 *Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat designated as domestic protection alternatives in Afghanistan*

In the EASO Country Guidance on *Afghanistan* the State Secretary for Justice and Security sees reason, in addition to Kabul, also to designate Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat as domestic protection alternatives in Afghanistan. "For the time being, the designation of Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat as domestic protection alternatives will not result in different practice of the Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V) and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (KMar) in enforcing involuntary departure to Afghanistan. Raising objections to one of the two protection alternatives would still mean in practice that there would be involuntary departure only to Kabul. The airline ticket would therefore be booked to Mazar-e-Sharif or Herat, but in case of involuntary departure, the third-country nationals would be escorted up to Kabul and would then have to travel on independently from Kabul to these cities."¹⁸⁷ This new policy took effect on 20 November 2019.

4.2.2 *Reassessment of safe countries of origin*

In a letter of 20 September 2019 the State Secretary for Justice and Security gave the second reassessment of the countries considered safe countries of origin in the first tranche. With respect to Serbia, there was a considerable decline in democratic government, protection of the right to freedom and safety of the person and freedom of opinion. Under the prevailing policy, a more comprehensive reassessment of Serbia was therefore necessary. Based on the comprehensive reassessment, Serbia is still considered a safe country of origin, with the exception of journalists and persons regarding whom it is plausible that they will be placed in criminal detention in Serbia. In individual cases, special attention should be devoted to LGBTIs.¹⁸⁸

4.2.3 *Sudan country policy adjusted as a result of general improvement of the safety situation*

The State Secretary for Justice and Security saw reason in the official country report on the situation in Sudan of 3 October 2019 to adjust parts of the current policy relating to Sudan. In view of the general improvement in the safety situation in the regions Darfur, South Kordofan (including Abyei) and Blue Nile, the State Secretary decided that it is no longer necessary to assume a 15c situation for these regions. This means that a realistic risk of serious injury in these regions will no longer be assumed for each third-country national, regardless of individual circumstances. The protection status of holders of a temporary residence permit on the basis of a 15c situation will be reassessed.¹⁸⁹ This new policy took effect on 15 January 2020.

4.2.4 *Examination of access to legal assistance in Greece prior to a Dublin transfer*

The Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of state gave two rulings on 23 October 2019¹⁹⁰ in which it was ruled that prior to the transfer of a third-country national to Greece in the context of the Dublin Regulation, the access of asylum seekers to legal assistance in Greece must first be examined. The Netherlands may transfer the third country national to Greece only if such examination shows that the third country nationals will have access to legal assistance.

4.2.5 *Policy relating to interpreters for international missions in Afghanistan*

The Dutch House of Representatives adopted a motion on 12 November 2019¹⁹¹ in which the government is requested to adjust the policy for *Afghan* interpreters. In the update of the EASO Country Guidance on Afghanistan, persons who have made efforts for international missions in Afghanistan, particularly interpreters and guards, are considered a systematically persecuted group and targets of the Taliban. In the motion a request is made to bring the protection policy for interpreters in line with the EASO Country Guidance on Afghanistan and to consider them a

¹⁸⁷ Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives, 5 September 2019, EASO Country Guidance Afghanistan, reference 2683666

¹⁸⁸ Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives, 20 September 2019, safe countries of origin – Reassessment 1st tranche, reference 2458707

¹⁸⁹ Letter to Dutch House of Representatives, 18 December 2019, Country Policy on Sudan, reference 2636944

¹⁹⁰ ECLI:NL:RVS:2019:3537 en ECLI:NL:RVS:2019:3538

¹⁹¹ <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2019Z21804&did=2019D45341>

systematically persecuted group. A request is also made, if interpreters are needed in future military missions, to give preference to interpreters who have a contract with the State of the Netherlands and to set out in it that they deserve protection when they are in immediate and personal danger. In a letter to the Dutch House of Representatives of 18 December 2019 the State Secretary of Justice and Security announces that the government has decided, in accordance with the motion, to assume systematic persecution of interpreters who have worked for international military missions in Afghanistan. Moreover, it will be included in the contracts of interpreters for future military missions in Afghanistan that they deserve protection when they are in immediate and personal danger.¹⁹²

4.2.6 *State of affairs and measures with respect to processing times*

In a letter of 18 November 2019 the State Secretary for Justice and Security informed the House of Representatives about the state of affairs and measures with respect to the processing times in handling asylum applications.¹⁹³ The problem of long processing times is stubborn and the forecast for the asylum influx has been adjusted upward. Because of this, it is a considerable challenge for the IND to meet the commitment to decide on 90% of the asylum applications within the statutory time limits in 2021. The State Secretary mentioned various measures that should contribute to this: expansion of the decision-making capacity at the IND, smarter working, structural financing, project-based approach to cases with a good chance of success and introduction of a client monitoring system.

4.2.7 *Measures with respect to the high influx of Moldovans*

In a letter of 16 December 2019 the State Secretary for Justice and Security informed the House of Representatives of the measures to be taken as a result of the high influx of *Moldovans* in the month of November.¹⁹⁴ In the letter it is first explained that Moldova cannot be considered a safe country of origin. Next a number of organisation-wide measures are put forward intended to make the Netherlands less attractive to Moldovans to apply for asylum, to call a halt to the influx and to effect return. One of the measures is that groups of Moldovans have been placed in austere accommodations with limited facilities. The asylum applications by Moldovans are also handled with priority.¹⁹⁵ When there is reason to assume that another Member State is responsible for handling the asylum application, no application will be submitted to that the Member State for international protection under the Dublin Regulation. The substance of the application will then be assessed and efforts will be made for a speedy return to Moldova. After expedited handling, most Moldovans, notwithstanding a Dublin indication, are rejected in Track 4. Discussions have been held with the Ambassador of Moldova about expediting the return procedures of Moldovans.

4.2.8 *Extension of the decision and departure moratorium for Libya*

In a letter of 18 December 2019 the State Secretary for Justice and Security informed the House of Representatives of the extension of the decision and departure moratorium for asylum seekers coming from *Libya*. Because of the continuing uncertainty about the developments in Libya, the State Secretary decided to extend the decision and departure moratorium by six months until 1 July 2020.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives, 18 December 2019, Reactie op motie inzake beschermingsbeleid tolken uit Afghanistan (Response to the motion for protection policy for interpreters from Afghanistan), reference 2761353

¹⁹³ Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives, 18 November 2019, Terugbrengen doorlooptijden asielaanvragen en stand van zaken dwangsommen (Reducing the processing time for asylum applications and state of affairs regarding incremental penalties), reference 2658165

¹⁹⁴ Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives, 16 December 2019, Maatregelen hoge instroom van Moldaviërs (Measures concerning the high influx of Moldovans), reference 2761864

¹⁹⁵ Spoor 4 is de achtdaagse Algemene asyumpprocedure.

¹⁹⁶ Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives, 18 December 2019, Country Policy on Libya, reference 2762061