

Illegal population movements across the southern Algerian border (a field study of the reality of African migration in Tamanrasset)

التحركات السكانية غير الشرعية العابرة لحدود الجنوب الجزائري
(دراسة ميدانية لواقع الهجرة الافريقية بمدينة تمنراست)

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Abstract: The phenomenon of illegal African migration is one of the most important movements of population across Algeria towards Europe. The border areas in Algerian south are the main outlets from which these movements come from the Sahel and West Africa. Recently, border control posts have registered Asian elements using the African migration cells to enter Algeria. These population movements made the city of Tamanrasset a regional capital with a special social pattern because of the intermingling of African cultures and peoples. Characterized by rapid demographic growth due to the accumulation of illegal migrants over the time.

Keywords: Population movements, African migration, Borders, Sahara, Sahel.

ملخص باللغة العربية

تعد ظاهرة الهجرة الافريقية غير الشرعية احدى أهم التحركات السكانية العابرة للجزائر قصد التوجه للدول الأوروبية او الاستقرار بالجزائر. تعتبر المناطق الحدودية بالجنوب الجزائري أبرز المنافذ التي تدخل منها جماعات المهاجرين الأفارقة من دول الساحل وغرب افريقيا. ومؤخراً سجلت مصالح مراقبة الحدود مهاجرين من دول اسبوية يستغلون شبكة الهجرة الافريقية للعبور إلى داخل التراب الوطني. هذه التحركات السكانية جعلت من مدينة تمنراست عاصمة جهوية بصيغة اجتماعية خاصة نتيجة امتزاج الثقافات والشعوب الافريقية، تتميز بتسارع النمو الديمغرافي بسبب تكدس المهاجرين غير الشرعيين مع الوقت. كلمات مفتاحية: التحركات السكانية؛ الهجرة الإفريقية؛ الحدود؛ الصحراء؛ الساحل.

1- Introduction and problematic of the study:

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From the logic of human geography, we can say that population movements throughout history have been an important factor among the factors that are pertinent with human being's wealth. This relationship resulted in the extend of human beings throughout the earth (Baudelle, 2016: p103). By the end of twentieth century, the large scale of population movement or so-called "international migrations" began to appear, coinciding with several exogenous factors and other attractions in other parts of the world (Al-Badou, 2009: p63). These movements quickly took a large part in the demographic dynamics at the global level. In 2005, the number of migrants around world was about 200 million, at the rate of 3% of the world's population (CDEAO, 2006).

This number has been quickly doubled since 1970, with about 100 million of immigrants in 1980 and 150 million in 1990. This explosion in global migration since 1980 was varied across continents. The United Nations has recorded almost 44 million in Asia, 41 million in North America, 33 million in Aruba, 30 million in the ex-Soviet Union, and about 16 million migrants in Africa (CDEAO, 2006). By the year of 2013, the number of illegal migrants worldwide reached 232 million, representing 3.2% of the world's total population (Belguidoum S, Mohammed SM., 2015).

The border communities in the Algerian south represent land ports for population movements on the regional extent of the Maghreb and the Sahel. Algeria is the most exposed country to the phenomenon of African illegal migration due to its large area, and its direct contact with several countries of the Sahel of Mali and Niger and the Maghreb countries, which represent the crossings of African migrations towards Europe (Libya, Tunisia and Morocco). As a result of the geographical and security dimension of this phenomenon on the national and international levels, the Algerian government has enacted laws and orders to regulate and control it (REMDH, 2013).

It has established regulatory measures supported by security structures to control the Algerian borders under international human rights instruments, providing human security as the highest priority in international relations and as a new concept of security according to the first United Nations Declaration on the concept of human security through the 1994 Human Development Report (Doubi, 2012). What is the reality of this phenomenon in Tamanrasset? What are the nationalities of illegal migrants? What are their activities?

1.1. Hypotheses:

- Illegal migrant are divided into groups by country of origin, language, and race.
- Illegal migrants engage in activities that are not under the heavy control of the security authorities, often-simple activities that do not require great effort.
- Illegal migrants are widespread in Tamanrasset, particularly in slums and marginal areas.

1.2. Objective of the study:

We will try to answer the questions in which the research aims to analyze the phenomenon of illegal population movements across the southern border of Algeria with Mali and Niger. Through studying the theoretical and field aspects of this phenomenon with a close geographical view of human relationship in the natural, social and cultural fields. We also aim to highlight the location of the city of Tamanrasset within population movements across countries and continents. Besides to the fact, that it has become one of the main hubs of illegal migrants on their way to the North African countries and Europe.

2. Field work Research methodology:

Transboundary population movements have created an emergency among various governmental and non-governmental bodies around the world. As well, studies are conducted during twenty years of migration between Africa and Europe. These studies aimed at the new aspects of these movements between the African and European countries across the Maghreb countries, highlighting their causes and their demographic, socioeconomic and political effects on these regions (Marfaing and Wippel, 2004). There is a several work on the phenomenon of African migration across the southern border of Algeria, but it was based on international statistics, or newspapers. "Getting accurate information on the number of migrants crossing the border into Algeria is difficult, and the statistics provided by the security services (police, army, national gendarmerie and customs) remain the most important information to be obtained, besides to statistics from the National Office of Statistics"(Bensaad,2009: p18).

We have conducted close field investigations to verify the reality of this global migration - regardless of legal migration - across Algeria through the urban border communities in the south. With the detection of the causes of their origins, and its effects on the physical tissues of the study area and the various socio-economic aspects related to them. Our investigations are based on what the newspapers are reporting on the development of this phenomenon now, besides to the works that have studied its regional and global dimensions.

The geographical study of any phenomenon requires field investigations. Due to the big area of Tamanrasset and the importance of illegal migration in its urban dynamics. As well as the acceleration of demographic dynamics due to the socio-economic changes resulting from this phenomenon, we followed the directed investigation methodology. Through the distribution of housing, population and migration forms to 100 foreign families in the city according to a random sample. We also conducted

a similar investigation using the interview, where we conducted 30 interviews on illegal migration with clandestine migrants, and with the local population.

3. Results:

3.1 - A mixture of Sahel and West African countries with Arab communities:

The conditions experienced by the people of sub-Saharan Africa and West Africa at the end of the twentieth century. As well as the crises, that occurred in some Arab countries at the beginning of the second decade of this century. All these crises have made Algeria one of the most important destination for the displacement and the fleeing from these situations looking for tranquility and security, and because of its good relations with most countries of the continent and the world (Drozd, 2004: p91).

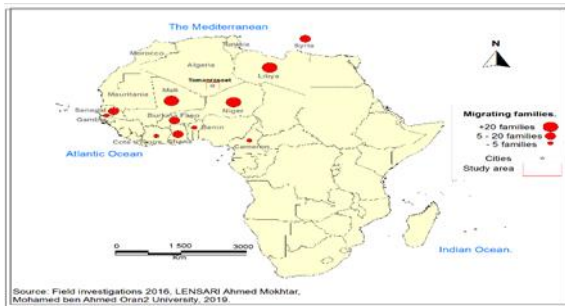
Through the sample of randomly chosen households in Tamanrasset city, we found that most of the foreign families are from Niger and Mali, and even Libya because of the Libyan crisis. As well as families from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Senegal, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Gambia besides to Syrian families and families from other African countries came to Tamanrasset because of the events mentioned above. Libyan and Syrian families are fled after the events of the Arab Spring.

Table 01: The Origins of Illegal migrants by Sample.

Country	Number of families
Niger	32
Mali	21
Côte d'Ivoire	2
Burkina Faso	8
Ghana, Guinea	0
Senegal	5
Benin	2
Cameroon	2
Gambia	1
Libya	12
Syria	9
Total	100

Source: Field Investigation May 2016.

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**Map.01: The origin of the migrant families
in Tamanrasset city by sample.**

3.2. Most migrant families live in marginalized neighborhoods.

Determining the sample of the investigation from foreign families in Tamanrasset is difficult given the number of illegal migrants in this city. After careful observation of the area over the course of two years (2015-2016), we distributed the selected sample to the largest concentration centers in Tamanrasset’s districts; in Gata-Eloued west, Tahaggart west, Matnatlat, and Ankouf. The proportion of Gata-Eloued west of the sample was 34%, especially in the area called "Sarketna", followed by the neighborhood of Matnatlat by 30%. Tahaggart west (Shomara) is estimated at 21% of the total families investigated. Finally, Ankouf district with 15% of the selected sample.

The presence of these families in these neighborhoods is the result of several factors, including:

- Being a neighborhood established by the first refugees and by the time) it was considered as a special case of authorities in Tamanrasset.
- Social cohesion within different African identities and ethnicities (Touaregs, Mours, Bambara, Hausa ...).
- The interests of foreigners are shared according to nationalities (Nigerians, Malians, Cameroonians ...), or according to the common foreign language Francophone, Anglophones, and Arabs.

The illegal expansion of these neighborhoods is one of the most important problems faced by local authorities in running the city. So that they became strongholds of various types of crimes and social pests, which increase the fears of the community towards the phenomenon of the accumulation of clandestine migrants in the city.

Table 02: Distribution of Migrant Families to Tamanrasset Neighborhoods by Sample.

Source: Field Investigation May 2016

Neighborhoods	Number of families
Gata-Eloued west	34
Tahaggart west	21
Matnatlat	30
Ankouf	15
Total	100

Our investigations with 100 migrant families showed that the housing growth rate of these families exceeded 8p/H (the number of individuals who were investigated was approximately 800). We also concluded after the investigations that the proportion of illegal African migrants in the city of Tamanrasset exceeds 15% of the total population of the city. Most families come from Mali and Niger prefer to stay in the city because of its strategic location between the Maghreb and the coast, and because of social and cultural characteristics of this city. The majority of people (from West African States) prefer to cross into the northern regions in order to complete migration to Europe.

Map.02: Distribution of the migrating family on the neighborhoods of Tamanrasset city by sample.

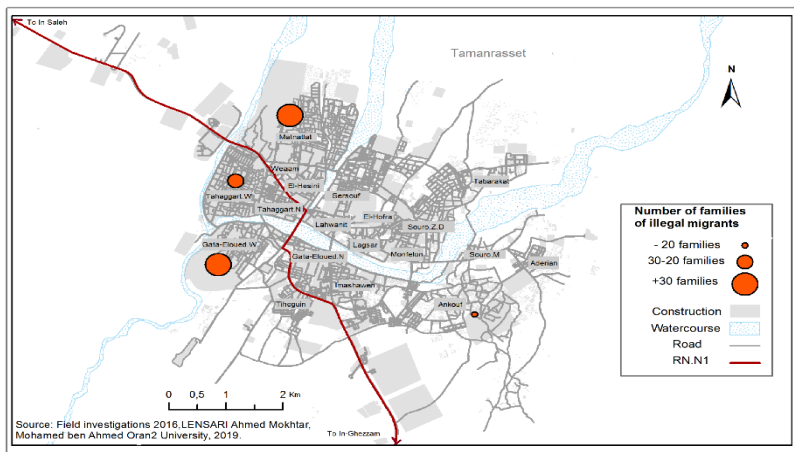


Photo No. 01: African migrant groups are looking for work on the sidewalks of the Tahaggart west - Source: LENSARI, March 2016.

3.3. Illegal trade is the most important activity of African migrants.

Tamanrasset is full of illegal markets, especially in the center of the city, such as the Souadine market in Saffsaf (Souk El-Souadine) and the new Tafsit market. The Sahelian character of the market characterizes these markets, and by the time Tamanrasset became an Algerian city with distinct Sahelian characteristics and African space of several nationalities. besides to the large number of illegal migrants in this city, several illegal trade practices have emerged in order to earn a living: clothing, cosmetics, spices, sewing, restaurants (Minama), laundry and various other works in construction. Moreover, engage in covert and suspicious activities such as prohibited trade, gold mining and smuggling.

During our field investigations, we encountered all of these practices through the sample, but the questions were cited indirectly by observation and similar interviews with the local population. In an interview with a resident of Ankouf district, he replied:

"... Of the large number of illegal migrants in Tamanrasset. The searches of neighborhoods and houses by the National People's Army. were intensified in search of cells of terrorism, weapons and contraband. the dismantling of cells of falsification of documents and the conversion of the dinar to the AFC or euro. Sometimes in search of smuggling stores and gold exploration equipment. ... The authorities are always controlling the neighborhoods known to foreigners and illegal migrants. Who are being exploited by organized criminal cells in their illegal Trans-Saharan practices ... "? [By a resident of Tamanrasset on May 26, 2015].

Table 03: Activities of Illegal Immigrants in Tamanrasset City.

The original country of migrants	Activities
Niger	Trading of clothing, Cosmetics, Spices, Sewing, Minama, Construction, Gold exploration.
Mali	Domestic Work, Laundry, Minama, Driving, Mechanics, Smuggling, Gold exploration.
Senegal	Sewing, Cosmetics, Construction.
Côte d'Ivoire, Cameron, Ghana, Guinea	Painting, Decoration, Trade prohibitions, Forgery.
Burkina Faso	Construction, welding.
Libya	Fast Food, Trade.
Syria	Construction, Drilling of wells.

Source: Field Investigation May 2016.



Photo No.02: The illegal migrant market (Souk El-Souadine) in front of Al-Saffsaf market in Gata-Eloued district- Source: LENSARI, March 2016.

4. Discussion:

4.1. Tamanrasset has become the most important center for the gathering of illegal migrants in the Algerian south.

Tamanrasset is the cultural capital of Touareg in Ahaggar. It is the regional capital of the Great South, and it's the most important point for illegal migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and West Africa (Marfaing & Wippel, 2004; Sbiga, 2002, 2005). Before heading to the northern cities of Algeria or Libya across the Algerian-Libyan border, especially through the border crossing Dabdab. On the other hand, towards Morocco, through the various states of the West Algeria urges infiltration across the Algerian-Moroccan border (REMDH, 2013). Because of the flow of illegal migrants to the city of Tamanrasset since the end of the twentieth century. Especially through the flows of the main axis of migration between them and the community of Agdez (Niger) (Bensaad, 2003, 2002; Pliez, 2002).

Tamanrasset was known for its commercial activity and its connection to the network of convoys linking the Islamic Maghreb with the kingdoms of sub-Saharan Africa. "Until the end of the 1960s camel convoys reached the people of Touareg from the south of Algeria and central Niger, from the north tribes Kel Ahaggar and Kel Ajer of Tamanrasset and Djanet loaded with salt to the Sahel to replace with corn"(Brachet, 2009; p26). by the time, Tamanrasset became a geographical, sociological and political researcher known for the phenomenon of illegal migration because of the proportion of the foreign population compared to the proportion of citizens. According to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) report in 2006 that the proportion of foreigners in this city was 50% in 1990 (CDEAO, 2006).

Any visitor to Tamanrasset can see the density of illegal migrants so that this city resembles a continent because of the diversity of population. Which includes the various nationalities until it was called the city of the "55 nationalities". Between the African nationalities, Asian and European, including regular residents, illegal residents as well as tourists who visit annually the area of the distinctive tourist character. "The Francophone of Mali, Niger, Benin, Cameroon, and the Anglophones from Nigeria and Liberia. In total, the National Gendarmerie has counted during the past 39 nationality, including Asians, such as Syrians, Iraqi Kurds and Egyptians with a small percentage "(Haniouni, 2011).

The phenomenon of the accumulation of illegal migrants in Tamanrasset is exacerbated year after year. In 2013, the security services arrested more than 10,000 illegal migrants from 23 African nationalities, of which 220 were financial and Nigerian. Since the year 2000, they have numbered about 70,000 illegal migrants and increased their percentage by about 80% in 2014 (Dekhan & Hamidi, 2016). This rapid increase is due to the tightening of security conditions in the north of country, and the deportation of refugees to the border areas coinciding with the closure of the Algerian-Libyan border.

4.2. The Algerian government is trying to control illegal migrants by setting up border posts.

The Algerian government has established security structures to protect the borders and organize the crossing process according to international and local law. The most important security structures include border guards, border police, the regional chamber for investigating illegal migration and monitoring its networks, and the Central Office for Combating Illegal migration. The government has set up a new center for illegal migrants at the border crossing on the Algerian-Nigerian border on the African Union road.

These security structures are coordinated with other security sectors such as customs, military, regional and international governmental entities concerned with human rights, and bilateral cooperation agreements on issues of security in North Africa and the Mediterranean (Chefar, 2012). For example, Algeria has signed several bilateral agreements with its neighbors on security cooperation and combating all forms of breaches of international covenants from illegal migration, smuggling and terrorism. With Libya in March and April 2012, Mali in January 2014, and Tunisia in April 2014 (Dekhan & Hamidi, 2016). Perhaps the "Tamanrasset Plan" held in August 2009 is considered the most important plans and serious in the control and organization of the border area in the Algerian southern border areas. Which resulted from the security coordination between Algeria, Niger, Mali and Mauritania to tighten the control of the large border crossing with these countries.

5. Conclusion:

At the beginning of the twenty-first century Europe sounded bells of various media to alert African countries of the importance of curb and study the causes of population movements across the Sahara and North Africa. Moreover, study their developments to reduce their impact on countries of origin and countries of polarization. In 2016, Europe recorded some 160,000 African migrants illegally, and in 2017, it counted more than 17.2 million migrants due to the situation in the Middle East (Arab Spring), with a significant share of African migrants. Between 2009 and 2011, Algeria counted more than 41,000 illegal African migrants, and counted nearly 25,000 refugees from Niger and Mali after the Malian crisis in 2012.

A significant part of these population flows are the urban border communities in the Algerian south. In addition, over time it has become urban centers with demographic and urban dynamics accelerated by its population growth. Cross-border migration movements that seek security and economic conditions always fuel this demographic increase. Which witnessed and witnessed Algeria since independence to this day (agricultural revolution, development of the south, administrative promotions). The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decisions announced that in 1990 alone, the city of Tamanrasset had more than 65,000 inhabitants, 50% of whom were foreigners (from sub-Saharan Africa and West Africa), while its population was only 3,000 in 1960, National Office of Statistics (2008).

This irregular population dynamics has made the city of Tamanrasset a Sahelian city. Due to the intensity of illegal migrants within their urban tissues and rural areas. As well as the emergence of illegal markets for various economic activities imported from the cities of sub-Saharan Africa and West Africa in the scene of the "continent city" resulting from the merging of several nationalities, cultures, races, religions from the African continent as well as Asian and European elements. Our field study also revealed the presence of Libyan and Syrian refugees following the events of the Arab Spring 2011.

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