

Migration aux frontières de l'Europe

- l'histoire de Karim Keita

Migration at Europe's frontiers

- the account of Karim Keita



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In cooperation with Chabaka

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I consider my friendship with Karim one of the most special I have had, not only because it was such an unlikely friendship, but also because we felt connected through our shared experience of being a foreigner in such an odd place. Karim shared everything with me and I am very thankful of the understanding that I gained through him and his stories.

I was invited in Morocco to work with Chabaka, an organization that I was connected to by the Germany organization World Unite!. I am both organizations very grateful for facilitating this experience. It was not always easy for both sides, but I think we learned from each other.

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Vincent Siegerink,

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Foreword

This is an account of the migration that takes place from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. It is an account of the desire of people to take their chances, to leave everything behind in order to try to build a new life somewhere else. In this report, I will put the story of Karim Keita in the light of existing knowledge on Sub Saharan migration. By doing so, I hope to achieve two goals. First, I hope to stimulate the understanding for migrants across Northern Africa and to raise awareness for the circumstances they live in. Their lives are not well understood, not by researchers and certainly not by the public, and I believe that telling an individual's story also creates understanding for the collective. Secondly, this report gives the opportunity to an individual that has gone through more than many of us could only imagine, to tell his story and to know that there are people out there who are aware of his situation.

This report came about during the six weeks that I spent in Tanger, Morocco. With the aim of researching the human rights of irregular migrants in Morocco, I interviewed several migrants, from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Senegal and Nigeria. Each had a story, and it was humbling to be given the trust to hear their stories. But not often have I met someone so open and with such strong desire for their story to be told as the very first migrant I met in Tanger: Karim Keita. I met Karim right outside the fort of Tanger, the Kasbah, where one can overlook the Strait of Gibraltar, the rest of the city, and across that gorgeous water: Spain. Ironically, that water, whose beauty drew me to return to that same spot many times, was all that stood in the way between Karim and his European dream.

In a paper prepared for the International Organization for Migration, Hein de Haas, a prominent researcher of the migration patterns in Northern Africa, called for the need to increase the knowledge and understanding of those individuals such as Karim: "... it is of paramount importance to achieve a more socially embedded understanding of the phenomenon ... Virtually nothing is known about the lives of the bulk of 'normal' migrants, such as the numerous Chadian, Ghanaian, Malian, Nigerien, Nigerian, and Senegalese migrants who pass largely unnoticed."¹

Reconsidering the added value that I would be able to bring to the existing knowledge and discourse of Sub Saharan migration, in combination with the desire of Karim to share his story, I decided that I would collaborate with Karim in writing his personal account. I think his story is a story worth telling for several reasons. First, it provides an explanation for the motives of migration: why does a person decide to take such a drastic step of leaving his country? What is the final straw? Second, Karim's account shows the human side of the migrant. In the Europe of the 21st century, migration is a strongly debated issue, causing growing xenophobic sentiments. I hope that Karim's account stimulates people to question their prejudices concerning migrants and consider their similarities as opposed to emphasizing their differences. Last, the story of Karim is representative of the group migrants that leave their homes in West Africa in an attempt to venture to Europe. There are thousands of other stories like Karim of people, educated but unable to find a job, desperate to give their life meaning.

¹ De Haas, Hein. *Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union: an Overview of Recent Trends*. Rep. no. 32. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2008. Print.

Each chapter will commence with a narrative of Karim. These narratives are summary's of the answers that Karim has given me to the questions and statements I confronted him with during our interviews. Furthermore, these answers have been translated from French to English. For this reason, it must be noted that Karim's narratives represent true facts, but the way they are phrased may not reflect the exact way in which they were phrased by Karim, purely for the sake of the coherence of the account.

Introduction

Morocco's geographical location at the crossroads of two continents makes it a major transit hub for irregular migrants from Sub Saharan Africa. Although originally the boat routes between Morocco and Spain were used primarily by the inhabitants of Morocco itself, especially since the 2000s these routes have become dominated by migrants originating from countries below the Sahara: irregular Sub Saharan immigrants (ISSs). The term irregular is used to describe those migrants that through both legal and illegal means move and reside in countries other than their own. Karim, for example, though residing in Morocco legally, is still considered an irregular migrant as a result of his illegal transit through Mauritania.²

From Morocco, there are three main routes into European territory: the Western Sahara coast route to the Canary Islands, to Ceuta and Melilla, the two Spanish enclaves in Morocco, or to mainland Spain across the Strait of Gibraltar. Tanger is situated at the tip of Morocco, overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar, which at its narrowest point constitutes a 14 kilometer divide between the two continents. Though the journey across the Sahara is either a costly or a tough one, and often both, most migrants manage to reach Morocco. In Morocco, however, they are either forced to take life-threatening risks by crossing the waters that lie between them and Europe, or pay thousands of euros to obtain the necessary documentation to at least enter Europe in a legal manner. As many are unwilling to risk their lives and unable to pay the large sums of money involved in entering legally, Morocco and other countries in the Maghreb have also become major destination countries where migrants settle for longer periods of time.

There are several misunderstandings about migration from Africa to Europe that I want to clarify. Media often misrepresent African migration into Europe. To start with, they use phrases such as "waves of desperate Africans" or "an exodus" to describe this phenomenon.³ This firstly suggests that this migration is of reasonable size. In fact, migration from Africa accounts for a much smaller proportion of migrants than from other continents. Secondly, it is often the poorest of the poor from the most war torn countries that are suggested to be the subjects of this migration. In reality, the bulk of migrants to Europe do not escape extreme war or poverty situations. This brings me to an important point hypothesized by Hein de Haas. A large proportion of the migrants that travel to Europe are educated and come from reasonable financial backgrounds. This means that they do not flee from urgent risks of starvation or prosecution. They migrate in order to improve prospects for a better job and quality of life, because these prospects are so meager in their country of origin. They are enabled to make such journeys through financial support from their families and their knowledge of the countries of destination and the languages they speak.

Based on this realization of the motives and engines of migration, Hein de Haas argues that the development of African countries will enable and cause more migration.⁴ Assuming that African countries are slowly developing, the pressure on Europe's frontiers will therefore

² De Haas, Hein. *Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union*

³ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion: Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union*. Oxford: International Migration Institute, 2007. Print.

⁴ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

increase. Karim's story is becoming more and more relevant. By listening to what these migrants have to say, the governments of African and European countries can gain insight in ways to deal with these developments in a humane and productive way.

Chapter 1. Life in Senegal

My name is Karim Keita. I will tell you the story of a great journey that I embarked on from Senegal to Europe. I am currently still underway, planning my next move. The reason ? To find peace, prosperity and respect. Let me start at the beginning, at home, in Senegal.

My close family comprises of 5 people : my father, my mother, myself and two other siblings, a brother and a sister. My brother is a little older than me. He has a degree in telecommunication from a public university in Senegal. He always wanted to work for the radio or tv, and he actually did a little internship at the local radio station. Unfortunately right now, they are not looking for anyone permanent. At the moment, he does not have a job. He sells some small things on the streets, but it doesn't earn much. It's a shame because I think he would have been good.

You see, my family and I, we are not the poorest people in Senegal. My country faces many problems. It is very hard to get a job, even with a degree, and there are enormous inequalities. Some people barely have anything to eat, ever. Their children can't go to school and so they will never get a good job either. At the same time the rich have so much, but they don't share their wealth. The rich will always stay rich and the poor will always stay poor, it is impossible to break this cycle.

But despite the problems, Senegal will always remain my country. I love the lifestyle, the culture, the people. I miss my friends, and doing the things we always did, like walking through the countryside or going to the beach. We also played a lot of sports. I loved basketball, but I also played football. Sometimes we would go to the river to catch fish and then eat them, or we would go fruit picking : in the right season, there are delicious mangos and oranges ! Senegal is just my country, I grew up there, and I will always come back there. But unfortunately, I have no future there.

When I grew up, we were kind of in the middle. My father used to be a physics teacher, and he earned a good living. Also, my mom had a small pharmaceutical shop where she sold some hygiene products and some medication. We always had food at home and my father earned enough so that my brother and I could earn our degrees. It was a happy time. I always liked going to school and studying together with my father. Every evening after dinner, I would light the candle, and I would revise my homework while my dad did the preparations for his next class. I had big dreams. I wanted to become a politician and be a leader in my country. That way, I could try to change things and also earn enough money to help my parents once they get older.

Unfortunately, around the time when I started university things changed. My father fell ill with an eye disease. As a result, he was unable to teach, and so the school fired him. Now, he has to stay at home, even though he is only fifty years old. He still gets a small amount of money from the teacher's association, but it is not enough to maintain five people. And so, one night, when I had already graduated, my father and I talked, and we decided that I should leave the house. My brother earned some money with a small shop, and so he could stay. My sister was still in high school, and she helped my mother with the household. But I

had aspirations that I could not fulfill in our town, and there was not sufficient money for me to stay there anyway. My father said that I might have better opportunities in Dakar, and that if I would find a good job I could support my family. And so it was decided that I would move to Dakar.

This happened last year. I stayed in Dakar with a relative who provided me with food and shelter until I would find a job. The problem is, there are no jobs. I went to the ministry of employment and I showed them my qualifications, but they could not find anything. I looked everywhere, in government offices, schools and businesses, but they would not hire me, despite the fact that I have a degree in Sociology.

Finally, I found work as a guard, so at least I had an income. I worked as a guard for several months. But the thing is, all my life I studied so hard to do well in school. Then I went to university and got my degree. Throughout all those years, I was motivated by the idea that one day I would get a job that would earn me respect and a good living standard for myself and my family. So when I found out that this was all just a dream, that I had worked so hard all this time to maybe only be a security guard, I was very disappointed. My aspirations of becoming a politician have been compromised because of the difficulties in my family and in my country. Many, many people don't have a job, and everyone deals with it differently. Some people turn to crime as a solution for their problems. They steal, deal drugs, or work in prostitution. If they get caught they end up in jail. I have some friends who have experienced that. Others don't do anything and they simply live in dire poverty, but they are very unhappy and gather little respect. My way of dealing with these problems was to escape the country, and try to find better opportunities elsewhere.

One day I met a man in Dakar who told me that there was a lot of work in Mauritania. In the past, I had already heard that Mauritania was a good place to go for work. My friend also suggested that as soon as I had gathered some money there, I would eventually be able to go to Europe, where life is much better. This plan gave me hope for a better future. There was no reason not to go, and so I decided to work for one more month and to then leave the country.

Every day the situation in Senegal seems to get worse. Initially there was not such a job crisis, because people stayed on the lands and helped out on farms. But there has been a rush of migration to the cities, especially Dakar, leaving very few jobs for young people. All the work sectors are closed while the prices are rising higher and higher, and it does not seem like the government is taking measures to deal with the situation. If even I have such small chances of finding a job, you can imagine that the uneducated people really stand no chance at all. If they have a job, for example on the land, the salary is not sufficient to live. They spend the whole day working in the sun, eating only one meal a day. The only thing they have to hold onto is God.

I don't believe that God can help me. The only way I was able to raise myself out of my situation was to take the gamble and move away. I hope that it will all pay off in the end.

Senegal is located at the Western-most point of West-Africa, and is considered one of the most stable countries in an otherwise unstable region. Yet economic growth lacks sufficient

speed to provide employment for the rapidly increasing population.⁵ Unemployment is severe, especially among youth. Furthermore, the country faces the same development challenges that are ubiquitous throughout the region, notably poor health conditions and low levels of education. However, social indicators such as primary school enrollment, literacy rates and child mortality are improving steadily.⁶ There are obstacles that need to be surpassed, challenges to be faced, but considering the poor state of some other countries in the region (i.e. Mali, Burkina Faso), Senegal does not perform badly. What follows is a crucial point that is often missed by politicians, media and the general public. It is because of its relative development, rather than its relative underdevelopment, that Senegal is one of the main countries of origin of migrants.⁷ Development in Sub Saharan Africa allows people with greater financial means to migrate as well as more awareness of the opportunities elsewhere.

Sub Saharan migrants are often portrayed as the collective of most vulnerable, desperate Africans that consider migration as their only chance to survive. Through headlines such as 'Waiting for the barbarians,' 'Desperate voyage, destination Spain,' 'Group from Senegal risks all to reach Europe,' 'When surviving is a tragedy' or 'They fear nothing' images are provoked of invasions of the poorest of the poor, risking everything to cross the waters.⁸ "Migrants themselves are commonly portrayed as passive victims who are desperately pushed out of the African continent by external forces, and who fall easily prey to unscrupulous traffickers and smugglers."⁹ Of course, many Sub Saharan migrants are desperate to improve their living situation and a portion of them indeed take life-threatening risks in order to fulfill their dream of going to Europe. However, most migrants often do not belong to the poorest of the poor of Sub Saharan societies. Hein de Haas, a Senior Research Officer at the International Migration Institute, has executed extensive research suggesting that greater economic development stimulates, rather than restrains migration.¹⁰

It is thus not surprising that Senegal, which is politically stable and where education rates and other social factors are improving, is a major Sub Saharan country of origin for migrants in Mauritania, Morocco, and Europe. There are several characteristics of Sub Saharan migrants that Senegal facilitates. First, migrants generally have economically stable backgrounds. "Despite common portrayal of migrants desperately fleeing poverty, migrants are rarely from the most destitute families. Migrants tend to be from moderate socio-economic backgrounds and are often from urban areas in their countries of origin."¹¹

This is explained firstly by the high costs that are involved with migration. Migrants often pay several hundreds of euros to reach transit destinations such as Morocco or Libya, and similar

⁵ USAID. "USAID: Senegal." *Senegal*. USAID. Web. 30 Aug. 2011.
<<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2005/afr/sn.html>>.

⁶ World Bank. "Senegal | Data." *Data | The World Bank*. The World Bank. Web. 30 Aug. 2011.
<<http://data.worldbank.org/country/senegal>>.

⁷ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

⁸ Carretero, Maria Hernández. "Risk Taking in Unauthorised Migration." Thesis. University of Tromsø, 2008. Print.

⁹ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

¹⁰ De Haas, Hein. *Migration Transitions: a Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry into the Developmental Drivers of International Migration*. TS 24. University of Oxford.

¹¹ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

or higher amounts to buy visas or means of transport for the final stretch across the Mediterranean. Secondly, it is often not the urgent need for income that drives migrants to move away, but rather the disappointment of a low quality of life combined with the awareness that there are opportunities elsewhere. As Hein de Haas phrases it: "rather than fleeing poverty, migrants tend to move either because of a general lack of perspectives for self-realization in their origin countries and the concomitant inability to meet their personal aspirations."¹² Migration is not an impulsive decision resulting from the pressure to survive, but a conscious move to search for better opportunities. This is often stimulated and supported by family, who support the migrant financially with the hope that their investment will render a profit in the form of remittance payments once the family member has settled in Europe.¹³ Furthermore, migrants are often educated: a substantial proportion has a secondary or higher education diploma.¹⁴ Their knowledge of the world that inspires them to find other opportunities is thus derived from the education that they have enjoyed. Lastly, even though an increasing number of women and children have also started to embark on going abroad, traditionally the majority of migrants have been young men. In Senegal, where 100,000 people enter the job market each year, some well educated, there is a relatively high number of young adolescents who fit this profile, and who are tempted to find opportunities abroad.¹⁵

Karim is thus quite representative for the collective of Sub Saharan African migrants. Through my conversations with him and the background knowledge I have gathered, I draw the following conclusions about the motivations for many migrants like Karim to move. Both push and pull factors play a role. Push factors include a low quality of life, and limited prospects for improvement on the short and medium term. People like Karim have spent their lives studying, working hard with the idea that one day, this hard work would pay off. They have dreamed about being able to position themselves in business, government or other professions. When they find out they might not even be able to equal their parents' level of welfare, it becomes difficult to accept a life on very meager living standards and with no opportunity of self-actualization and (self-) respect. Pull factors are also present. Educated Senegalese are regularly confronted with the wealth that is present overseas. They often know of friends or family that have already been able to move. Migration has become the answer to the hopelessness of the situation that Karim and others are in. It is a way to acquire money, prospects, and status: Senegalese pop songs celebrate the migrant as a modern hero. "Whereas formerly the state functionary symbolized individual success, now it is the international migrant."¹⁶ Karim and other migrants desperately try to break out of the misery that they witness in their country in the hope to one time be able to become a functioning member of the world society.

¹² De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

¹³ Caritas. "Senegal Migrants' Pursuit of Happiness." *Caritas Internationalis*. Caritas. Web. 30 Aug. 2011. <http://www.caritas.org/activities/women_migration/SenegalMigrants.html>.

¹⁴ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

¹⁵ UNHCR. "The "missing Middle" - Tackling Youth Unemployment." *Refworld*. Integrated Regional Information Networks, 10 Mar. 2009. Web. 30 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/category,COI,,,SEN,49b8dfd614,0.html>>.

¹⁶ Focus Migration. *Country Profile: Senegal*. Rep. no. 10. Hamburg: Hamburg Institute of International Economics, 2007. Print.

Chapter 2. A long and tiring journey

And so my journey began. I bought a bus tickets to go to the Mauritanian border. The border is a river, and I paid someone to take me across. But just as I disembarked the boat, an official saw me. I was scared to get caught, so I fled. Unfortunately I could not take my luggage. I left one bag at the border and continued with my backpack. I walked around a village nearby called Rosso where I met a Senegalese guy, and he invited me home. I waited there fore a couple of hours, while he helped me find someone to take me to the capital. Finally, we found another Senegalese man who was willing to take me to Nouakchott.

That night, we arrived in Nouakchott. The following day, I went to the area where many migrants stay, in the hope they would be able to help me find a job. But despite what the people in Senegal had told me, there was no work in Nouakchott. Fortunately, there was a Senegalese restaurant where they let me eat some of their food. At that time, in that town, I felt like that would be the end of my journey, that I would have to go back to Senegal. I did not have the prospects to move on to Europe. But one evening I saw this town at the Moroccan border on television. I gathered some information, and decided that I would make the next step to Morocco. The next day, I took my bag and got a ride to a town twenty kilometres from Morocco : Nouadhibou.

When I got to Nouadhibou, the police caught me again. They are especially aware of illegal immigration there because it is so close to the border. They sent me to prison and it was horrible. For three days, I did not have anything to eat and I remained in complete insecurity about what was going on. At that point I missed Senegal so much ; I wanted to go back there. Finally, after consulation with Senegal, the Moroccan authorities let me go. I stayed in Nouadhibou for two months and had a great time. I stayed with a local family that provided me with food, shelter and a small salary in exchange for domestic services. They were very polite and respectful people, and they told me I can always go back there.

After two months, I had earned 100 euros, which was enough for me to continue my journey. I took the bus to Dakhla, where I worked on a construction site for a week, after which I continued further to Agadir. I always look for people to help me out when I arrive in a new town. I look for someone black, and then I ask them where they are from and what they do. Senegalese always help each other. In Agadir too, I stayed with some Senegalese students. I continued again to Casablanca, close to my goal town, Rabat. I wanted to go to Rabat because I had heard that there are few problems with arrests in Rabat, and that there is also some work there. In the other towns, there would be more risk for arrests, they said. Waiting for the bus to Rabat I bumped into a Guinean who knew some Africans living together in Rabat. In that community I talked a lot to other immigrants. I got to know things about crossing the water to Europe, about employment and about living in Morocco. Many of the people I spoke were stuck in Morocco, unable or unwilling to go back home, but also unable to continue. On the other hand, I also gathered hope from the stories of others, who had succeeded in making the crossing. I really thought that one day I would also be able to make it. In Rabat, I met a friend from Senegal that I had known for a long time. We talked a lot about opportunities in Morocco, and it was then that I first heard about Tanger. Tanger is at the frontier with Spain, there is a lot of work, and if there was anywhere from where I could

go to Spain it would be there, he said. And so, after two weeks in Rabat, I took the train and ended up here, in Tanger.

There are some other routes to Morocco. I have friends in Tanger from different West African countries who have travelled different ways to come here. Some travel to Niamey in Niger, to continue across the Sahara to Algiers, from where they can enter Morocco via the border town of Oujda. But Oujda is a very dangerous place for migrants because there is a lot of border police, and many migrants get deported there. From Oujda it is still a long way to the rest of Morocco. They have to walk to this little village called Naima. There, if they have money, they can take the train to Fes. Only in Fes they are a bit more free, because the border police is not very present there. Others travel to Mali, from which they enter Algeria in Tamanrasset. These are all busy routes for migrants, but that makes them also dangerous. But whatever way we go, it is a long and often dangerous journey.

Some reports deem the long journey between the Sub Saharan country of origin and transit/destination countries such as Morocco and Libya to be at least as dangerous as the actual attempt to reach the European continent.¹⁷¹⁸ Depending on the amount of money that they have available, the ability to legally move around countries, and the country of origin and destination, many migrants indeed face distinct challenges and dangers en route. Examples are dehydration, violence, arrest and detention, malnutrition, rape, et cetera. Journeys often take several months to even years before and if final destinations are reached.

The arrival of significant numbers of Sub Saharans in Morocco only started to pick up around the mid-1990s. These consisted mostly of Senegalese, Nigerians, Malians and Ghanaians, as well as refugees from further into the continent.¹⁹ Since then, the number of migrants crossing the Sahara with destination Europe has been increasing rapidly, overtaking the Northern Africans as the most dominant group of African migrants to Europe. Furthermore, the major anti-immigrant uprising in Libya in 2000 has been significant in distinguishing Morocco as a major country of transit and destination for Sub Saharan. On top of that, the tightening of immigration procedures on air routes between West Africa and Europe has forced Sub Saharan migrants to explore overland routes rather than being able to directly enter countries of destination.²⁰ As a result of these events, Morocco has become an increasingly important country of transit but also of destination, for those migrants unable to continue to Europe.

There have traditionally been several main routes from West Africa to the Maghreb countries, though the extent to which these have changed as a result of the recent crises in notably Libya is unclear. To Morocco, there are two main routes. The Western Sahara route runs via Bamako, Dakar and Nouadhibou (where some take boats to the Canary Islands) into the Western Sahara and onwards to Casablanca. Another longer, cheaper but more difficult route, but more attractive for those from countries with few visa exemptions, runs from Agadez in Niger, to Tamanrasset in Algeria, from where they can go to the border zone

¹⁷ MSF. *Violence and Immigration. Report on Illegal Sub-Saharan Immigrants (ISSs) in Morocco*. Rep. Médecins Sans Frontières. Print.

¹⁸ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

¹⁹ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

²⁰ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

between Morocco and Algeria by Oujda, to continue into Morocco. Both routes present distinct difficulties.

The continuous battle against irregular migration that occurs not only at the borders, but well before them, constantly pushes the unstoppable group of migrants to find different routes through and into countries, increasingly difficult and dangerous. According to Doctors without borders: “The majority make the journey under very difficult physical and dangerous conditions. They travel for days, crowded into the back of pickup trucks crossing the desert, without stopping to sleep or eat and with little water. Sometimes they have to walk to avoid police checkpoints. According to various testimonies, men, women and children have died due to the difficult conditions of the journey or the violence they encountered along the way.”²¹ The extent to which this is true for a majority or large group of migrants is questionable, but in any case all migrants put themselves to great vulnerability as a result of the combination between limited budget and knowledge while traveling through hostile areas such as the Sahara. Furthermore, the migrants are often subject to inhumane treatment by the authorities that are in charge of controlling the borders as well as police. For example, detention at Nouadhibou is reported to be executed without proper trial, and migrants are subjected to poor and degrading treatment. “This repression gives rise to situations that are as tragic as they are absurd, and they reveal the lack of consideration that governments have for these people, who merely seem to be reduced to the status of ‘illegal’. The arrests in Nouadhibou lead to situations that are frightful; in just a few hours, a life can effectively collapse in the name of the protection of European borders, because they are foreigners in a city that is accused of being a “revolving door for illegal immigration” and in which procedures for stopping presumed migrants are not based on any law, they become things that are moved, taken away, and whose existence can be ruined.”²² At Nouadhibou, migrants have been deported to the desert at 55 kilometer distance of the city, an area that is nick-named ‘Kandahar’ because of the presence of mines as a result of the Western Sahara conflict.²³ On the Moroccan-Algerian border, similar deportations take place. As a result of the dangers faced on route, especially in border areas, migration to Northern Africa has resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries.²⁴

Still, the majority of migrants, like Karim, are able to reach Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia or Libya without encountering major hazards. Like Karim, migrants often spend months or even years reaching North African transit/destination countries. “On their way, migrants and refugees often settle temporarily in towns located on migration hubs to work and save enough money for their onward journey.”²⁵ GADEM, a Moroccan organization for the support of migrants points out the exhausting effects of this lifestyle: “The fact that this migratory movement is particularly long further reinforces the transnational and semi-nomadic character of these actors, who are obligated to develop ties in order to confront the precarious situations and

²¹ MSF. *Sexual Violence and Migration. The Hidden Reality of Sub-Saharan Women Trapped in Morocco En Route to Europe*. Rep. no. MSF-E. Print.

²² Migreurop. *European Borders Controls, Detention and Deportations*. Rep. Paris: Migreurop, 2009/2010. Print.

²³ Migreurop. *European Borders Controls, Detention and Deportations*.

²⁴ GADEM. *The Human Rights of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco*. Rep. Geneva: Migrants Rights International, 2010. Print.

²⁵ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

repression to which they are subjected.”²⁶ And finally, after months of traveling, when Spain is in sight, they realize that the last 14 kilometers are going to be the most difficult to cross.

²⁶ GADEM. *The Human Rights of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco*.

Chapter 3. Life in Morocco

Yet again, I arrived somewhere alone. This time it was Tanger. I asked someone whether there are any cheap places to stay in the town, and he told me to go to a quarter called the medina. I took a taxi to the medina and I quickly found a place where I could stay for a couple of euros per night. I went to bed and fell asleep right away. The next morning I started looking for a job immediately. But soon I found, there are no jobs. There are some jobs, especially in construction, but they pay almost nothing. Soon I found out that the best sources for money are tourists.

I will tell you what I do. I always stay in the medina, because there is little police, and there are many tourists. When I see a tourist, I make a short judgment call. It's best when they are alone. If it is a couple, or a group, they often don't want personal contact. Also, if they already have a guide, they will be told to stay away from me. But people that are alone often enjoy some company, and have more time and freedom to talk to other people. So when I see someone, I often try to make a joke or say something interesting to break the ice. For example, on those days that a French cruise ship is in town, there will be many French people. So then I wear my France football jersey, so that I can tell them that I am a France supporter. I tell them that I am a guide, and then ask them whether they would like me to show them around the town.

Almost every day, I will find someone. If they like me a lot, I will take them to café Hafa, the famous café. We will stay there and drink something, and I will tell them about my situation, but only if they are interested. Some people just want to know things about Tanger, and I will tell them about the city. I learned a lot of things about Tanger from other migrants. After café Hafa, sometimes we have lunch, or I bring them back to their hotel. But it all depends on the person. Some will thank me and give me a tip, but others like to exchange telephone numbers and meet up again the next day. Some people are very generous, and they will give me five, or ten euros. Sometimes even twenty. The whole time I have to sell myself, be polite, and make conversation. So at the end of the day I am completely exhausted. But it works, I earn a small living: I can sustain myself. Only at the end of the month, there is nothing left to save. Crossing the border costs a lot of money, but I have not yet been able to make a profit. I rent out a room with 7 other migrants, and we all have to pay some rent. After buying food and my residence card, there is nothing left.

Life in Tanger is not easy. Two out of every three people in Tanger are racists. We all experience the racism every single day. We walk over the streets, and people will call you names. They scream 'filthy black', or 'go back to where you belong'. Whenever you meet someone, they judge you based on several questions. First they ask you where you are from. Then they ask you what religion you belong to. Then they ask you what you do in Morocco. But there are no right answers, because they already have made up their opinions. Sometimes they ask me: "so you want to go to Spain?" But both answers will get you in trouble. If you say yes, you are a criminal. If you say no, they are upset that you stay in Morocco. It is everywhere, the racism. It makes me so tired. In Morocco, there is a real hierarchy of people. And we are at the bottom of the hierarchy, the outcasts. It is hard to live with.

It is getting harder and harder to live with no prospects, missing my family. I set myself a date, October 27th. If I still don't find a way to go to Europe, I will go back home. Even though I survive, I cannot stay in Morocco. I am tired of being a guide, of having to always rely on people's kindness, and to always have to take up this roll of poor person. This is not how I want to live. I cannot deal with the behavior of the people, and with the idea of being less than everybody else. One time, I met a Senegalese man who had already been in Morocco for ten years, trying to go to Spain. He has a wife and children here. I cannot stand the thought of having to stay here for so long.

If I go back to Senegal, I will try to get a visa, and fly to Europe. I just can't stay in Africa. Everyone is searching, everyone is trying to build a life, but everyone is poor. But up there, these problems don't exist.

Misinformed or simply hoping for a good outcome, many migrants underestimate the difficulty of traversing between Morocco and Spain. As a result, thousands of migrants like Karim have become stuck in Morocco, making attempts to cross the borders, but often simply trying to save money and surviving on a daily basis. Furthermore, for a proportion of them trying to continue their journey may not be a priority anymore. Even though countries like Morocco are often considered to be transit countries, the reality is that many migrants have started to accept the fact that they may not reach Europe, and settle for Morocco instead. Several studies have indicated that the vast majority of the migrants who are stuck in countries like Morocco want to remain there. "After investing considerable personal and family resources in reaching North Africa, and often having connections to those migrants who already succeeded in entering Europe, migrants do generally not want to abandon their migration project at the fringes of Europe."²⁷ During their stay in Morocco, they face several difficulties.

Even with a residence permit, migrants are not allowed to work legally. Consequently, it is almost impossible for them to secure a stable income. Migrants thus live in continuous insecurity of being able to sustain themselves. They subsist from begging, remittances, petty commerce or illegal jobs in for example the building industry. All these forms of income are subject to distinct insecurity and this has a damaging impact on the migrant's quality of life. Furthermore, they are almost always overqualified for whatever employment they are able to find, which further inhibits any sense of satisfaction or well-being.²⁸ "These situations of vulnerability increasingly favour the illegal businessmen in the agricultural and building sectors, who benefit from this new workforce whose rights are neglected and whose salaries are derisory low."²⁹

As a result of the consequent low levels of income, migrants encounter difficulties sustaining a reasonable quality of life. Shelter is a main difficulty, as Moroccans tend to ask double or triple regular prices of rent for Sub Saharans. Others stay in pensions in cities whereas the most unfortunate reside in camps in forests such as in Gourougou near Oujda. According to Hein de Haas: "in Morocco, migrants live in highly degrading circumstances in overcrowded houses or, sometimes, in improvised camps."³⁰ Shelters may offer a place to sleep, but

²⁷ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

²⁸ Focus Migration. *Country Profile: Senegal*.

²⁹ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

³⁰ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

hygiene, privacy and space are highly compromised. For example, Karim shares a mattress with two others, in a small space in a building with 5 other Sub Saharans. There is no shower and the walls have mould on them. Such precarious conditions strongly affect both health and happiness.

Special attention should be given to the situation of female migrants. Women are among the most vulnerable groups of migrants because they have most difficulty securing an income. Many travel pregnant or with young children as a result of rape en route, and have to care for them right away. "Many women, single mothers as a result of violation, depend on people's mercy to cover their children's basic needs. These children, in turn, are refused in schools or even nurseries for not having a proof of identity."³¹ As a result, finding employment is difficult, which is more difficult for women regardless. Furthermore they face the challenge of getting access to medical services to support them during their pregnancy and after childbirth, as well as to deal with the medical consequences of rape.

If the Moroccans in Europe encounter difficulties integrating and thriving in their recipient societies, they should think about the challenges that their colleague migrants in Morocco face. There is little facilitative legal framework for incoming migrants, forcing them to live under the radar, vulnerable to the dangers this life presents. "These migrants not only live in precarious conditions but also feel increasingly hopeless and worried," according to Hein de Haas. Furthermore, they are subject to distinct threats to their human rights.

³¹ APDHA. *Human Rights at the Southern Frontier*. Rep. Asociación Pro-Derechos Humanos De Andalucía. Print.

Chapter 4. Human Rights Violations at the frontiers

I don't think the human rights of myself and the other black Africans here in Morocco are respected. We do not really participate in the society, we live without the access to forms of protection that normal citizens have. There are many ways in which this can be noticed.

One time, I was confronted by a group of aggressors. They undressed me completely, and then they stole my money and my other belongings. But I knew that if I would go to the police, they would rather believe a group of Moroccan criminals than me, and perhaps it would even backfire at me. Black Africans in Morocco do not have protection from the police. Many boys from the outskirts of the town walk around the medina when it's dark, and sometimes they do such things. We are a very liked target by such gangs because they know we will not go to the police. Violence like this happens to myself and other migrants on a regular basis. Everyday people threaten me. It's part of the reason why I want to leave.

Another example. One time I bumped into some Spanish tourists, three guys. They called me and asked me to talk to them. They wanted to have sex with me, and they would give me money. But I said no and wanted to walk away. As I tried to walk away they pushed me into an alley, and started touching me and harrassing me. I was able to get away, but there was nothing else I could do. The police is not going to prosecute three Spanish tourists because of accusations by a Senegalese immigrant.

For a little while I had this job working at a construction site in a village near Tanger. But the day to receive my salary passed, and after a while I started asking my boss for the money, but he wouldn't give anything. That time I actually went to the police, but they didn't do anything. In the end I never got the money, he used my labor for nothing.

In Morocco, people are not equal. A black African does not have the same rights as a Moroccan, and he is not free to live and express himself like he would want to. When I walk on the streets, boys come and spray water from the fountain at me, calling : « blacks, blacks ! ». But nobody does anything. We are not free. When the police see us, they ask us for our papers. We are not considered as people, who have thoughts, and feelings, and even a conscience. They treat us as if we are animals.

I have some friends who have told me about when they were arrested and deported to the border. The police very easily finds people without residence permits, because they just ask all the blacks to show their papers. If you don't have them, you will be deported. Every day people get deported from Tanger. First, they are put in jail for several days, with nothing more than one piece of bread to eat per day. They sleep on the floor, without any guarantee for their health. A friend of mine had fallen ill, but they would not treat him. We are all just treated very badly.

In this section I will focus on the Human Rights violations towards Sub Saharan migrants that occur in Morocco and at its frontiers. The rights that migrants are entitled to are dictated by national and international law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out the general Human Rights. However, irregular migrants are not usually considered to be entitled to these rights, especially if they have entered Morocco illegally, but also simply because

they are not nationals of the country. The Declaration of Human Rights of Individuals Who are not Nationals of the Country in which They Live provides more specific rights to the groups of migrants that can be found in Morocco. Unfortunately this declaration is an extremely distilled and weakened version in comparison to the actual Universal Declaration, and the rights described in this Declaration are nearly all bound to domestic law. This means that domestic law is the most authoritative legislation concerning irregular migrants. In 2003 Morocco introduced law 02/03 with the purpose of regulating irregular migration. But Law 02/03 is mostly focused on systematic security measures rather than securing the rights of the migrants.³² As a result, the rights of irregular migrants in Morocco have little legal foundation, and are subject to the discretion of government authorities. Furthermore, even though Law 02/03 does refer to several international conventions such as the two mentioned earlier, in practice the rights that these conventions facilitate are often ignored.³³

The main direct violations against Sub Saharan migrants are committed by authorities at the frontiers. Migrants are subject to violence, sexual violence, degrading treatment, unlawful punishments, discrimination, et cetera. In the processes of border patrolling, arrests and detention, there have been many reports of violence committed by police and security forces. Doctors without Borders has executed an extensive study among their Sub Saharan African patients. This study exposed that a large number of medical problems were caused by violence, and that the majority of violence encountered by irregular migrants was committed by authorities. "Our patients say that they have been victims of an excessive use of force in addition to humiliating and cruel treatment whilst being detained or chased by certain members of the Moroccan security forces (SF) and the Spanish security forces in Ceuta and Melilla."³⁴

Many violations occur during raids and arbitrary arrests. During large scale raids, hundreds of security forces are involved in the arrests, punishments and violations of groups of migrants in city areas as well as forest camps. According to Doctors without Borders, during these raids migrants are beaten, raped and faced with violence causing immobility, loss of limbs and other injuries. "Numerous immigrant statements describe how security officials, sometimes accompanied by civilians, use excessive force during arrests causing serious injuries (wounds, fractures, bruising or burns). Injuries are also sustained indirectly (such as loss of limbs near train tracks) when ISSs flee in an attempt to avoid an arrest which in the best case scenario would see them being returned to the border."³⁵ Such actions go against many international conventions, such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment or Treatment and the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights.³⁶ The most serious of these cases have occurred in the forests near Oujda, where migrants that have been deported hide in camp sites waiting for an opportunity to move to different cities. As a result, a cycle is created, where deported migrants move between Oujda and other cities, until they get deported again.

³² Jankari, Rachid. "Morocco and the Rise of Racism against Sub-Saharan Immigrants!" *Zawaya*. Maghreb. Web. 30 Aug. 2011. <http://zawaya.magharebia.com/en_GB/zawaya/opinion/168>.

³³ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

³⁴ MSF. *Violence and Immigration*.

³⁵ MSF. *Violence and Immigration*.

³⁶ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

These deportations are often arbitrary and unlawful. There are many reports of arbitrary arrests of irregular migrants who are deported without proper trial. When their decision of deportation is made they are often brought to either the border zone between Algeria and Morocco or between Mauritania and Morocco, both of which are deserts and the latter of which contains mines. As a result, the migrants are subjected to hunger, thirst, but also to violence committed by organized gangs such as assault and rape.³⁷ This goes against the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 on the status of refugees: ““No foreigner can be deported to a country if it is established that his [or her] life or liberty are threatened or that he [or she] is exposed to inhumane, cruel or degrading treatment.”³⁸ Regardless, Doctors without Borders has witnessed the deportation of vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, juveniles and seriously ill persons to such regions. Despite appeals to Moroccan authorities this has taken place on multiple occasions and this is highly unlawful especially when it concerns vulnerable persons.³⁹ The manner in which some deportations are made cannot be justified legally or morally in any way. The Andalusian organization for Human Rights APDHA notes: “Up to now, no rights have been recognized to migrants but those of ‘arrest and deportation’.”⁴⁰

The Moroccan authorities are not alone in their violations of some essential rights. Once in the water, or at borders between Morocco and Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish authorities have been reported to remove migrants and refugees back to Moroccan territory without trial, compromising their protection. This act, known as *refoulement*, is illegal under several international conventions that promote the principle of non-*refoulement*.⁴¹ Furthermore it must also be noted that the increased border patrolling and controlling executed by Morocco and Spain under pressure from the European Union has forced migrants to embark on increasingly dangerous routes.

There have also been reports of authorities and police unable or unwilling to assist Sub Saharans. This is an example of the difficulty of life on the fringes of society, namely the absence of legal assistance. According to Doctors without Borders, Sub Saharans, especially vulnerable groups such as women and minors, are subjected to assault and other forms of crime by common criminals.⁴² They suspect not to be taken seriously and fear reciprocal effects. “In all the cases known to MSF [Doctors without Borders], only one woman (who still showed bruises and had not had access to legal support) reported the rape to the authorities. In that specific case, the perpetrator claimed that the victim had given her consent and was acquitted.”⁴³ No prosecution had followed. Similarly, the Sub Saharans that I have spoken to, including Karim, are daily confronted with the threat of violence by Moroccan gangs. The suggestion of going to the police is refuted because they claim to not be taken seriously and are even scared of negative repercussions. As a result, the violence and threats migrants face continue.

Sexual violence committed against women is not uncommon. A representative at Terre des Hommes estimated that the majority of women who travel alone encounter sexual violence

³⁷ GADEM. *The Human Rights of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco*.

³⁸ GADEM. *The Human Rights of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco*.

³⁹ MSF. *Violence and Immigration*.

⁴⁰ APDHA. *Human Rights at the Southern Frontier*.

⁴¹ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

⁴² MSF. *Violence and Immigration*.

⁴³ MSF. *Violence and Immigration*.

as well as allow being violated in exchange for assistance with their travels. According to Doctors without Borders, one in three women treated admitted to have been subjected to sexual violence, a figure that could be even higher considering the number of women that were unwilling to talk about this issue. Walking around in Tanger, the only Sub Saharan women visible sit on the street, begging, with almost not a single exception accompanied by one or two children. Women are easily neglected and such accounts as Karim's are also necessary for women, in order to fully understand their behavior and problems.

The severe violations to Human Rights previously described do not apply to the majority of migrants, especially in cities such as Tanger. For them, the single most severe violation of their rights is the constant discrimination that they face by the people and authorities. Karim claims two thirds of Moroccans to be discriminatory towards Sub Saharans. Indeed, all Sub Saharans I have spoken to have reported the outspoken racism they are confronted with on a daily basis to be a major impediment to their life in Morocco. They are referred to as 'sales immigrés'; dirty immigrants, and other derogatory terms. Karim considers this a major obstacle to life in Morocco, as it is impossible to function as a normal member of the society. Furthermore, there have also been cases where migrants have been denied the right to critical services, or have difficulties obtaining these. APDHA mentions the cases where people were denied the access to hospitals in Rabat and Casablanca. Shelter is also reported to be difficult to find as higher prices are charged for Sub Saharans. "Emigrants live exclusively in marginalized areas, resulting in xenophobia and speculation."⁴⁴

Some of the Human Rights violations that the migrants face have a legal foundation according to national and international law, others perhaps do not. But that does not make these violations more licit. They should be constricted nonetheless. GADEM argues in their Human Rights report: "Today, migrants' rights are in danger all over the planet: migrants are stigmatized, pushed aside, locked away, displaced against their will, and hindered from circulating by increasingly coercive measures that lead to thousands of deaths and victims... The question is: how far will it go? How many people will need to be buried before this unacceptable injustice is put to an end?"⁴⁵

⁴⁴ APDHA. *Human Rights at the Southern Frontier*.

⁴⁵ GADEM. *The Human Rights of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco*.

Chapter 5. Destination Unknown

To live in Europe is like a dream for many Africans. I think that I won't have any more money problems once I get there. In Senegal, Europe seems like a sort of El Dorado or something. There, you can change your life for the better. Everyone's human rights are respected, there is work, there is justice, and there is solidarity. When you fall ill, you can go to a hospital, and you have the support of the society. There, I could have a home, and be proud of my existence on earth, and make my life meaningful.

Even though I never really considered it, I always knew of the possibility of moving to Europe. Many people do it, and from a young age we are confronted with the wealth and opportunities available there. We learned about it in history class, in geography class, reading books about France and other countries. You see it on television and hear about it from people who already went there. But the borders are closed. There are so many Africans who would like to go there, that they made it very hard. For that reason, I might never get there.

While some migrants may thrive in their European countries of destination, many face large, unexpected difficulties. Family and friends in the countries of destination are often the main source of information for the migrants. But according to some, migrants often exaggerate their living conditions to their relatives and tend to emphasize only the positive sides.⁴⁶

In reality, many studies point out the difficulties that migrants face in Europe. Increasingly strict immigration policies will cause the lives and freedom of irregular migrants in Europe to be very restricted. If they live illegally, they will face uncertainty of income, of availability of health care and education, and are vulnerable to crime. But if they search asylum or attempt to acquire residency, they are very likely to be expelled. Even if they are able to do so, the process of acquiring legal status is a long and stringent one. According to Mazzucato, Ghanaian migrants had two cleaning jobs while trying to acquire legal status for 10 years, after which they were physically unable to continue working and became dependent on welfare payments.⁴⁷ At the same time, they may face discrimination, racism and the experience of relative poverty. According to Focus Migration, “the cliché of “Paradise Europe” and the image of the migrant as the embodiment of success are diametrically opposed to the actual experiences of the average Senegalese person abroad.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, they claim that most Senegalese migrants in Germany would not choose to migrate to Europe again, nor advice others to do the same.⁴⁹

Whether the latter applies to all migrants is questionable, because despite the exaggeration of “Paradise Europe”, some argue that migrants can indeed expect better prospects in Europe. “Even if impressions of Europe as some kind of paradise were too rosy, the image that there are more opportunities overseas does reflect reality at least to some extent. Salaries are many times higher even in the informal sector and regularization is a realistic prospect. Notwithstanding all the problems migrants may face, and although distorted views

⁴⁶ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

⁴⁷ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

⁴⁸ Focus Migration. *Country Profile: Senegal*.

⁴⁹ Focus Migration. *Country Profile: Senegal*

might prevail, the perception that international migration is the most secure way towards more social and economic opportunities is more than a mirage.⁵⁰ Indeed, ninety per cent of Senegalese citizens still consider immigration as a viable option to improve their prospects.⁵¹

Whether Europe really is an El Dorado for Sub Saharan African migrants is questionable. They will face large obstacles in acquiring the freedom, respect and wealth that they set out to find. At the same time, a certain level of material improvement as well as the esteem gathered from friends and family back home will serve as a sufficiently strong engine to keep up the El Dorado image and continue to draw people from across the continent to embark on this journey.

⁵⁰ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

⁵¹ APDHA. *Human Rights at the Southern Frontier*.

Chapter 6. The last 14 kilometres

When I left Senegal, I did not have a plan. I just thought that I would take it step by step, getting closer and closer. But now, even though I'm so close, I don't know how to continue. There are a couple of ways that people go there. Some people try to go by boat, with someone else or alone. Some boats depart here, but more depart in the South, to the Canary Islands. But I won't do it; it's too dangerous. The sea is enormous and scary, and many get caught anyway. One time, in Nouadhibou, I tried to take a boat. It was a fishing boat, and the sailor told me and a friend that he would bring us to Fuerteventura. But as soon as we departed the port, a police control came and found us and brought us back to land. The only possible way is to buy a visa and then take a boat or plane. But I can't afford it. It will cost around two thousand euros for me to buy all the right papers for the visa.

I have some friends who were able to make the crossing. I have a friend in America. He was fortunate that his father was able to help him to go there. Another friend is in England. He works for a big organization and he even sends money to his family. He encourages me all the time to come there. He will even help me with food and shelter once I get there.

Everyday I'm busy with trying to save enough money to be able to go, but I just am not able to raise that much money. People discourage me all the time. They say I'm not going to make it, and I should stop trying. At the same time, there are fewer and fewer tourists and more and more aggressive people. Because of all of this, I'm seriously thinking about leaving. It would just be very embarrassing to go back home with nothing. My family encourages me all the time to keep the courage to continue. If I would come back and told them that I was not able to reach Europe, they might think of me as a failure. They do not understand how hard it is for West Africans to enter Europe. I don't want to disappoint them. My whole life they took care of me, they let me go to school and gave me a good upbringing. This was my chance to pay them back and raise them out of their situation. But I can't force it. If I would force it I would die.

I think I have to face the facts and go back. If I would have earned a fortune, I would be received as a hero. Now, people will talk about how I went a way but came back with nothing. There are times that I want to take a big knife and stab myself in the head. I just don't know what to do with my life anymore.

The final crossing between the African and European continents is likely to be the most sensationalized aspect of the migration of Sub Saharan Africans to Europe. Indeed, it takes courage and desperation to cross such a vast body of water, a crossing very costly to human lives. Migrants use *pateras*, wooden rafts to cross distances of at least 14 kilometers, but often many more in order to overcome the distance between Morocco and Spain, as well as between Libya and Lampedusa and the Western Sahara and the Canary Islands. Newscasts of horrible deaths resulting of such journeys are not uncommon, and indeed, some migrants experience tragic deaths as they drown in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Statistics are unreliable as the illegality of the phenomenon makes it difficult to account for those who do, and do not make the journey. The only reliable data comes from interceptions by government authorities and from bodies found on shores. According to Doctors without Borders, between 1995 and 2005, an estimated number of 6,300 people have lost their lives

on the Spanish-Moroccan coast line.⁵² More recently, APDHA has witnessed a decrease in reported deaths between 2007 and 2009, but it adds that “Although this drop is good news, we cannot be satisfied just by a “drop” if we are talking about human deaths in a society where human rights are supposed to be respected.”⁵³

In cooperation with the Moroccan border police, Spain has severely professionalized its border patrol activities over the past decades. These measures are taken in order to decrease the attempts of crossings and thus its death toll, but this is certainly not the main reason. “The path of the European Union is progressively geared toward measures that aim to stop migrants from entering its territory or measures geared simply toward preventing migrants from leaving African Soil.”⁵⁴ The EU goes well out of its way to improve relations with border countries such as Morocco to gain the goodwill necessary for tight cooperation in order to prevent migration. However, many argue that the increasingly strict border controls have a very unfortunate side effect. “The direct results of these actions are neither to decrease the number of potential migrants, nor reduce the number of migrants who are already in the process of migrating, but to make migration more perilous, trap people in countries in which they do not want to stay and plunge their lives into a “legal clandestineness”, making them more vulnerable and rendering them too easy to exploit.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, these policies have led to the emergence of even more dangerous alternative migration routes.⁵⁶

Despite the tragedy of the death toll that the sea crossing between Morocco and Spain claims, it distracts from the reality that the vast majority of migrants use other methods to go to Europe, or get stuck in a transit country, like Karim. Indeed, migrants generally avoid entering Europe by boat, and only ten per cent of irregular migrants in Italy have entered the country by boat; not to mention all those others that do not even attempt the crossing.⁵⁷

In reality, the far majority of migrants enter Europe legally. They usually buy the required documents to obtain a tourist or business visa, and then legally enter the country of destination by airplane. Once there, they overstay their visa, becoming irregular migrants, even though they entered in a legal manner.⁵⁸ However, this way of entering the European Union is very costly and requires large amounts of money or connections that can work the system. For many migrants, this sum of between 1,500 and 5,000 euros is unaffordable, and they end up stuck in a country of transit such as Morocco, like Karim. From that point on, prospects are grim. Going back will harm the social status of the migrant as well as their family, not to mention the disappointment of the realization that there is very little to look forward to in the future. For Karim and many other migrants in Sub Saharan Africa, there is little hope.

⁵² MSF. *Violence and Immigration*.

⁵³ APDHA. *Human Rights at the Southern Frontier*.

⁵⁴ GADEM. *The Human Rights of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco*.

⁵⁵ GADEM. *The Human Rights of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco*.

⁵⁶ Focus Migration. *Country Profile: Senegal*

⁵⁷ De Haas, Hein. *The Myth of Invasion*

⁵⁸ Focus Migration. *Country Profile: Senegal*

Conclusion

Migrants, whether they live in illegality in Europe, whether they are stuck in transit countries such as Morocco, or putting themselves at risk by crossing the Mediterranean, live in precarious and unsustainable situations. They are considered to be burdens of society and as a result, they often are. At the same time, they encourage relatives, friends and acquaintances to migrate as well. As Africa's countries are slowly finding ways to develop and as they are creating larger and larger bases of lower middle class people, the amount of people that will have the ability and the desire to migrate is likely to grow steeply.

So far, the main way of dealing with these pressures has been to increase border patrols and immigration laws. Yet this has not decreased the amount of migrants that depart their countries of origin. From the story of Karim it becomes clear that a migrant does not make decisions based on a certain likelihood of success; a migrant acts based on the mere possibility of success. This migration is inevitable and will continue. Following this reasoning, European countries should expect an increase in migration pressure on their frontiers, which will also have consequences for transit countries such as Morocco and Libya.

As a result, an increasing number of people like Karim are stuck swerving around West Africa without any prospects. They stimulate criminal activity in the form of human trafficking. They put themselves at risk by attempting to cross kilometers of open sea. At the same time, the human resources that these migrants, often educated, possess go to waste. Those people that are supposed to constitute a very important middle class leave a gap in the society.

With this foresight, leaders both in Africa and Europe need to start thinking about how they are going to deal with such pressures. Furthermore, it is important that people both in Europe and in transit countries such as Morocco become aware of the situations of these migrants. In Europe, Africans are often seen as a burden. However, politicians, especially in Southern Europe, know that they make valuable contributions in informal sectors. The problem is that this creates a negative image of these migrants. In Morocco, authorities need to realize that the never-ending cycle of deporting migrants who return anyway is counterproductive. Rather, a legal framework that could stimulate the role of migrants in the economy would be beneficial for both sides. Naturally, solutions to the issue of migration are entangled in the will of many different stakeholders. At least, by hearing about the situation of a migrant, I hope that these stakeholders will recognize the human face of these migrants. Karim, as well as Abubaka, Ernest, Louis and many others will continue to try to mean something to this world. They have the intelligence, the power and the will to contribute in a positive way to their own country or any other country that will take them. Their lives should not go to waste.