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Local Perceptions and Experiences of Smuggling and Human Trafficking in Sudan The case of North Darfur and Northern State of Sudan

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate local perceptions about human trafficking in Sudan among migrants who want to travel to Libyan and Europe. The study falls within the domain of qualitative research, with primary data from interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with different stakeholders, mainly government-responsible authorities, smugglers, brokers, members of the local communities in the crossing areas, and victims of human trafficking. The secondary data for the research includes reports, scientific research, and studies on human trafficking in this area. The study reveals that Sudan receives a regular influx of refugees and economic immigrants, mainly from East Africa (Ethiopia, Eritria, and Somali), for a variety of different reasons and aiming at a variety of destinations. Different types of human trafficking occur, including exploitation and abuse along migration routes used between Sudan and Libya. The (IOM) estimations show that (66-77%) of migrants along routes have experienced either work without payment, forced labor, being held against their will, or being targeted for an arranged marriage. We argue that the political and economic factors at play in this area, fostered by uncontrollable borders, have made Sudan a source of migration, human smuggling, and trafficking to Libya and transit to Europe. Migrants being smuggled through Northern State and North Darfur, especially women and children, are exposed to different types of human trafficking and grave protection risks. Migrants are smuggled to Libya through different paths with differing motives and destinations, and the majority of youth seek transit Libya to Europe. We argue that irregular migration including human smuggling and trafficking will increase in the near future, due to the eruption and escalation of the April 15th war in Sudan. The paper offers insights into the perceptions of different groups on human trafficking, addresses the key challenges of combating human trafficking in Sudan, and has come up with some recommendations, based on the case of Sudan, that might be helpful in combating this crime on the African continent.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

On 11 March 2021, different types of social media and information centers circulated a video describing a successful military mission against Libya that resulted in the liberation of more than (70) people who were held captive by human traffickers there. The victims were mainly Sudanese, Eritrean, and Ethiopians who went to Libya from Sudan seeking the European seacoasts as their final destination. Stories of victims indicate how migrants suffer from different types of human trafficking, as reflected in the following story about a Sudanese migrant in Italy:

Aziz Adam is a Sudanese man who migrated from Sudan to Italy through Libya. He shared his story in a humorous way through a Tik-Tok video that ended up televised on Al Jazeera. He described his journey from Sudan to Italy through Libya, indicating that he “ate” (this was his own expression) 35 slaps in his face from a short man from Tabo’s Tribe who also slapped him 8 times while they were entering Libya. He was also forced to give up his smart phone and money. He claimed that a short man slapped him when he was trying to convince the Tabo man that he had no money to give. He said he had also received 15 slaps in Al-Egailat town in Libya. Nevertheless, the slaps did not stop even when he arrived at Italy. When he spent more than a month at a refugee camp and started to feel bored, he pretended that he is exhausted and passed out, then a female medical doctor slapped him in the face many times to help him wake up.

It is widely known Libya has been a major transit area for migrants who fled their countries of origin in Africa and the Middle East for many different reasons with the goal getting into Europe through Libya. These migrants unfortunately find themselves stuck in a very miserable situation and at the mercy of human trafficking gangs’ sadism. Since the year 2000, Libya has been both a destination and transition node for migrants from the horn of Africa who use the north-western migration routes toward Europe via Sudan, the Eastern Sahara, Libya, and the Mediterranean Sea. Brokers offer to guide migrants and refugees along safe routes toward borders, to provide transportation services to cross borders, desert, and sea, and to secure temporary jobs and safe houses in Sudan and Libya. For these reasons migrants often define the action of smugglers as a form of brokerage rather than a crime (Ayalew, 2019). The European countries intervened, considering all trans-Saharan movements as a first step on a journey toward Europe, thus encouraging national authorities to stop them along the way. This led to the tightening of border controls across northwest Africa and then to the criminalization of travel to and through the Sahara, which again has led to the development of specialized passenger transport as a clandestine activity, resulting in an increase in the human and financial costs of those journeys. Thus, smugglers, as a particular category of actors, appear to be direct products of the migration policies that were drafted to control them.

The government of Sudan has responded to the international outcry on the spread of human trafficking, particularly among migrants who cross international borders between Sudan and Libya. Security forces ceased forcibly recruiting and using child soldiers; the government drafted and passed an amendment to the 2014 anti-trafficking law that criminalized sex trafficking as well as labor trafficking; and officials investigated more potential cases and convicted more traffickers. The country’s National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking expanded awareness activities and coordinated with international organizations to improve the country’s limited understanding of human trafficking. However, according to the US Department of State (in June 2021), the government of Sudan does not fully meet the minimum standard for the elimination of trafficking, even though it has been making significant efforts to do so.

This study attempts to investigate the perceptions of different stakeholders on the phenomenon of human trafficking, taking into consideration the most influential pulling and pushing factors that contribute to it and that make migrants abandon their home lands and fall into the trap of human trafficking. While addressing the different stages of migration, the study focuses on local perceptions of human trafficking in the minds of different stakeholders who compose the research community. The research community consists of human/goods smugglers, relevant government authorities, and members of

local communities in villages at the entry points into Sudan from Ethiopia in particular. Special consideration has been made to departure points in North Darfur and Northern State of Sudan where the influx of migration and smuggling processes from Sudan to Libya tend to take place.

Sudan represents one of the more important countries in Africa and Middle East with regard to human mobility, as it has become a prominent hosting and transit country through which at least some migrants are able to reach North Africa and Europe. The strategic location of Sudan and neighboring countries being affected by different types of crises have led to the emergence and escalation of different types of cross-border human trafficking. Sudan is an active transit area for human mobility for the people of the neighboring countries, where many people engage in smuggling, thus investing in the uncontrollable open border between Sudan and Libya. The deterioration of political stability in East African countries, the Middle East, and recently Chad has resulted in a mass influx of refugees and voluntary migration to Sudan. Increasing violence and persecution in Sudan's neighboring countries, accompanied by the escalation of wars in Syria and Yemen, have resulted in immigration, smuggling, and human trafficking. The recent eruption of war in the Tigray region in Ethiopia worsened the situation of refuge in Sudan. Official estimates from UNHCR in 2021 on refuge to Sudan show increasing numbers of refugees, to reach more than 1.14 million living in Sudan by the end of 2021. Among those, 51% were female and 53% children. The continuation of economic inflation, accompanied by general insecurity in many parts of Sudan, has worsened the situation and complicated the problem not only for the immigrants and refugees, but also for the Sudanese people. Focusing on North Darfur and Northern State of Sudan as transit areas to Libya, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main (pulling/pushing) factors of migration? Who are the main actors with respect to human trafficking? Why? And what are the reasons behind favoring Sudan and the two states within it as crossing points and for trafficking activities?
2. How do local communities and relevant government institutions deal with the phenomenon of human trafficking?
3. Bearing in mind the immigration in East Sudan, what are the nationalities of the immigrants who cross the two states, both in the past and currently? And what are their final destinations?
4. What are the categories of individuals who are working in the field of human trafficking and smuggling? And what are the dynamics of the relations between the borders' tribes or local communities and migrants/migration networks in East and West Sudan? And what are their relations with other activities (e.g., artisanal gold mining)? What are their views and perceptions of these other activities?
5. What is the impact of the political change that has taken place in Sudan since April 2019 and the current armed conflict between Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces on the future of the human trafficking and smuggling phenomenon at state and federal levels?

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to assess the future of human trafficking in the contemporary Sudan amid the unstable political situation and the escalation of armed conflict between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The specific objectives can be described as follows:

1. To address the current aspects of human trafficking, focusing on North Darfur and Northern State of Sudan, and investigating the indicators of future trends and predictions with respect to human trafficking in the selected states.
2. To understand and clarify different perceptions of the phenomenon of human trafficking across different levels (refugees, victims of smuggling and trafficking, smugglers and human traffickers, the local community, and relevant government institutions).
3. To investigate the influential factors behind forced migration decisions and the perceptions of different actors and stakeholders.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- The phenomenon of human trafficking, as a global issue, has rapidly grown over the last decade to become a top issue in international media. This study is an attempt to contribute to the ongoing debate on the issue of human trafficking.
- North Darfur and Northern State represent the main passing points for the migrants who target Libya, Chad, and Egypt. To meet this objective, there are many local actors who play different roles, and the study attempts to investigate these roles and the perceptions related to them.
- The study fills the gap of addressing local perceptions on human trafficking, which have been neglected by national and international levels and researchers.
- However, this study is an extension of and fills the gaps in previous research conducted by the two authors on human trafficking in eastern Sudan and smuggling in Western Sudan under the umbrella of an ARUSS project.
- Preliminary information indicates that the large numbers of migrants who cross international borders pass through many urban settings and rural areas where diverse groups and individuals play key roles. The previous studies have not covered these roles and their impact on escalation or de-escalation of this phenomenon.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING ASPECTS IN SUDAN, LITERARY UNDERPINNING

Human trafficking represents one of the more serious problems and the fastest growing transnational crime in the contemporary world. It is also a very lucrative business. According to a study by Ngwe and Elechi (2012), it is estimated that between 800,000 and 4,000,000 people – mostly women and children – are trafficked across international borders annually. According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), there were 214 million international migrants worldwide in 2010. This compares with just 156 million migrants in 1990. The economic and political significance of international migration is its concentration. Certain areas have become major emigration areas (African countries), while other locations have become the major poles of attraction, like European countries (Castles, 2013). These figures indicate how migrants are exposed to human trafficking and the strong relationship between trafficking, smuggling, and migration. Most organized criminal groups operate among vulnerable groups of IDPs and migrants in poor countries with few or no economic opportunities, like many African countries including Sudan. They also find fertile ground in countries with weak and corrupt governments, where the rule of law is lacking, and possibly in countries going through war or experiencing other social and political conflicts (Ngwe and Elechi, 2012). Estimates show that 80% of the mixed migration cases crossing the Mediterranean are facilitated by migrant smugglers and criminal groups. So, human smuggling and trafficking are interrelated and reinforce each other as they both see a source of making big profits in thousands of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers trying to find better opportunities, higher living standards, and protection. Smugglers and traffickers have become increasingly organized and have created sophisticated transnational networks in order to effectively control every part of the smuggling and trafficking process (Monzin et al., 2015).

Using different definitions for different categories of human traffickers, smugglers, and migrants (along with a lack of registration for irregular migration) is one of the key challenges for migration studies in Sudan. Due to conflicts and regional instability, there are more than 2.5 million IDPs, and more than 1 million refugees in Sudan – populations with increased susceptibility to forced labor or sex trafficking (US Dept of State, 2021). However, Sudan is a source of transit and a destination country for migration. Sudanese migrants are mixed groups of refugees and asylum seekers, economic migrants, and, to a lesser extent, foreign students. The majority are men aged between 24 and 40, and they come from a wide range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

There have been instances of state collusion in smuggling people and in the trafficking of migrants, with members of the Sudanese military, borders patrols, police, and refugee camp guards reportedly involved (Strachan, 2016). The Sudanese environment is supportive of migration. In 2016, Strachan noted that the majority of migrants to Sudan were transits to Libya, Egypt, and Europe. Whether they are migrants and refugees from Sudan or just passing through, they generally travel from Sudan with migrant smugglers at some stage of their journey. The journey from Sudan to Libya is extremely dangerous due to the risk of kidnapping, extortion, torture, and sexual and physical violence perpetrated by migrant smugglers. Migrants are aware of the dangers involved in undertaking the journey through Sudan and onward to Europe. They have access to a wide range of information sources, including returnees' stories, information from family and friends who have undertaken the journey, and access to some international television channels like BBC inside refugee camps. Despite awareness of these dangers, they feel this is the only feasible way to improve their lives (Strachan, 2016).

Sudan features large numbers of international migrants and refugees who are exposed to different types of human trafficking and smuggling. Estimates show that international immigrants in Sudan totaled 503,477 persons in 2015, most of them entering the country through Eastern borders from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. Abdalla Onour (2018) conducted a study on the phenomena of human trafficking and smuggling in East Sudan, focusing on the border localities that link Sudan with Eritrea, Ethiopia, KSA, and Egypt.

Onour investigated the different perceptions at four levels: actors who engage in human trafficking and smuggling, victims of trafficking and refugees, local communities at border villages, and government-relevant authorities. The study shows that there are two types of migration: the ordinary historical and recurrent migration of border tribes, and contemporary migration. Most of the migrants are youth who seek entry to West Europe as their final destination, and this is the phenomenon that this study is going to investigate. The previous study also revealed that there are different types of human trafficking in the eastern states of Sudan that are classified depending on the size and density of trafficking. Kassala State had the most trafficking, followed by Gadarif and Red Sea States. This study will provide a good chance to conduct a comparative analysis between Eastern Sudan and North and West Sudan. The previous study showed that the majority of migrants were from Eritria, Somalia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Syria, South Sudan, and West Africa countries. Through this study, the researchers will investigate the relation between the nationalities of those who enter Sudan through the East and of the migrants who cross international borders toward Libya through North and West Sudan.

Onour's study also revealed the significant effect of the borders' tribes on the practice of human trafficking at two levels: the level of smugglers in local communities or villages, and the level of formal authority (Onour, 2018). These two levels will be examined through this study. The previous studies assessed the viability of the formulated laws and legislation concerning smuggling and human trafficking in the three states of East Sudan, and investigating the existent judicial and legal system in the two states selected for this study will be vital. This study, however, yielded results indicating that there are diverse types of relationships between smugglers and traffickers and other community sectors. There are some gaps in Onour's study that this study is trying to fill. These include exploring the relationship between the central government and state level governments and exactly what each does to address human trafficking. On the other hand, there is a big difference between the two contexts, despite of some slight similarities. So, covering western and northern Sudan through this study will provide a good opportunity to finalize a complete picture of the human trafficking issue in the area, which will help in developing practical solutions based on the study's results.

Adelmageed Yahya (2020) published a brief entitled "Irregular Migration or Human Trafficking? The Realities of Cross-border Population Mobility in Western Sudan." The brief traced the history of Sudan as an origin and a transit country of migration and focused on discrepancies between the self-image of the actors who facilitate irregular migration and the policy makers who try to stop it. Sudan has a long history as a migration-causing country and is considered to be the main transit country for irregular migration. The case of Sudan shows that it is difficult to mark clear boundaries between voluntary and forced migration. Because of the corruption during the previous regime, despite having relevant legislation and action plans, Sudan has not seen any measurable progress in combating human trafficking (Yahya, 2020).

The study Susanne Jaspars and Margie Buchanan-Smith (2018) conducted on Darfuri Migration from Sudan to Europe reveals the persecution and despair of many Darfuris, as well as the risks and hardships they faced on their journey to Libya and Europe, but also their determination to reach safety and a better life. Many studies focus on the routes and the roles of smuggling and trafficking networks, particularly through Libya and Sudan, as well as the causes and drivers of migration. These studies have shown that migration is highly context specific and that developing nuanced, tailored, and targeted policy responses require information about the movements and intentions of people within a particular context. Migration has many facilitators and obstacles, including communication technologies, social networks and Diaspora, and smuggling and trafficking systems. These systems and networks also influence the experience of migrants. So, it is expected that the transitional government may adopt a new approach in dealing with voluntary and forced migration.

Studies on migration, human smuggling, and trafficking represent a good starting point for a wider debate about the phenomenon of human trafficking in Sudan, where this study has benefited from new insights and has generated its key results.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING, CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As the study focuses on conceptualization of different types of migration processes between Sudan and Libya and their relation to human trafficking from the perspective of different local actors, this part of the study seeks to provide a clear understanding of the different terms related to human trafficking. This study will do this by addressing the abstract concepts related to migration and human trafficking employed by relevant international academic and non-academic institutions, and then matching them with the perceptions of different local institutions/actors. The local perceptions of human trafficking and migration processes are affected by the general context where migration and human trafficking practices take place, which are in this case inextricably related to the socio-cultural history of communities in sub-Saharan Africa generally and Sudan in particular. The population mobility from Sudan has long been a part of a general movement of people between the Sahel and northern Africa. So, bearing in mind socio-cultural narratives on migration and human trafficking concepts in relation to the practices of different actors could help us to understand how social, cultural, and political debates are structured and how each actor might frame the issue (Jaspars and Buchanan-Smith, 2018). So, better understanding of the context within which migration and human trafficking take place and of how concepts are developed can equip us with deep knowledge about the real motivations behind both the intentional and unintentional engagement of different actors in the practices of human trafficking and how migrants identify what they do. Such knowledge is essential in helping different stakeholders at national, regional, and international levels to formulate effective strategies and policies.

The history of migration from Sudan to Libya illustrates that migrants were encouraged and supported by their families to travel by land to Libya despite the serious problems and risks associated with doing so. “Human trafficking” as a term was not used by local actors who consider themselves to be service providers rather than traffickers. However, many cases indicate that local actors have been implicated in human trafficking by engaging in exploitation and fraud against individuals and groups of migrants. Using fraud, deception, abuse of power, or a position against vulnerable migrants represents concrete evidence of human trafficking practices. This concept is to some extent relevant to UN protocol, Article 3A, 2000, which defines the human trafficking of persons as

“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”.

The UN’s concept focuses on exploitation, coercion, fraud, and deception as key elements of human trafficking. Many migrants, mainly non-Sudanese who traveled from Sudan to Libya, revealed that they had experienced some sort of exploitation and fraud by paying more for travel costs than they had agreed with smugglers to pay before starting their journey. For the purpose of this study, human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of migrants between Sudan and Libya, by using means of threat or other forms of coercion, fraud, deception, abuse of power, a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a migrant having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Migrants between Sudan and Libya are exposed to diverse forms of human trafficking because they have limited choices under particularly strong pressure and insecurity that push them to leave without notifying their families and personal network of their international transit and without informing them of the different migratory steps. This separation from family and community safety nets is certainly a relevant factor in their vulnerability to exploitation, which can be extreme in character (Monzin et al., 2015).

Discussing human trafficking in relation to human mobility, smuggling and migration leads to some difficulties, as Ngwe and Elechi (2012) cited noting that human trafficking

is not a precise term. It is not an easy process to differentiate between smuggling and trafficking, which often seem to be just two sides of the same coin. Nevertheless, one of the key challenges related to the definition of human trafficking is that some scholars agree that human trafficking is a modern practice of slavery (Ngwe and Elechi, 2012).

Illegal migration, smuggling and human trafficking

The concepts of illegal migration, human smuggling, and human trafficking practically overlap in different ways. For the benefit of the study, it is crucial to make a clear distinction between human smuggling, illegal migration, and human trafficking, which are nested but separate concepts. This distinction is quite relevant because these different categories of illegal movement of people across borders have quite different legal and political consequences. Human smuggling is a special case of illegal migration, while human trafficking is a subcategory of smuggling. Smuggling and human trafficking are part of illegal migration and an element of the larger problem of organized crime resulting from illegal population movement (Vayrynen, 2003). Trafficking entails the use of coercion, placing people in exploitative positions in the destination countries, which most migrants from Sudan to Libya are exposed to. On the other hand, smuggling is a process of illegally crossing the Sudan national border to Libya, either directly or through Chad.

Studies have shown that the distinction between trafficking and smuggling is not always clear-cut, but consent is the key difference, with consent considered to be lacking in the case of trafficking and present in that of smuggling. Distinction between smuggling and trafficking is at times difficult to make as migrants' status may change during the course of the journey as a smuggled migrants may fall victim to exploitation by traffickers (Carter and Rohwerder, 2016). Morrison and Crosland (2001: 55) argue that engagement with the smuggling process itself "is not as consensual or as free from human rights abuses as the smuggling process suggests." Our concern here is to indicate that there are no clear boundaries between the two terms in practice. So, the action that those who engage in migration between Sudan and Libya perceive to be migrant smuggling can easily turn to take the form of human trafficking. Migrant smuggling, according to the UN definition, is a "procurement in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a state party of which the person is not a national or permanent resident". In this regard, the concepts of human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and illegal migration are distinct crimes that often are erroneously conflated or referred to interchangeably. Clarifying the differences between the different concepts is crucial to assess the viability of local perceptions of migration processes and critical for the development and implementation of sound government policies (Hamood, 2006).

As mentioned above, the main element in human trafficking is the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion employed for the purpose of exploitation, against the will of the individual. Smuggling, however, focuses on the material gains from the illegal crossing of international borders, and there can be consent from the individual to be moved (Yahya, 2020). Also, a key difference is that victims of trafficking are considered victims of a crime under international law, while smuggled migrants are not, since they pay smugglers to facilitate their movement. Nevertheless, the international understanding is that smuggling and human trafficking are organized crimes that mostly happen in clandestine manners. The truth is that some of that movement has been irregular, but not clandestine. Most of the border crossings have been supervised and (illegally) taxed by border police: everyone knows who does what with whom, and Saharan drivers do not consider themselves to be smugglers of people. Thus, better awareness of the distinctions between human trafficking and migrant smuggling could potentially improve victim protection and help avoid the re-exploitation of victims (Adepoju, 1984). Defining human trafficking in relation to migration leads us to talk about the inextricable relation between human trafficking and migrant smuggling, as there are fewer (or no) cases of human trafficking among those migrating legally, and most human trafficking reports in sub-Saharan Africa are related to migrant smuggling. As we are discussing the concept of human trafficking within the context of migration processes, and for the sake of giving a complete picture of the

relations and differences between human trafficking and legal or illegal migration, it is important to shed light on the concept of migration.

Migration and organized crime

Despite the fact that population mobility between Sudan and Libya dates back to the early 1960s and 1970s, before the emergence of human trafficking term/practices, it stays within the framework of migration processes. Due to international momentum on the criminalization of population mobility in sub-Saharan Africa, it is crucial to distinguish between legal and illegal migration and to precisely differentiate between the movement of people that belongs to “trafficking” and that which belongs to “migration”. Our main focus in this study is the illegal migration that leads to human smuggling and trafficking and represents an element of the larger problem of organized crime and the illicit global economy. Generally, migration is the movement of a person or a group of persons across an international border or within a country. According to the International Organization for Migration, it is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition, and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes (IOM, 2013). Despite the fact that the number of people engaging in internal migration is far greater than the number engaging in international migration, the internal migration attracts less political attention (Castles, 2013). Internal migration is a movement of people from one place to another within a country and takes place in large part in response to imbalances between the regions of a country, the dominant direction of such movement being dictated by the locational bias of employment-generating projects. International migration signifies, to a large extent, inequalities in development, employment opportunities, and especially income and living conditions between countries, particularly between the developed and developing countries. Conceptually, international and internal migration are complementary and can indeed supplement each other (Castles, 2013).

The reasons associated with international migration are not solely economic. As Adepoju (1984) cited, “in international migration, political factors are often more important than economic factors”. The migration process is related to the migrant’s motives and decision making and how these are affected by different socio-economic and political conditions along the migration path. The changing nature of motivations make it difficult to determine whether a particular instance of migration is voluntary or forced (Carling and Tolleraas, 2016). Classical migration theories suggests that disparities in conditions between different places represent the main drivers of migration. The push-pull model in some classical literature suggested that migrants were pushed by low income in their countries or origins and pulled by better prospects in more affluent areas (Van Hear et al., 2012). Others have underlined the importance of chains, networks and culture in keeping migration going, beside understanding the extent to which migration is also shaped by other structural dimensions. However, it is crucial to understand that decision to migrate - or not migrate, and the emergence of wider patterns of migration as being the outcome on an interplay between social structure and individual’s freedom of choice (Van Hear et al., 2018).

Alan Symmon (1987) suggested three major dimensions to define migration: a change in residence, a shift in employment and a shift in social relations. Migration involves an individual decision-making process as when an individual decides to leave their place of residence, they examine the costs and benefits (money or non-money cost/benefit). According to Piche (2013) migration is a result of an individual calculation based on positive factors at the destination and negative factors at the origin. However, among factors influencing the migration decision are personal contacts and sources of information about the situation at the destination. This led to the notion of migration networks that became the basis of the central migration theory from 1980s. Other scholars developed other factors that include, for example, the notion of specialization in particular skills and occupations that prefigure the hypothesis of labor market segmentations (Piche, 2013).

Migration infrastructure, a concept that has recently been developed by some anthropologists (Ounour, 2018), has five dimensions: commercial (smugglers, brokers),

organizational (state, institutions and procedures), technical (communication and transportation), human (NNGOs and INGOs), and social (migrants' networks).

METHODOLOGY

The study operates within the domain of qualitative research and mainly depends on ethnographic field work in North Darfur and Northern State of Sudan to build empirical knowledge on migration and human trafficking phenomena. The methods used were qualitative, as the research was inductive, data-driven, and context-centric. Consequently, different qualitative tools were used for data collection, including, but not limited to, in-depth and KII interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and field observation. The researchers have employed interviews and FGDs to gather information on:

1. Migrants of different nationalities including ex-migrants who cross the borders and arrived in Europe, migrants who were arrested and failed to complete their journey, and those who have a great desire to continue their migration on to Europe. With regard to this category, social media was used in interviews.
2. The perceptions of members of local communities in the border villages through which the migrants pass in North Darfur and Northern State (the border localities for the field study were identified later)
3. The perceptions of the phenomenon of human trafficking among smugglers, professionals, and those imprisoned on charges of human trafficking (interviews at prisons).
4. The perceptions of official institutions, namely relevant government institutions in the selected states; these include but are not limited to the refugees' commission, anti-smuggling departments, prosecutors of human trafficking and the special courts for human trafficking cases, and border guards.

To obtain primary data from the field interviews, focus group discussions and field observations were used. Overall, the researchers met with more than 67 interviewees, in addition to conducting two FGDs, one in each state. It is notable that some interviews were organized by using phone calls and some through WhatsApp with the Sudanese immigrants in Libya. Interviews, FGDs, and field observations were applied as follows:

Interviews

- **Official Institutions:** The official institutions included 15 interviews, with 10 in Northern State and five in North Darfur with Criminal Investigation departments, human trafficking prosecutors, judges, court observers, the Department of Passports and Migration, anti-smuggling departments, joint Sudanese and Libyan forces to combat smuggling, and the national prison in Dongola, the capital of Northern State.
- **Civil Society:** Five interviews were conducted with members of civil society in the two States, including two interviews in Northern State with Sudanese Red Crescent (SRC) and Mutaawinat Association. In North Darfur, three interviews were held with SRC, IOM, and the Commission of Refugees.
- **Migrants:** Five interviews with migrants from diverse nationalities (mainly Sudanese, Ethiopian, Eritreans, South Sudanese, and Chadian) in each state, in addition to two FGDs with Ethiopian migrants in El Dabba, Northern State, and a Chadian migrant in North Darfur.
- **Networks:** Thirteen interviews were held with smuggling networks, including two interviews in Om-Durman/Khartoum city, eight in Northern State, and three in North Darfur.
- **Local community:** Ten interviews were conducted in Northern State (five in Dongola, three in El Dabba, and two in Wadi Halfa). In North Darfur, nine interviews were held, including four interviews in El Fashir and five in El Malha.

Focus Group Discussions

The researchers organized FGDs with migrants and local communities in particular. Two FGDs were held with migrants: one with Ethiopian migrants in El Dabba/Northern State, and another one with Chadian migrants in North Darfur. In addition, a focus group discussion with six community members in El Malha was conducted.

Field observation

The researchers' field work in the two states focused on field observations of the dynamic of migrants interacting with smugglers' networks. Some observations were made while traveling with migrants from the main towns to borders points and also during the daily work of local people in areas where migrant smuggling was taking place.

Secondary Data

In addition, the researchers have consulted the secondary data from previous studies and reports written by relevant institutions (e.g., IOM, government relevant institutions, UNHCR, etc.).

For the analysis of the collected data, the researchers relied on qualitative data analysis methods in analyzing and classifying interviews and FGDs to write the report and achieve the objectives of the study.

LOCAL PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF SMUGGLING AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

This section of the study covers local perceptions and experiences of smuggling and human trafficking in Sudan, focusing on the study areas. We will start by tracing the history of migration and smuggling in the two states that shape the perceptions before addressing the local perceptions of the different stakeholders who are involved in migration, smuggling, and human trafficking between Sudan and Libya.

The history of migration through Northern State and North Darfur to Libya

Historically, migration routes from Sudan to Libya were either via Donola (Northern Region) or via Malha in Darfur. Darfuris also migrate via Chad to find work in gold-mining camps, to cover their onward journey to Libya and beyond. In 2017, the Sudanese government blocked the Malha and Dongla routes, which resulted in an increased prevalence of illegal migration via human smuggling, clandestine migration, and human trafficking. The local perception of human trafficking in West Sudan is related to the history of migration in Darfur that has been characterized by seasonal, long term, or responsive (food insecurity, famines, or conflicts) movements for the sake of work or protection within Sudan or to move on to the neighboring countries (mainly Libya, Chad, and Egypt) or beyond to the Gulf countries. Migration patterns have also been linked to ethnicity, livelihood groups, and the geographical homelands of particular groups. Before the eruption of conflict in the peripheral regions of Sudan (mainly Darfur), local people saw migration as a legal and economically oriented phenomenon, often in response to periods of acute food shortages and famines (Jaspars and Buchanan-Smith, 2018). The eruption and escalation of war in Darfur has resulted in the emergence of forced migration or displacement that many have seen as a security threat. This has led to a reconceptualization of security and to a process in which new institutions are developed in which migration and humanitarian aid are being linked to security sector dynamics as well as concerns about defense.

Despite the fact that there were some practices on the ground related to human trafficking, “human trafficking” as a term was not widely used among local communities in Sudan and in the two selected states at the beginning. Through recent history, however, it has become a normal, daily activity run by criminal networks, with one of the main operations centers being where migrants enter through Eastern Sudan’s borders to Khartoum. In Khartoum the immigrants prepare themselves to transit to Libya either through North Darfur or Northern State. They use the public roads and public means of transportation to get to Darfur or Northern State (they have well known cafes and cafeterias). In Northern State, there are two central points for smuggling and migration, namely the national market of gold mining in “*El-Khannag*” area in Wadi-Halfa locality, and the area widely known as the border triangle between Sudan, Libya, and Egypt (*Al Muthalath*). The triangle constitutes the most important transit area between Sudan and Libya currently. Foreigners from Eritria, Ethiopia, and Somalia are the main ones smuggled to Libya besides the Sudanese. The main smugglers are Sudanese individuals who smuggle migrants of diverse nationalities from the triangle area to Libya.

Travel to Libya through El Malha started in the beginning of the 1960s, when the first group of astronomers from the El Malha area crossed the great desert by camel and arrived at Libya (Interview with Elssayah, Oct. 2021). This era was followed by the emergence of many experts who came from different parts of Sudan, but mainly Kordofan. At the beginning, Libya was the final destination for all migrants, and none of them was thinking of going on to Europe at that time. The continuation of migrants’ movement fostered by the deterioration of the economic situation in Sudan has pushed an overwhelming majority of youth to think of leaving their schools and engaging in other activities within and outside of Sudan.

Early communication between Sudanese and Libyan traders encouraged some Sudanese traders (e.g., Mohammed Suliman) to travel to Libya by lorries in 1960, where Libyan authorities welcomed them. At the beginning of the 1960s, Sudanese traveled to Libya to change their economic situations. All Sudanese migrants who wanted to travel to Libya were travelling through North Darfur through El Fashir–Millet and El Malha. Sudanese migrants brought modern equipment from Libya, which encouraged many Sudanese to engage in the migration process (Rabih, Interview, Oct.2021).

The fact that trade between Sudan and Libya was a lucrative business paved the way for formal migration led by businessmen from the two countries and facilitated by government authorities. The Sudanese trader, Mohamed Suliman Rabih, cited that he was the first person who traveled to Libya by lorries and when he came back, he was accompanied by 101 lorries of Libyan traders. In May 1990, Rabih wrote a letter to the Darfur governor saying that he had a plan to travel to Libya as a trader with his own Lorries. Despite the fact that it was an adventure, Rabih accepted the challenge and successfully arrived in Libya after crossing the great desert. It was an official journey approved by the Darfur governor who encouraged them, though they shouldered their own responsibility for the trip. The perception local people had of migration and human trafficking at that time was related to and affected by political relations between the two countries and how government authority in each country identified and dealt with migrants.

Ethiopian and Eritrean migration emerged after the 1990s, with individuals traveling as ordinary migrants with Sudanese who received special treatment from Libyan authorities. During El Qaddafi regime, no clear cases of human trafficking were reported, though smugglers were very active between the two countries. Human trafficking in Libya has obviously emerged after the death of Qaddafi, and Sudanese smugglers and drivers view “human trafficking” as a term that is propagated by international media to criminalize those who work in smuggling and to reduce migration to Europe. However, human trafficking in this case was associated with fraud, exploitation, and misleading information about easy access and work in Libya and Europe.

Official perceptions of human trafficking

The official perception emanates from national, regional, and international efforts that consider illegal migration and human smuggling to be crimes and essential elements that lead to greater human trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa. In this regard, human trafficking in relation to migration has been described as the cross-border global trading of people in which there is a low risk of being apprehended by state officials (Meriläinen and Vos, 2015). The Sudanese official institutions have adopted the concept of human trafficking from UN relevant conventions and, accordingly, have responded to fight these negative practices through engaging in anti-smuggling efforts and prosecutions. So, the official perception of human trafficking on the part of government authorities emanates from the UN National Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes of 2003 that marked a very significant global response to public outcry against transnational crimes. The goal of this instrument is to empower nations and to enhance international collaboration in dealing with transnational crimes. It also works to raise awareness and develop preventive measures against human trafficking and other transnational organized crime. The volume of trafficking that takes place within a state is connected to the level of corruption in immigration organizations and the number of organized crime networks that are active within that society.

Although the Sudanese police reported few cases of human trafficking accusations against Sudanese smugglers and drivers, it seems difficult for them to prove such accusations because there are now clear boundaries between human trafficking and smuggling in practice. They have long been familiar with human smuggling, and engaging in illegal migration to Libya through the great desert. Nevertheless, there is a slight difference between human smuggling and trafficking on the ground (Interview with Anti-trafficking police officer, Elfashir, 2021). Most of those who identify themselves as human smugglers could engage in human trafficking via undertaking exploitation and fraud against migrants who join them without coercion. This is because migrants tend to deal with their traffickers

as service providers who struggle to facilitate their entry to Libya. Despite seemingly clear distinctions in the law, the perception of migrants and smugglers indicate that it is difficult to differentiate between “trafficking” and mere “migration”. Nevertheless, in such migration there have always been illegal activities like smuggling, trafficking, etc. According to a police officer in Sudan, most cases of human trafficking take place in Libya when migrants cross the borders toward Libya.

As we mentioned before, the most famous group that engages in human trafficking practices on the Chad path is the Guraan tribe. In Sudan, the path to Libya goes either through North Darfur or Northern State, where the most famous group is Tooba, which is a group of Libyan gangs. Tooba gangs are not only infamous for human trafficking, but also for slavery, as they force migrants to work in gold mining for free and for an unlimited time. Most of those who succeeded in escaping described how they suffered from inhumane treatment and severe exploitation.

With regard to the issue of international migration, Northern State and North Darfur are considered transit states in Sudan. The majority of human trafficking victims, whether male, female, or children, are from Sudan’s neighboring countries (Ethiopia and Eritrea). Kassala State in eastern Sudan bears the greatest burden of migration into Sudan. According to previous reports, the path starts from Kassala, then moves to Gadarf, Khartoum, and then to the Libya market in the western part of Om-Durman. Reports indicated that different types of violations against human rights related to human trafficking occurred along the way, such as torture and forcible transportation.

It is observed that there is a prosecution office that specializes in human trafficking issues in Northern State; however, there is also a general specialized prosecutor in Dungla (Northern State) and El Fashir (North Darfur). The reports show that during 2016-2019, there were a number of reports of human trafficking (an average of 7-8 reports annually), the maximum penalty to the accused persons was jail for 10 years and property confiscation. Most of the defendants were transferred to Al-Huda prison in Omdurman in the capital of Khartoum (Interview with the prosecutor, Elfasir, 2021). However, over the last two years, no trials related to human trafficking were undertaken, with the exception of a few trials for infiltrators who were tried on passport violations (Interview with judgeship in El Fashir, 2021). Lenient sentencing resulted in all traffickers receiving inadequate terms of imprisonment or fines, thus undercutting efforts to hold traffickers accountable and weakening deterrence (US Dept of State, 2021). According to the department of passports and migration, since 2017, no cases of smuggling or human trafficking have been reported in Northern State due to extensive deployment of security forces along the border (Interview Manager of the department of passports and migration, El Fashir, 2021). The practical difference between smuggling and human trafficking is still unclear, and this remains one of the key challenges to the security and joint forces who work in combating human trafficking. Also, there are no serious prosecutions to dissuade smugglers, as they only pay small fines (An interview with the Director of operations authority of the Sudanese- Libyan joint forces, 14th Sept. 2021).

According to a policeman in El Fashir, the government authorities and police apparatus in particular have no budget allocated to provide food and accommodation to arrested migrants and smugglers. So, the only possible ways to deal with them are to deport them to Omdurman prison or to release them. This situation has led to the emergence of corrupt practices among anti-smuggling forces, who began to take bribery money and illegal fees from each migrant to facilitate the transit movement of smugglers to Libya. Sometimes smugglers include the bribery money in transportation fees beforehand, as they can easily communicate and negotiate with authorities to remove any obstacles. On the other hand, this has led to an increase in smuggling and human trafficking cases, as well as the emergence of videos of young Sudanese held by human trafficking gangs in Libya asking for payment of ransom from their families.

An interview with the manager of Dungla prison reveals that smuggling was carried out frequently in large numbers, and anti-smuggling forces were doing their tasks properly, but the responsible authorities did not take the issue seriously. There was a case of three Ethiopian migrants who were captured by anti-smuggling forces and then tried and

sentenced to seven years in prison. They were sent to Al-Huda prison in Om-Durman, but after a month they were released. After that, five smugglers were arrested when they tried to smuggle (180) Ethiopians to Libya. The court sentenced them to five years in prison, but the sentence was overturned after four months.

Migrants were also smuggled in large numbers, ranging between 200-300 people in one journey. Smugglers come from different regions of Sudan, mainly Khartoum, Darfur, and Northern State. Some travel agencies were even acting as brokers in some cases. Due to the large numbers of migrants during 2016-2018, their numbers reaching around 700-800, and the relative lack of state resources, providing needed services became a problem, so the state authorities transferred them to Khartoum. These migrants represent diverse nationalities (e.g., Ethiopian, Eritrean, Chadian, Egyptian, etc.). During the COVID-19 pandemic, some migrants to Sudan from Egypt were arrested, but they were pardoned due to the COVID-19 pandemic (An interview with the manager of the national prison, 21st Sept. 2021).

Migrants' perception to human trafficking

Understanding characteristics of those who are involved in the migration process, their motives, means of communication, information sharing, and destinations helps us to know the size and streams of migration, and thereby the point where migration transformed into human trafficking. Some reports show that means of communication and social media can increase the likelihood of illegal migration for individuals and collective migrations, whether targeting Arab countries or passing through transit countries to a final destination in Europe (Muyassar, 2018). So, this section focuses on migrants' perceptions of human trafficking with special consideration given to migrants' characteristics, communication and information sharing, motives and destinations, and their vulnerability to human trafficking.

Migrants' Characteristics

It is observed that most of the reported cases of movement from Sudan to Libya are a result of an individual plan and positive expectations about the socio-economic and political aspects of the destination. Misleading information and deception about the fact that Libya has become an area of extreme violence and various forms of socio-economic and political discrimination reflect a new type of human trafficking practice. The migrants who cross Northern State and North Darfur can be classified into Sudanese and non-Sudanese migrants. Each group has its own perceptions and explanations of the migration phenomenon.

The Sudanese migrants whom we met were diverse in age and educational background. Social media applications (WhatsApp) were also used to communicate with some of those who are in Libya. According to their perceptions, they can be sorted into two categories. The first category is the group of elders who were thinking of two options for their final destination: the Gulf states or Libya. Some of them targeted Libya as a means of transit on to Europe. The majority of interviewees from this group were over fifty years old, and they identified the Gulf States as their first choice of destination. However, due to the complicated procedures required to follow the official migration pattern to the Gulf States, such migrants need intensive communication with travel agencies to obtain a job. In addition, this official path is high cost and unsecured. Based on their knowledge of the experiences of those who have already emigrated to the Gulf States and information about work conditions and environment, these migrants decided to travel to Libya. They collected a great deal of information about Libya and its economic prospects, and then they decided to travel to Libya illegally, as they don't have much money to meet the requirements of legal migration to Libya. Some of them started out thinking they would cross to Europe, and others work to legalize their status through getting official residence. The second category is youth who look to Europe as their final destination. They depend on information they gain from their information networks to decide on the best track that they should follow prior to starting their journey. All of them are younger people who either recently graduated from universities or had graduated longer ago but had not

been able to find jobs. These youth repeat the slogan, “*Sumbuk is an idea and the idea will not die.*” Sumbuk is a local Sudanese term was first used to describe human trafficking and smuggling in Red Sea area of Sudan. Then used to describe a form of profitable, illegal, high- risk transportation over borders (Elhassab, 2016). Some of those who have financial ability stay in Libya waiting for opportunities to travel, while others work to collect money so that they can proceed on their journey to Europe.

Ethiopians represent the majority of the foreign immigrants in both states (the Northern State and North Darfur). Some of them arrive at these states through their relatives who are staying there, and some were arrested while they were trying to enter Libya. Their cases are handled under passports and migration law, but most of them go to the administration of passports and migration and legalize their status as economic immigrants in Sudan and then integrate into the Sudanese economy (Tasfai, Oct. 2021).

Before 1995, the migrants from Sudan to Libya were mainly Sudanese, but since then nationals from other East African countries (Ethiopia, Eritria, and Somalia) have come to join the migrants’ caravans. Mixed migration has become the new feature between Sudan and Libya, where diverse people from different nationalities (Sudanese and non-Sudanese) travel together generally in a regular manner using the same routes and means of transport but for different reasons and to go to different destinations (Monzin, 2015). Accordingly, this study concerns human trafficking among migrants who engage in mixed migration from Sudan to Libya. Undoubtedly, the perception of each group of individuals as to the nature of their movement varies with their motives, pushing/pulling forces, and final destination, as well as with the degree of the risk that they could be exposed to human trafficking through their journey.

The networks that migrants have to facilitate their access to smugglers and easily arrive at Libya also is an important element for understanding the perception of migrants. There is a well-developed social network system for the Ethiopian migrants, as there are many Ethiopian communities in Dungle, El Dabba, and Wadi-Halfa where migrants can work in collaboration with SRC and the Mutaawinat Association to legalize their status and facilitate their integration into Sudanese society by providing them job opportunities. It is observed that many of these Ethiopian migrants have tried to travel to Libya and then to Europe, particularly after the recent deterioration of the Sudanese local currency and the resulting economic hardship.

On the other hand, the numbers of Ethiopian migrants in Sudan have increased dramatically over the last year due to the escalation of the war in Ethiopia, the subsequent influx of refugees, and finally the opening of civilian camps in Gadarif, East Sudan in response to this crisis. So, some migrants whom we met in the Northern State mentioned that they came from refugee camps in Gadarif. Different types of human trafficking occur, including exploitation and abuse along mixed migration routes used by migrants from Sudan to Libya, as well as in the form of people moving through Sudan from countries such as Eritrea and Ethiopia. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2013) estimates that 66-77% of migrants along those routes have experienced either work without payment, forced labor, being held against their will, or being targeted for an arranged marriage (Lumley-Sapanski et al., 2021).

Motives and destination

Human trafficking in Sudan is mainly run by smugglers and migrants, who have obvious motives and destinations. For smugglers and traffickers, the process is an economic activity and the most workable way to gain a lot of money in a limited period of time. According to different stakeholders, working in human smuggling and trafficking is a very profitable activity, as every single Sudanese migrant has to pay 100,000 SDG or (200 USD, according to the official rate of exchange in 2020) for transportation fees, while foreigners (mainly Ethiopians) pay 3,000 USD to be transited from Om-Durman to Libya. The economic problems that face the neighboring countries of Sudan have contributed to the emergence of what is called the “European Dream”, which means that the majority of youth have the dream of reaching Europe to improve their economic situations. This has led to the

emergence of smuggling and illegal migration that has turned over time into human trafficking. Some migrants we met suffered a lot along their journeys, and some of them failed to reach Libya and had to come back. Despite these obstacles, they still have a great willingness to travel to Libya again.

The final destination for the majority of youth migrants is Europe. A migrant cited that when he was travelling with 36 migrants to Libya through Chad, only ten of them were targeting Libya and gold mining camps as their final destination; the rest were targeting Europe. Some migrants' targeted gold mining areas in Chad, which were safe before they have more recently turned into centers for slavery and human trafficking (Ahmed, Oct. 2021).

It is observed that there is a strong tendency among youth in Sudan who started to communicate with their friends and relatives in Libya to emigrate due to the poor economic situation in Sudan and the prospects of a gloomy future with limited work options. The prospect of job alternatives in Libya has made talk about emigration to Libya become a daily occurrence among most of the young people and youth. They decide to leave schools and travel, saying "No Education under painful conditions". Only youth and young boys can take the risk of crossing the Mediterranean Sea to enter Europe (Focus Group Discussion, El Malha, 20th Oct.2021). Local communities in the study areas see that smuggling is one of the very serious problems facing the younger generation in Sudan these days. Thousands of people who cross Sudanese-Libyan borders due to frustration and poor economic prospects seek Europe as a final destination.

Diverse Sudanese tribes, mainly Zagawa, Masalit, and Fur, have migrated to Libya and beyond. As they are among the groups most affected by the war in Darfur, most of those who belong to these groups aim for Europe as their final destination. Their relatives in Europe who went ahead of them encourage them to come to Europe. Atrocities against non-Arab origin groups, continuing violence, and instability represent the pushing factors of migration alongside the pulling factors of special consideration in immigration treatment and facilities for war-affected groups in Europe. For most migrants from Arab groups and other Sudanese who are not coming from flashpoint areas, their final destination is Libya (Interview in El Fashir, Oct.2021).

North Darfur and Northern State are considered the main transit states to the neighboring countries, where migrants use different paths with different tactics to reach their final destinations. From Northern State, the migrants use the western great desert to go to Libya and the eastern desert to Egypt. In North Darfur State, the migrants also use two main tracks: one is from El Fashir to El-Tina in Chad and then to Libya, and the other is a direct path from El-Fashir to El-Malha to Libya through the great desert. Smugglers use the western desert road extensively to reach Libya. It is around 150 km from Dungle to Kufra in Libya. They have smuggled Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somalian, Syrian, and Sudanese migrants. They follow the roads of the triangle area to Wadi-Halfa, and most of the infiltrators do not reach the triangle. In the past some were smuggled to Egypt, and some migrants utilize Egypt as a transit area to reach Greece or to seek asylum because of the attractive resettlement program there.

Communication and information sharing among migrants

Before their movement, migrants contact their relatives in Libya, and as a result, they have a specific perception and categorization of towns in Libya. When a person starts thinking of migration to Libya, they collect information from their trusted sources, and they don't trust and are not content with any information unless they test and verify it. They depend on their trusted relatives and friends and believe that stories about human trafficking are related to a lack of commitment to pay the required fees for transportation to Libya or paying less than requested. Many people identify networks and smugglers through their personal relations and relatives. A migrant cited that he was planning to travel to Libya through the Chad path. He traveled to Chad with one of his relatives who is a trader at El Fashir market, who then asked one of the drivers to take him to El Tina in Chad.

Migrants and smugglers use different means of communication, but they prefer using social media in communication, mainly Facebook, as a source of information. Communication and interaction with migrants and refugees indicate that they establish and maintain with family members in their homeland's former migrants' routes, and the diaspora and local people along the trail generate a body of collective knowledge about routes, smugglers, and timing. Information and communication technology has not only revolutionized communication between migrants, but also come to facilitate recruitment of migrants (Sanchez and Achilli, 2019). Migrants acknowledge their membership in a number of Facebook groups, in which most information related to smugglers and networks is shared. One of the active groups is "*The Sudanese in Sumbuk Group*", which was established in April 2020 and comprises 12,300 members, of which one of the study contributors (Ounor) is a member as a researcher. The analysis of flyers shared by the group members show the following:

1. Some members share flyers that focus on raising questions like which is the better road to use to enter Libya from Sudan. In comments, some members describe the best road according to their experiences, explaining the characteristics and expected challenges of the intended road. In fact, these pieces of advice are highly significant, particularly when followed by confirmation that the adviser took this road before and has arrived in Europe.
2. Some members disseminate their success stories and document suffering that they faced before their arrival in Europe. Their flyers are supported by some pictures that indicate the difference between their living in Sudan and Europe. However, they do not share stories of failure.
3. Some brokers share and disseminate information about the planned journeys and their costs and dates of departure.
4. Some members disseminate flyers to shed light on the existence of new paths of migration (e.g., shared information about migration from Morocco to Spain and from Tunis to Malta/ Italy). One of the flyers cited the idea of travelling officially to Turkey and then proceeding to Europe through smuggling. Some flyers talk about scholarships as an option and the USA lottery program.

Non-Sudanese migrants also have their own networks that provide them different information about migration from Sudan. It is quite difficult to discover their plans outside of their network system, but at the level of official institutions they mainly deal with SRC. To achieve their goals, they track a very long road, starting from their original countries to Sudan, crossing East Sudan to Khartoum, and then to Northern State or North Darfur to end in Libya. In Northern State and North Darfur, they establish networks to serve the new immigrants by providing them job opportunities and advising them on the most secure and suitable path to Libya. They tell stories about some Ethiopians who were in Sudan and went to Europe through Libya. Local communities in Sudan do not distinguish between Ethiopians and Eritreans, as they look alike, where Eritreans introduce themselves as Ethiopians because local communities are more familiar with Ethiopians. In fact, there are other nationalities, but the study mainly focused on Ethiopians and Eritreans, who represent the dominant groups.

With regard to migrants' networks, there is a complexity in describing them because they are not clearly visible, as in the case of East Sudan. However, these networks link with each other, as they have common objectives, even though their members are diverse in their ethnicity. They also share common knowledge on migration tracks, which is not monopolized by a specific group as in the case of border tribes. Border tribes always have updated information and knowledge about the safety and ease of border crossing that can be used by smugglers, as well as when/how to deal with border authorities.

Northern State has been a destination area for migrants who seek work in gold mining. Surprisingly, it is observed that some of smugglers who were working in human trafficking have shifted their operations toward smuggling vehicles. One of the professional human smugglers who was working in Kassala/East Sudan during 2017 has started to smuggle

vehicles between Northern State and Kassala, and he has a specific road he likes to use to get to the triangle area from Kassala. So, we can emphasize that smuggling networks are very complicated and have strong ties with the capital of Khartoum, where most agreements are made, while Northern State and North Darfur are considered the transit and coordination areas.

A young boy with 20 years old migrated from Sudan to Libya last March 2021. He left school and suddenly disappeared from his family in El Fashir without notifying them about his plan. A week later he talked to his family through phone call from El Tina (close to Chad). He told them that he sold his telephone and withdrawal money from his father's bank account to cover his traveling fees, and now on his way to Libya through Chad is asking them to forgive him and pray for him to arrive safely. His father and family were shocked by this information, but could do nothing to stop him from traveling despite the fact that they did not agree with him as they said. When he arrived to Libya with his friends, they unfortunately met with gangs (two Sudanese and two Libyan) who detained them and communicated with their families to pay 15000 Libyan Dinar (\$ 400) for each one as a ransom to release them. After a week, the victims attacked the gangs who were detaining them and fortunately they were able to overcome them. They then hid in the desert and finally decided to deliver themselves to the Libyan authorities in Bani-Waleed, who then jailed them (*An interview in El Fashir on 18th October 2021*).

The trap and vulnerability to human trafficking

Despite the fact that human trafficking has become typical for migrants from Sudan and Libya, the real problem is that the perceptions of human trafficking on the part of formal authorities and the local community is related to the Sudanese culture, the members of which see themselves as service providers assisting those who like traveling to Libya. Human trafficking is neither a part of the terminologies and practices used by either government authorities nor smugglers and local people. Despite preparations and attempts to anticipate dangers, the journey is still risky and unpredictable given the obstacles migrants encounter along the route (Sanchez and Achilli, 2019). However, many Sudanese or non-Sudanese migrants who enter Libya through Sudan are exposed to human trafficking for many reasons, as the following cases indicate:

- Some interviews have shown that human trafficking starts when a migrant agrees with his relatives or friends in Libya to pay them back the cost of transportation upon arrival, but then the relatives or friends fail to give the migrant the money for transportation. Then smugglers sell the insolvent migrant to a human trafficker in Libya for less money than they agreed on (e.g., they may agree to pay 1000 Dinar, and then the smuggler sells the migrant for 800 Dinar). Sometimes the trafficker sells the victim to another trafficker, and then the traffickers force the victim to work with them in human trafficking to compensate them for what they paid for the victim. Gangs engaging in human trafficking have come into existence in Libya after the death of Gaddafi (October 2011), once the Libyan military forces fragmented into many militias and formed new armed movements on tribal bases.
- **Information trap:** Some people collect information about the economic situation of migrants' families and then coordinate with human trafficking gangs to bargain accordingly. In some cases, if a person paid the transportation fees on the spot to smugglers, he would be in a critical position and exposed to trafficking, as his ability to pay would indicate that his family is rich, and then they would hold him and bargain with his family on the ransom. So, many migrants prefer to pay upon arrival through one of their friends or relatives to make sure that they safely arrive free from human trafficking.
- Some interviews (Dabaka, Oct. 2021), revealed that many of the youth who traveled to Libya did not talk to their families about their willingness to travel to Libya, and they only talk about it to their peers and friends. That is because migration choices, for them, are made under particularly strong pressure that pushes them to leave without notifying their families and personal networks of their intentions and without

informing them of the different migration steps. Such lower reliance on family and community safety nets is a crucial factor in migrants' vulnerability to exploitation and human trafficking (Abdel Aziz et al., 2015)

- **Using apps for electronic bank transfers to avoid the risks of taking cash:** Some migrants deposit their cash in their friends' bank accounts to help them pay through electronic apps where payment is accepted in either Sudanese or Libyan currency.
- There are some Sudanese people who work with Libyan smugglers as brokers in the triangle area, El Khannag, El Dabba, and Omdurman, where they have active networks (Interview with Sudanese Migrants, Sept.2021).
- According to the manager of the intelligence office in Northern State, migrants are not always victims, and in many cases, there are many risks related to illegal migration which are invisible to many people. For instance, there are many lawsuits against migrants who practice fraud by taking loans and money from the migrants accompanying them on their journey under the pretext of paying them back after they arrive at Libya.
- Some drivers and vehicle owners provide offers to transit migrants to Libya, and while they are on the way to Libya, they fall into a network of human trafficking and gangs.

Last year 22 migrants, including 20 males and 2 females, were found dead in the great desert due to water shortage and dehydration, after a driver cheated them by taking their transportation fees and taking them to the middle of the desert and leaving them there.

- **Missing the right Path:** There are many cases of wanderings in the great desert because of missing the right track. As every trip is joined by a diverse group of people, some of them either smugglers or migrants, some of them could be traffickers who kidnap migrants and ask their families to pay ransom. Some people seek work in gold mining areas in Karri in Chad and then discover that they are working with human traffickers.
- There are many stories about migrants who were dreaming of getting work in Libya and unfortunately found themselves with human traffickers who took them by force to work as laborers in gold mining camps in Chad (East Karri) in the border area between Libya and Chad. These areas are dominated and controlled by the Guraan tribe and are isolated from and inaccessible to ordinary people and government authorities. Local people describe the Guraan tribe as "The group of three cards", referring to the fact that this tribe has a presence in three countries (Sudan, Chad, and Libya). Most human trafficking cases are related to these extended tribes, as they have their own relations and communication with their counterparts in each country. Migrants describe the Guraan area as a very dangerous and risky area, like the Bermuda triangle, as those who enter and work in it will likely never be able to leave. Gangs and traffickers take migrants by force or mislead them to work in gold mining, promising them that they will be given a percentage of production, but instead they enslave them and force them to work for free. Some people spent more than a year working for free and when they asked about their wage, the traffickers take them to an area where they kill those who protest, and then they bring them back. Victims precisely understand that they should stay and work for free for many years or find a way to escape. These types of human trafficking support the judgment that human trafficking is a modern practice of slavery. (Ngwe and Elechi, 2012)

An emigrants' father stated that last year when his 20 year-old son decided to travel to Libya, he didn't tell him about his plan, because he knew that his father would prevent him from traveling because he is still young and didn't finish his education. But unfortunately, by chance his father discovered that he went with four other young men, who went from El Fashir through Teena, Chad. He spoke with his father through a mobile phone, saying he decided to emigrate from Sudan to improve the economic situation for himself and the family. He managed to provide his traveling fees himself, without getting financial support from his father. When he arrived and worked in Libya, he sent 250,000 SD, to his family, which had been distributed among his extended family at the rate of 10,000 SDG for each of the family members. Then they went to Algeria seeking a route to Europe,

mainly Switzerland, as one of his friends is there and he is communicating with him. His friend is encouraging him to come there.

Another emigrant also traveled from El Fashir to Libya through Chad last year. His track was started from El Fashir to Sudanese Teena, then Chadian Teena, and then involved his being smuggled to Libya by small vehicle. When he arrived at the Sudan-Chad border in Teena, he told his father that he decided to travel to Libya and asked him to transfer him money to cover traveling fees. He told his father to pay through a specific merchant in El Fashir, who had a connection with smugglers' network in Libya and knew how to transfer the money to them.

Informal sector and human trafficking

The informal sector comprises three levels: the level of the local community, the level of civil society organizations, and the level of smugglers and traffickers who engage in smuggling and human trafficking practices.

Local community and human trafficking

In Northern State, the people who were interviewed represented three areas, namely Dungla, El Dabba, and Wadi-Halfa. In North Darfur State, they represented two areas: El Fashir and El Malha. The local community's knowledge of the phenomenon of human trafficking can be classified according to the area where people stay. In the main town, like El Fashir and Dungla, they have limited experience with human trafficking, so their knowledge is just a matter of hearing about arresting infiltrators while they are crossing the state. Residents who are living or working in areas related to the activity have deep knowledge about the process, such that they could easily identify specific people who have gotten rich due to their engagement in smuggling and who then undertake money laundering through investing the revenue in commercial activities. However, there are some stories about some individuals who emigrated from these areas (North Darfur and Northern State) to Libya and then to Europe.

Also, there are some brokers and activists in these areas, whom the researchers met in El Malha, El-Dabba, and Wadi-Halfa, who spoke about their knowledge with some brokers and some individuals who have had their economic conditions completely changed because of their work in human smuggling. Despite the fact that human trafficking has become a prominent feature in the practices of smugglers and drivers between Sudan and Libya, the real problem is that local communities look at the process as ordinary migration for people who are looking to get jobs in Libya and improve their life standards. So, they don't see smuggling and transiting migrants across the border as a crime. It is rather a normal form of assistance provided to people who want to change their economic situations and have long been suffering from economic hardship and violent conflicts (FGD, El Malha, Oct. 2021). It is also observed that smuggling between El Malha and Libya is run by Sudanese and Libyan smugglers who don't use the term "human trafficking" at all. Rather, they use the term "human smuggling" and link it with the smuggling of goods and vehicles from Libya to Sudan (Meetings in Dungla, El Dabba and Halfa, Spt. 2021). Listening to communities at the grass-root level and at the level of normal people, it is clear that most don't conceptualize migration-related activities as human trafficking or smuggling. However, the population in the two states (Northern state and North Darfur) have a good understanding of the phenomenon of migration based on their long history with migration patterns, particularly seasonal migration. They understand very well human mobility and migration as well as smuggling that connected the smuggling of goods and of passengers, however, they have no idea about human trafficking because that term is not in their vocabulary and they see foreigners' mobility as a sort of migration separate from what they practice. At the same time, there are some people from these areas who have followed foreigners' migration patterns by working as brokers. With the exception of a few success stories of some who migrated to Libya and recently to Europe and improved their economic situations, most of them have little experience with migrations to Europe.

Understanding of new patterns of migration is affected by how those patterns are linked to displacement in Darfur and internal migration to different states within Sudan regardless of the history, causes, and motives. Furthermore, the majority of migrants from these states have long stayed in the Gulf states, mainly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The majority of the population in Sudan generally and of the two states in particular prefer emigration to KSA since many people want to travel to KSA and since the ideal husband is one who works in KSA.

Throughout the history of North Darfur and Northern State, these states have long dealt with different patterns of migration including migration to Gulf States (mainly KSA), internal migration to various other Sudanese states, and the presence of displaced people from the Nuba Mountains and Darfur region. However, the patterns of migration across North Darfur and Northern State are new and have not clearly been understood and classified. Therefore, local communities are not a part of discussions among official bodies and organizations, despite the fact that some of them know what is going on, because they do not let their deep knowledge of illegal migration show in order to cover up the networks and the presence of active members who work in such activity. With regard to Sudanese emigrants, the discussion is related to the history of economic conditions that have deteriorated and the decline in the value of the local currency over the last few years. Also, there is great disappointment with the political change that has taken place in Sudan, as it forced so many to make the decision to engage in illegal migration. Sudanese emigrants abroad, representing diverse states and communities in Sudan, have a common vision and perception of migration as a direct result of the economic situation in Sudan. Some of them emphasize the fact that they want to change their lifestyle, with the European standard of life as their ultimate goal. Youth in particular are very fascinated by European life, and while they don't have specific knowledge of particular European countries, the majority of them target Italy's coasts. Sudanese emigrants abroad have a great influence on migration networks, as most of them have links with people residing in various European countries and have a great will to share these experiences.

Perception of human smugglers and traffickers

Even though smugglers and drivers define themselves as service providers who use their knowledge and expertise to guide migration seekers to their destinations, they engage in illegal migration and human trafficking by using their advantage to exploit and manipulate migrants' legal status to prevent engagement with legal authorities. Investigations show that there are no clear networks working in human smuggling and trafficking in North Darfur or Northern State, as those who work in this activity rely on their personal relations and networks rather than connecting with a new network specialized in human smuggling and trafficking. Regardless of the practices on the ground, local people are reluctant to mention the term "human trafficking", insisting that this activity is not available in their areas so far and that there are some kinds of illegal migration through smuggling to people who are in need of these kinds of services (FGD, El Malha, Oct. 2021). The networks of human trafficking include four types of actors, including the head or the leader of the group or the network, the smuggler, the broker, and the victim. The group leader is the main funder who initiates the idea and pays the smuggler. The broker is a pivotal person who undertakes different roles of coordination and facilitation between the other three parties (head of the group, smuggler, and victim/s).

According to interviews with different stakeholders, most of those who work in human smuggling are also working in the smuggling of vehicles and human beings between Sudan and Libya. The network starts from Omdurman in the capital, Khartoum, and the members define themselves as brokers who facilitate the transit of migration seekers to Libya. They have a specific classification of migrants and divide them into Sudanese and foreigners. They believe that smuggling Sudanese people is easier and less risky than smuggling foreigners, as the Sudanese can easily move from place to place within Sudan without restrictions. Foreigners who have legal status come in at the second level after the Sudanese in the smuggling process, as they have rights to move within Sudan under

the pretext of working in the service sector in gold mining areas in the Northern State, particularly in the areas close to the border with Libya. The migrants who have no legal status come in at the third level, which is very difficult for smugglers because people from this group enter Sudan as infiltrators through Eastern boundaries and include Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Somali individuals. When members of this latter group arrive at Khartoum, brokers in specific neighborhoods in Khartoum will mobilize them, and when they reach the targeted number and smugglers have made their own preparations, the smugglers take them directly from Omdurman to Libya through North Darfur and the Northern State. Most of the foreign migrants who don't have regulated status choose illegal migration and to be smuggled from Om-Durman market to Libya.

Brokers and smugglers do not prefer to keep migrants in Northern State or North Darfur while they wait for the right numbers of migrants – they prefer to deport them directly to Libya. They only communicate through Thuraya XT Lite network and they have stewards in different places in Sudan, whether in the East or the West. They classify Sudan into entry, coordination, and crossing areas. The entry areas are the eastern states (Kassala, Gadarif, and Red Sea), even though Gadarif has become the most active one because of the war that has taken place in Ethiopia over the last year and because of the revival of smuggling activity. Different places in Khartoum serve as coordination areas where diverse immigrants will be gathered for the sake of smuggling them to Libya. Also, some migrants who are staying in Khartoum could join them if they had enough money to enable them to cover the cost of the journey. Finally, the crossing areas are located in Northern State and North Darfur, where brokers and agents work in coordination and also provide opportunities to migrants who seek to join the different journeys that cross either state (Interviews with brokers in Omdurman, 17th Sept. 2021).

It is observed that most smugglers have a connection with individuals who own agencies in Libya Market in Khartoum City, and they operate using money transfers between Libya and Sudan. In the Northern State, they have special representatives in the triangle area (Al Muthalath) and also El Khannag, where they earn a commission on each transaction. From Libya market in Om-Durman the migrants are dispatched as ordinary passengers to El Khannag in Northern State and then to the triangle area. Sudanese migrants pretend that they are going to work in gold mining, as the triangle area is famous for traditional gold mining activity. They use this tactic as a cover to reach the Sudanese-Libyan borders so they then can more easily enter Libya.

On the Libyan side, there are also Libyan smugglers who are very connected with the Sudanese ones, and they receive the migrants from the Sudanese smugglers on a regular basis. With regard to foreign migrants, some of them legalize their status as economic immigrants who seek jobs in gold mining areas in the triangle and engage in service sector work (e.g., cafes, laundry, etc.) and then pass on to Libya. The majority of those who engage in smuggling practices on the Libyan side are from the Tubu Tribe, who collaborate with the Sudanese smugglers. They work actively at the Egyptian borders or in the triangle (Al Muthalath) area. In the past, they used long vehicles (ZY) to transport migrants because they could take a large number of people at one time. According to police records in Northern State, in 2013 there was a big vehicle (ZY) carrying 90 infiltrators, including 30 Somali and 60 Eritrean individuals. In 2017, smugglers started to use fast cars instead of lorries, and they apprehended a four-wheel drive vehicle (Land Cruiser) carrying 19 Ethiopians. The infiltrators are penalized nominal fines, and after they pay, they legalize their status and then work in Northern state in marginal businesses for the sake of collecting money to continue the journey with the help of brokers in Dungle. Recently, the work of smugglers has been concentrated in El Dabba area as a connection point (Interview with the police officer, in Northern State, 14th Sept. 2021).

Working in smuggling has become a very profitable business to brokers due to the availability of some Sudanese who are willing to take the risk of illegally traveling to Libya and engaging in smuggling. Also, there are some migrants' groups who are staying in different parts of Northern State who have established social networks for the sake of gathering and exchanging information for migrants about smuggling networks. They stay at Northern State towns and El Fashir in North Darfur to work and provide money

and information so that they can complete their journey to Libya where they depend on their relatives and friends who have more expertise than them in this field.

It is worth mentioning that brokers rely on their knowledge of the two states and also on their relations with different smuggling networks that have been built over a long time. Brokers have deep knowledge with different components and social structures that relate to their work, including their knowledge of suitable roads, how to deal with responsible authorities through bribery, gauging the financial ability and seriousness of migrants who seek transit, etc (meeting with some brokers in Northern State, 9th Sept. 2021).

Tactics and strategies of smugglers and traffickers

Smugglers follow different strategies and employ various tactics to protect themselves from border guard forces and snags. These tactics and strategies can be described as follows:

- **Using special terms:** Smugglers prepare a house in which to hide migrants until it is a suitable time to start their journeys. They call these places “Tarkeena”, which is a Sudanese term used sometimes by drivers to mean something like “parking”. The place where they hide migrants in Libya is called “El Hoash”. They also use the term “fish” and sometime “sheep” to refer to migrants when they talk to each other in front of those who are not a part of the network. They have started to use “sheep” as a term for migrants, when some Sudanese and Libyan traders started to trade in animals, mainly sheep, between Sudan and Libya. They use these terms to mislead anti-smuggling authorities and security forces (Mohammed, Oct. 2021). After a wide and extensive campaign led by Rapid Support Forces (RSF), smugglers have started to use these terminologies to communicate with their network in a secret way.
- When travelers arrive at Karri in Chad, the smugglers meet with others and negotiate with them to dispatch migrants to Omel-Aranib, which is an area located on the border between Chad and Libya. In this area, smugglers sometimes stay and survey the border authorities’ movements. They put migrants in a “Tarkeena” until they find a suitable time to continue their journey to Tripoli.
- Some Libyan traders and smugglers bring goods and gasoline from Libya to Sudan through El Malha. They use this movement of goods to misdirect anti-smuggling authorities, pretending that they are not carrying passengers, but they smuggle migrants to Libya, where some of them might be exposed to trafficking. At the same time, some migrants try to manipulate authorities into believing that they are going to work in gold mining in the triangle area (Northern State), while in fact they are traveling to Libya (An Interview with a police man in EL Malha, Oct. 2021). In 2019, 14 migrants from Sudan were found dead in the great desert when a smuggler took them to the desert and left them there. Last year Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of Sudan arrested 60 travelers when they were driving to Libya. They were taken to the court in El Fashir and were released after the judge asked them about their destination and they answered that RSF arrested them as they were going to work in gold mining. In fact, they were going to Libya, but this is one of the tactics smugglers and migrants use to protect themselves from accusations of human trafficking, smuggling, and illegal migration.
- Libyan traders take goods and fuel from Libya and bring livestock – mainly sheep – to Libya. While they are taking livestock across the border, they transit passengers who have official documents and visas from Sudan to Libya.
- After the emergence of human trafficking practices in Libya and Chad, and after wide discussion in national and international media as well as on social media about human trafficking, many smugglers shifted from smuggling people to smuggling vehicles, a practice that is locally known as “Boko Haram Cars”. Boko Haram is an Islamic insurgency movement founded in 2002 in Nigeria that since 2009 has carried out assassinations and large-scale acts of violence in the country (Mbiyozo, 2017). So, “Boko Haram” as a term has been imported from Nigeria and dates back to the appearance of the movement in international media prior to the death of president Al Qaddafi in 2011. The momentum of Boko Haram among Sudanese people led to

the importation of this term when large numbers of cars were smuggled and/or stolen illegally after the collapse of Al Qaddafi regime. Consequently, the Sudanese called all vehicles imported from Libya – whether legally or illegally – “Boko Haram”. For many people in North Darfur and Northern State, the emergence of the smuggling of vehicles from Libya has changed the situation and, according to some interviewees, has reduced human smuggling and trafficking practices, since trading in vehicles is more profitable, safer, and less legally risky than human smuggling. Nevertheless, according to a policeman, Libyan vehicles transit migrants and passengers to Libya on a regular basis, at a rate of 150-200 passengers weekly. Every Libyan vehicle takes 3-4 passengers as assistants to help the cars’ drivers in looking after livestock they carry. Even those who have no official documents can enter Libya with Libyan traders under the pretext of working as assistants in livestock care.

- **Traveling without official documents:** This phenomenon has become more common among migrants, particularly among youth who believe that there is no need to hold passport if Europe is their final destination. According to migrants’ experiences, even if you hold a passport, it is advisable to throw it in the sea when you cross the Mediterranean to Europe. The European authorities will not welcome those who have passports or facilitate their stay there as refugees; rather, they deport them to their home countries (Maamoun, Oct. 2021). Interviews in North Darfur state show that there is a broad sympathy and solidarity among European authorities with those who come from war-affected areas in Sudan generally and Darfur in particular. Accordingly, some Sudanese migrants, particularly those from Darfur, only hold an IDP card, which according to many people, could help them in getting into facilities to obtain asylum. Even those who have official documents like passports throw them in the sea before arrival at European coasts.
- **Transportation:** Smugglers use different means of transportation like small cars, lorries, four-wheel drive vehicles, land cruisers, etc. Their path starts from East Sudan (mainly Kassala), then moves to Khartoum and then to the Northern State or Darfur and then to Libya. Smugglers mostly use a very fast vehicle called “Tundra” with a speed of 300km/hour. Since 2011, a new road from El Dabba has emerged, and it is used to smuggle cars and vehicles from Libya to Sudan (Interviews with Sudanese migrants, Sep. 2021).
- **Dealing with anti-trafficking authorities:** To avoid anti-smuggling authorities, the smugglers and migrants pay for the military and border forces in Sudan and Libya to facilitate their crossing to Libya. Reports alleged corrupt RSF officials financially benefited from their role as border guards and took a direct role in human trafficking. Darfuri armed movements exploit some migrants in forced labor or sex trafficking (US Dept of State, 2021). A new path of smuggling from Libya to Algeria and Morocco and then to Spain via a land crossing has recently emerged. The strategy of crossing the Morocco-Spain border is to have migrants organize themselves into big groups of 300-400 and then present themselves all at once to border forces who are unable to deal with such an influx, where the lucky people will be able to cross the border and enter Spain. Unlucky ones fail and go back to prepare themselves to try again.
- **Seasonality of trips:** According to accounts of their experiences, the suitable times for smugglers are during festivals for the New Year, Ramadan, etc (Interviews with migrants in El Fashir, 19th Oct. 2021). Anti-smuggling campaigns are mostly seasonal, and the majority of the people arrested are caught in winter, with fewer arrested during the summer season.

Paths of smuggling and human trafficking

The ordinary and daily migration through North Darfur and Northern State features many migrants from Sudan and neighboring countries crossing borders either with Libyan drivers or Sudanese smugglers. Libyan traders come to Sudan regularly with goods and go back carrying livestock, mainly sheep, and passengers to Libya in their long vehicles. According to many stakeholders, the path through Northern State is more active than

the one through North Darfur, as many people prefer to go directly from Om-Durman to the triangle area rather than to Darfur, which is a much longer trip.

According to interviews in Northern State, the main path of smuggling in the past was to Egypt through Wadi-Halfa, but that path is rarely used now. In addition to that, there is the path through Al Dabba, which is still used by smugglers. It starts from Omdurman, runs to Al Dabba, and then to Libya through an area known as Kilo 105. Al Dabba, with its distinguished location as a central point between Northern State, North Darfur, and North Kordofan States, represents the most important and famous area for smuggling and human trafficking activities.

The smuggling process across the river and through Wadi Halfa to Egypt was one of the important issues discussed by local people, who stated that this Egypt crossing was the main path for human smugglers before it was changed due to difficulties in using Egypt as a crossing to Europe or Libya. Instead, smugglers have started to use the triangle area directly to Libya over the last decade. In North Darfur State, smugglers were also using Chadian Teena to travel to Libya through Chad. But due to insecurity and the spread of gangs after the death of the president of Chad, Idris Debbi, smugglers abandoned this road and have instead completely relied on the path that started from El-Fashir to Libya through El Malha (Meetings with local people in Dungla, El Dabba Sept. 2021).

An interview with the director of the Central Investigation office indicated that migration to Libya through Egypt was moving along water boundaries through Wadi-Halfa between Sudan and Egypt. Due to shipwrecks that resulted in the death of many Ethiopian migrants, this path has been blocked. Another land road is still used by smugglers, which links Kassala directly to Northern State. The road starts from Kassala, passing across the eastern part of the river to Abu-Hamad and Atbara El-Dabba by crossing El-Saleem Bridge. In recent years, many incidents of looting and crime were reported in El Dabba, when Ethiopian migrants on board a vehicle were attacked by another vehicle and the migrants were kidnapped (as the result of a conflict between smugglers about migrants, (An interview with director of the central investigation/ Northern State, Sept. 2021).

The path from El Fashir in Sudan to El Tina in Chad was the most active path from North Darfur to Libya, as travelers through this path arrive to Libya through Tripoli and Misrata. After the death of Chadian president Idris Debbi, the situation has completely been changed, as a new armed, anti-government movement in Chad has emerged and gangs have spread widely along the path to Libya, resulting in the closure of the road to Libya from Chad. Currently, the path from El Fashir to El Malha is the only safe path for migrants and smugglers (Maamoun, Oct. 2021).

Through a group discussion with some Chadian migrants who were in Libya and on their way to Chad through El Malha – El Fashir, the migrants indicated that traveling directly from Libya to Chad has become very dangerous due to the spread of the armed movement, gangs, and human traffickers. So, even Chadian travelers have changed their paths from/to Libya to go through Sudan rather than directly to Chad (Group discussion, 18th Oct. 2021).

Currently, there are four paths to Libya (Interviews with local authorities in Dungla, El Dabba and Halfa, Sept. 2021):

- a. Traveling officially to Egypt and then via smuggling to Libya. This path is very difficult and is rarely used by smugglers at present.
- b. Traveling from North Darfur to Chad and then to Libya through smuggling. This path is currently very dangerous and difficult due to the spread of looting and human trafficking after the death of Chadian president Debbi.
- c. Traveling via the triangle area (El Muthalath) on the path that starts from Northern State to Wadi-Halfa locality, then to El Muthalath (the triangle area between Sudan, Egypt, and Libya). Most of the migrants use this path.
- d. Traveling via El Malha Road in North Darfur, which starts from El Fashir to El-Malha through Millet and then to the border with Libya.

The last two tracks are the most active ones currently; however, migrants tend to use the triangle road to Libya. According to many interviewees, the triangle road (*El Muthalath*)

(600 km to El Kufra/ Libya) is one of the ancient roads to Libya. In the 1990s, Libyan traders started smuggling goods between El Kufra (in Libya) and Dungla in Sudan. The Libyan traders bring goods to Sudan and take migrants to Libya. But for many stakeholders, the emergence of illegal migration between Libya and Sudan has occurred more through North Darfur and Egypt. With the emergence of gold mining in 2009 in the triangle area (El Muthalath) in border lands, smugglers have started to use this road to smuggle migrants of different nationalities to Libya.

EFFORTS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Sudanese government policies and efforts against human trafficking

The government policies to combat human trafficking began over the last decade after the Sudanese and Libyan military forces signed a protocol in early 2012 for the sake of guarding borders, protecting against cross-border crimes (human trafficking and different types of smuggling), maintaining protection of the Sudanese who work in gold mining, and facilitating border trading between the two countries. Accordingly, the Sudanese Libyan Joint Forces were established in 2012 to guard the border between the two countries. At the beginning, the coordination between the two forces was direct, as the Libyan and Sudanese forces were living together in camps. The 2014 Combating of Human Trafficking Act represents the first law the country put into place to deal specifically with human trafficking and defines human trafficking as a criminal offense, providing for jail sentences for up to 20 years. The act also calls for the establishment of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking (NCCT) to be the highest authority for combating and addressing this crime via adopting different initiatives, mainly developing a national strategy on addressing the issue of human trafficking.

In 2015 the Libyan forces went back to Libya, and coordination between the two forces has waned. In addition to taking responsibility for guarding borders, they also receive Sudanese deportees from Libya. Estimates show that there are around 60-120 Sudanese deportees monthly due to their illegal entry into Libya. The Sudanese forces receive them and hand them over to the responsible authorities in North Darfur or Northern State. Joint forces have two main tasks when they receive migrants: to provide humanitarian assistance by providing basic services (food and water) in collaboration with the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) and to undertake the primary legal investigations to identify the nationalities of migrants and smugglers and to identify them to police. The prosecution of Sudanese migrants is different from that of foreign migrants, as the Sudanese are exposed to penalty and jail, while foreign migrants are deported.

However, in November 2014, the EU Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative launched what they called “Khartoum Process”, which was intended to produce concrete action to prevent and tackle human trafficking and smuggling and placed the onus of work to curb illegal migration on state actors. Through this initiative, the EU allocated funds to control migration and influence the flows of illegal migrants. Through the Khartoum Process, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which were mainly former Janjaweed militias that had been integrated into Sudan Armed Forces, have been assigned the task of border management within the government of Sudan. The provision of funding to Sudan for border management effectively makes the EU complicit in human rights abuses and trafficking committed by RSF. It is observed that border agents led by RSF play a dual role of being officially tasked with stopping migrants and profiting from them at the same time. The RSF has also been accused of using their leverage to engage in sexual exploitation against migrants. However, the critical problem related to border control policy through the Khartoum process was ignoring questions of security pertaining to humanitarian protection seekers (Lumley-Sapanski et al., 2021). The eruption and escalation of the April 2023 war between Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and RSF will have a negative impact on the future of the Khartoum Process, which is no longer functioning at present. Also, migration patterns have completely been changed due to the current war of April 2023. Millions of people have been forcibly displaced due to fighting between SAF and RSF, thanks to the killing and the destruction of livelihoods. So, the traditional migration routes are no longer what they were before.

The practical experience of dealing with the phenomenon of human trafficking indicates that there are many problems that the anti-smuggling authorities between Sudan and Libya face, the most important of which can be described as follows:

- Lack of capacity to provide shelter and food for migrants. A policeman working in the anti-smuggling forces mentioned that they don't have a budget to provide food and accommodation for arrested migrants. In many lawsuits there are victims for whom neither the police nor the state governments have any capacity to provide shelter and food. As a result, they bring them back, and the judicial authority releases them, and then some of them retry the adventure and some go back to Khartoum.
- In the past, the security apparatus had capabilities to combat smuggling and illegal migration, as they had a budget allocated to cover food expenses and shelter.
- Security and military forces that work in border patrol and combating human trafficking have low capacity to be effective in desert conditions.
- Traditional gold mining has had a serious impact, as brokers manipulate young people, promising them work opportunities in gold mining, and then subject them to different types of human trafficking.
- Unfortunately, most cases are not completed because the main actors do not make themselves visible, and anti-smuggling forces can only capture mediators, migrants, and victims.
- The most important obstacles that the security and joint forces face in doing their work are the wide expanse of the great desert and the long distance between different points, made all the more difficult by mobility issues and a lack of means of communication in the desert. The security and joint forces in North Darfur and Northern State are still using traditional tools and lack the sophisticated technology that the border guards use.

Through last August 2021, anti-smuggling forces arrested many migrants including Sudanese, Ethiopians, and Eritreans representing many age groups and both genders. The forces took these migrants to the responsible authorities in El Fashir, but the authorities released them because there was no budget allocated to cover even food expenses for those who continued the journey to Libya.

The Role of Civil Society Organizations (SCOs) in migration

Generally, it is observed that there are no clear activities of CSOs in the two states (Northern State and North Darfur), and there are only two national NGOs working in migration process issues, Sudanese Red Crescent (SRC) and the Mutaawinat organization. The SRC had implemented a project during 2017-2020 focusing on different types of migrants including IDPs displaced from war-affected areas in Sudan and on Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants who use Northern State to pass through to Egypt and Libya. At the beginning, the project focused on IDPs, but in 2020 the project extended to cover migration issues and policies besides health, social empowerment, and protection. In its health cluster, the project provided first aid to migrants who were found in the desert on their way to Libya, in addition to facilitating migrants' integration after they legalized their status into the health insurance scheme. The social empowerment cluster comprises activities related to raising awareness, environmental sanitation, and community days. The social protection cluster provides social and physiological support to migrants. Regarding the issue of migration policies, the SRC works through the State Joint Technical Committee, which consists of Sudanese-Libyan joint forces, police, the passport department, the health department, the education department, and the legal advisor to the state government (in addition to the SRC). The committee has regular meetings and has carried out the state plan of dealing with the issue of migration (An interview with the director of the SRC, 14th Sept. 2021). On the other hand, the Mutaawinat Organization focuses on the provision of legal support to migrants (An interview with the director of Mutaawinat Association, 15th Sept. 2021).

Libyan monitoring efforts to smuggling paths

According to the UN expert panel's report on Libya, Mohammed Ali El- Fadeil, the head of the illegal immigrants' camp in El Kufra/ Libya, sent an official letter to the head of the anti-illegal migration authority. In this letter, he indicated that they monitor seven paths or lines for human trafficking between Sudan and Libya, five of which start from Sudan to El- Kufra and another that begins in Chad and goes to Ribana or Jebal Klunja in southeastern Libya and El- Kufra. This area is an important strategic location, bounded by Egypt in the east with a 250 km shared border, with Sudan to the southeast (350km) and Chad to the south (450 km). Estimates show that smuggling one individual from Sudan or Niger to Libya costs 5000 USD, in addition to 3000 USD to be smuggled from Libya to Europe. The seven paths of migration and smuggling to Libya can be described as follows:

1. The first path starts from Sudan, tracing Egyptian borders to Libya through the Jebal Abdel-Malik crossing oases area to Ajdabia and El- Braiga in Libya, and then to Europe.
2. The second line starts from Sudan to El- Marmak, then to Saleema south of the Owainat mountain range in Egypt and Abo-zraig through Wadi Abdel-Malik and Tazirbo, which is located 280 km north of El Kufra. From Tazirbo, the line goes to Ajdabia and El-Braiga, and then to Europe.
3. The third path starts from Sudan to El-Marmak, to Saleema South of Owainat (70 km), to Saif-El Barli (80km) from Owainat, to Jebal El-Shareef and then Ribana (135 km) from El-Kufra.
4. The fourth path runs from Sudan to Marmak and then to Sudan near Karab-El Tom (100 km), crossing Chadian lands to Ribana and El-Sareer area, and then on to Ajdabia in the north to then go on to Europe.
5. The fifth path starts from North Darfur in Sudan, crossing the western part of Sudan to Libya in the Sarrah area, and then to Jebal Kalamanja and Waw-El Namoos, then to Sebha and ending in Tripoli.
6. The sixth path starts from Chad and goes to Libya, through the land port of El Sarah in Chad to Ribana and then to Jebal Kuluja and Ajdabia in the North.
7. The seventh path is a new one that emerged when the military forces took control over Ajdabia. It starts from Zalah town in Libya and goes then to Jafrah, El Gatroon, Marzag, Wadri, and Sebha before ending at El- Kufra (Alwast news 2018).

CONCLUSION

The history of population movement in Sudan indicates that migration between Sudan and Libya dates back to the early 1960s and was a part of an ordinary population movement that related to the population's livelihoods. Before conflicts' escalation, migration was mainly to meet economic needs or in response to periods of acute food shortage and famines. The eruption and escalation of conflicts in Sudan has resulted in serious socio-economic, political, and security deterioration that has led to changes in migration patterns and migrants' destinations, with Sudan having become a source of migration rather than being merely a transit area for non-Sudanese. The emergence of forced and illegal migration has led to the need for security and to take into account the causes of and factors affecting migration. The official perception of human trafficking is related to the international discourse about illegal migration in general, and about human trafficking in particular, as well as to UN conventions against trafficking and the criminalization of population movements due to the belief that those movements are the first step in smuggling people to Europe.

National actors, particularly CSOs, have shown little concern about human trafficking and the smuggling of people, and discussions of these issues have been lacking as a result. Add in the scarcity of studies on migration in the two areas and Sudan in general, and this combination of factors has contributed to the emergence of a big gap between the local perceptions of migration in East Sudan, on the one hand, and those in the Northern State and North Darfur on the other. Local perceptions of human trafficking in Eastern Sudan and North/West are related to whether local communities are recipients and hosts or merely transit areas. Therefore, the perceptions of individuals who work in government institutions is to some extent focused on the migration dynamic or the abstract understanding of the phenomenon rather than on it as a social phenomenon with multiple dimensions. Furthermore, despite the fact that the two states, particularly North Darfur State, host IDPs, there is no discussion about concepts of displacement, refuge, migration, or human trafficking. So, most of our interviews with official authorities show that there is no specific conceptualization of these matters in their discussions, with the exception of judicial authorities, as their work is inextricably linked to the necessity of identifying the activity and deciding whether it is human trafficking or smuggling, and then they determine the pattern of adjudication accordingly.

In fact, most migrants come from Khartoum to North Darfur or from East Sudan to Northern State directly, but it is difficult to explain the presence and legal status of these migrants, particularly the Ethiopians who constitute the majority of such migrants and who have integrated into local communities. Despite the fact that they enter the two states as infiltrators, they eventually legalize their status, which has complicated the process of understanding whether they will have a long stay in Sudan or they will continue on to Libya.

Even though practical experience has shown that human trafficking has become quite typical among migrants between Sudan and Libya, our interviewees were skeptical about using the term "human trafficking," as they prefer to use "human smuggling". However, human trafficking is a subcategory of illegal migration and smuggling. Our previous experience with human trafficking studies in Sudan reveals that at the beginning of the discussion on the concept of the phenomenon, interviewees use "smuggling" extensively and do not use the term "human trafficking." Then gradually and through discussion, there is a need to differentiate between the two terms (smuggling and human trafficking), especially considering the political dimension of the concept. At the beginning, locals rejected the idea and the use of the term "human trafficking" as applying to migrants, as the traditional perception of human trafficking is linked exclusively to the organ trade. This part of Palermo's definition of human trafficking is reflected widely in the views of local communities, which has resulted in stereotyping "human trafficking" as part of the organ trade. Also, the local communities' willingness to use the term is related to government policies in a particular period of time, given that recognizing the existence of human trafficking will reflect negatively on the government within the international community. Gradually, and due to the efforts of international Non-Governmental

Organizations (NGOs) and government institutions tackling the issues, the concepts of and differentiation between smuggling and human trafficking have become more widely recognized. Furthermore, the trials have begun to explain the necessity of differentiating between smuggling and human trafficking. So it can be said that the judicial system gives the legitimacy to the recognition of human trafficking activity. However, this legitimacy does not extend much beyond those who work in trials, as the local communities are still far from these facts. It is worth mentioning that despite the government authorities having started to localize the concept, the conceptual cycle is still at the beginning. Over the last decade, many efforts have been made by the Sudanese government and Libya to combat human trafficking between the two countries, but the eruption, escalation, and continuation of the April 15th war in Sudan has destroyed such efforts, leaving the door open to various practices of human trafficking in Sudan and beyond. Combating human trafficking is no longer a Sudanese concern under conditions of an escalating war and the government's subsequent inability to control cross-border movement. However, there is a need to look at socio-cultural narratives and oral histories to analyze and conceptualize the different practices related to human trafficking in the future.

Recommendations

The researchers offer the following recommendations:

- The current political and security situation in Sudan requires a regional effort to reduce the negative effects of forced migration from Sudan on the neighboring countries.
- The government of Sudan needs to allocate budget resources to set up a new policy in collaboration with relevant regional and international institutions to jointly combat practices that lead to human trafficking.
- There is a great need for further policy-oriented or action research on human smuggling and trafficking between Sudan and Libya and beyond, since other North African countries have also now become a part of human trafficking dynamics.
- National and international NGOs and UN agencies need to set up programs and projects to respond to issues emanating from forced migration, human smuggling, and trafficking between Sudan and Libya in particular.
- Traffickers and smugglers should be sentenced to more severe penalties so that their punishments are actually commensurate with the seriousness of their crimes.
- Awareness-raising programs are needed in the local communities of crossing areas, particularly among youth, on the risks of illegal migration.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWEES (2021)

Number, name and direction.

1. El SSayah, Hafiz
Midob tribal king, El Malba, North Darfur State
2. Rabih, Mohammed S.
A prominent trader who start trading between Sudan and Libya, North Darfur State
3. Dabaka, Ali
Father on a Sudanese migrants who traveled from El Fashir to Libya, North Darfur State
4. Mohammed, Hassan
A trader in El Malba, North Darfur State , 22nd Oct. 2021
5. Maamoun, Musaad
A Sudanese migrant from El Fashir, North Darfur
6. Anti-trafficking police officer and investigation officer
El Fashir, North Darfur State
7. The prosecutor, the responsible of human trafficking cases
El Fashir, North State 12th Sep. 2021
8. The judgeship, human trafficking cases
El Fashir, Northern State, 12th Sep. 2021
9. Manager of the department of passports and migration
El Fashir, Northern State 12th Sep. 2021
10. Ahmed, A Sudanese Migrant
El Malba, North Darfur State, 21st Oct. 2021
11. Tasfai, an Ethiopian migrant
El Fashir, North Darfur State, Oct. 2021
12. The police officer, combating human trafficking and smuggling office
Northern State, 14th Sept. 2021
13. A police man working with anti-trafficking police
El Malba, North Darfur, 23rd Oct. 2021
14. The director of the central investigation
Northern State, Sept. 2021
15. The director of Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRC)
Northern State, 14th Sep. 2021
16. Interview with the director of Mutaawinat Association
Northern State, 15th Sep. 2021
17. The director of operations authority of the Sudanese-Libyan joint forces
Northern State, 14 September 2021
18. The manager of the national prison
Northern state, 21th Sep. 2021

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