CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND
ENVIRONMENT

BEYOND THE DIVIDE IN CYPRUS: A CALL FOR A COLLABORATIVE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AGENDA TO ADDRESS THE MIGRATION CRISES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

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Interdependent Nature of Regional Security Concerns: The report delves into the intricate tapestry of challenges facing the Mediterranean, especially migration, and its links with the sectors of energy, healthcare, and water access. It advocates for integrated policy solutions that address these interlinked issues.

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Cyprus's Humanitarian Response: The report underscores the critical position of Cyprus as a sanctuary for migrants and refugees, while also pointing out the consequent burden on its local infrastructure. It calls for robust governance and unified actions in Cyprus to elevate the collective human welfare across the island.

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Joint Efforts for Regional Stability: The report advocates for a united approach from both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in Cyprus to overcome divisions through a joint response to human security issues, a strategy that is vital for maintaining stability in the region as well.

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IN CYPRUS: A CALL
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HUMANITARIAN
ASSISTANCE AGENDA TO
ADDRESS THE MIGRATION
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INTRODUCTION

In September 2023, Storm Daniel caused significant flooding in Greece, Bulgaria, and Türkiye. As the storm moved across the warm Mediterranean waters, it gradually transformed into a "medicane,' a relatively new term that describes a specifically Mediterranean hurricane. In Libya, Storm Daniel led to flooding and the collapse of two damns—a situation that may easily recur since, according to recent research on global warming, the likelihood of severe heavy rainfall in Libya has risen by 50 percent (Braun 2023).

Since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011, huge numbers have fled the country (over 5.6 million) to take refuge in neighbouring countries such as Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, as well as many countries in Europe.[1] After nearly 12 years of war, the situation is dire: refugees are homeless/stateless; host communities struggle to accommodate refugees; humanitarian assistance cannot meet migrant needs.

From Syria to Ukraine, most refugees –whether individuals displaced due to conflict or victims of natural disasters-- lack access to essential energy services. Thus, at present, just 11 percent of refugees in camps have access to dependable energy sources (Ainio and Vittorangeli 2019). Lack of electricity makes ordinary tasks such as cooking, staying warm, and studying difficult or impossible, while inadequate lighting exposes women and girls to heightened safety risks.

In the eastern Mediterranean region in 2023, there were 64 reported disease outbreaks-- a significant increase from the 31 outbreaks recorded in 2021(OCHA 2023). This surge appears to be related to severe flooding in Pakistan and Libya, fatal earthquakes in Syria, Morocco, and Afghanistan, as well as a sharp escalation in conflicts in Sudan, the occupied Palestinian territory, and northern Syria.

UNICEF reports that approximately 289 children lost their lives or went missing this year while attempting the migration route through the central Mediterranean Sea (from North Africa to Europe).[2] This translates to a weekly average of al-most 11 children losing their lives or vanishing as they seek peace and hope for their future. The majority of those rescued are transferred to overcrowded detention facilities, where, among other difficulties, they often have little or no access to clean water.[3]

The above five vignettes may appear unrelated but, in fact, there is a common thread running through them. Today-- a time often described as the age of migration--each of these stories highlights the plight of so many vulnerable individuals, whose situation and needs pose many and complex challenges. These issues demand the attention of national and international bodies; they cannot be dealt with at the national level exclusively, nor with a simple hard security approach. The interconnected challenges of migration, energy, water, and health represent a convergence of crises that require a comprehensive approach when deciding effective policy and strategic solutions. Not one of these components can be addressed in isolation because of their diverse and multidirectional interconnections. In this report, therefore, these interconnections are examined in light of the current migration crisis in the Mediterranean region.

Scholars broadly agree that the Mediterranean region is now in a period of systemic transition (Litsas and Tziampiris 2016; Tziarras 2019). The many and persistent regional conflicts, confrontations and threats, as well as the massive movement of people, point to the need for greater coordination among nations, as so many of today's security threats are of an increasingly transnational character. This does not imply the pursuit of a Mediterranean unity; such an approach would ignore the complexity of contemporary regional dynamics. The region has been described variously as: located "between unity and fault line" (Bicchi 2018, cited in Panebianco 2021:19); a "common space" where the North-South and

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1 Operational Data Portal. *Situations*. UNHCR. Retrieved October 31, 2023 from https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations.

2 The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (July 13, 2023). Eleven children die every week attempting to

cross the Central Mediterranean Sea migration route – UNICEF. Retrieved 31 October, 2023 from https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/eleven-children-die-every-week-attempting-cross-central-mediterranean-sea-migration.

3 The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. (UNICEF). (April, 30, 2021). *114 unaccompanied children rescued at sea off the coast of Libya - More than 350 people perish or go missing in the Mediterranean since year began*. Retrieved 31 October, 2023 from https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/114-unaccompanied-children-rescued-sea-coast-libya-more-350-people-perish-or-go.

center-periphery divisions intersect (Ribas-Mateos 2015, cited in Panebianco 2021:19); an overlapping area (Panebianco 2021:19). These descriptions suggest that the Mediterranean is a fragmented region, and a region where politics revolve around security / insecurity. It is in this context, i.e., political instability, severe poverty, and climate change, that the region reveals blurred borders. A case in point is the irregular migration[4] across the Mediterranean Sea, which illustrates the way in which borders are shifting and security threats are becoming transnational challenges.

The Mediterranean region is a significant crossroads for migratory movements, as it is located at a crucial mid-point between the global North and global South (Panebianco 2021; Kinacioglu 2023). The fact that migration flows across the Mediterranean persist leads us to argue that the current approach, which primarily relies on state border control and state security, is inadequate. It is in this context that the present policy report investigates the concept of human security (Kaldor, Martin, and Selchow 2007; Kerr 2010; Christie 2018; UNESCO 2008), and argues that when human security is assured, state security increases (Hanlon and Christie 2016; Panebianco 2021). Working from this perspective, the individual becomes the primary security focus (Bilgin 2018).

 We first note that the region--as the site of some of the most significant and most long-standing crises in the world--must accept a large degree of responsibility for today's displaced populations. Because of its location, Cyprus has become a popular destination for migrants-- economic migrants, yes, but more importantly, political asylum seekers and refugees. This has evolved into a critical situation, with Cyprus now recognized as the leading EU country in terms of receiving political asylum seekers.[5] The surge in asylum applications has resulted in overcrowded reception, accommodation, and detention facilities, straining government departments and local authorities, and necessitating additional human, material, and infrastructure resources, as well as efficient management. The island's *de facto* division adds to the complexity, with a significant number of migrants reaching the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) by crossing from the north of the island through the Green Line, primarily entering via the Nicosia district.

This report emphasizes the humanitarian aspects of the migration phenomenon in the region, with a focus on Cyprus's security landscape insofar as it is affected by the complex and interconnected challenges related to migration. Therefore,

through the lens of human security, we examine multiple dossiers, e.g., the migration-energy, migration-health, and migration-water nexuses, as they represent pressing transboundary security challenges within the region. The report initially provides a broad overview of the migration dynamics in the region, followed by an investigation into the links between migration and various factors such as climate change, water scarcity, energy access, and health-related challenges. In conclusion, we explore the possibility of Cyprus's two communities (Greek and Turkish) working together to address the security concerns of migrants and refugees.

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4   The formulation of technical definitions, concepts, and classifications related to migrants and migration is influenced by a range of factors, including geography, legal considerations, political aspects, research methods, and the specific timeframe. This becomes crucial when measuring and examining the impact of migration and those who are considered migrants, regardless of their specific definition. The IOM Glossary on Migration (2019 edition) is a valuable reference resource. You can access the Glossary on the IOM Publications Platform at this link: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf.

5   SeeKantaris, M. & Theodorou, M. (2022). Cyprus's ongoing migration challenge. ESPN Flash Report 2022/01. European Social Policy Network (ESPN), European Commission.

1.
UNSAFE MIGRATION FLOWS IN THE EAST MEDITERRANEAN

The conventional interpretation of the migrant phenomenon, which distinguishes between voluntary and forced migration, is becoming less relevant today, as most migrants travel along the same routes and use similar modes of transportation. As such, refugees, asylum seekers, and all other categories of migrants arrive at the same transit and destination countries and are processed together at reception centers. Therefore, in contrast to the traditional picture of migration, we now have the situation where migration is a complex blend of voluntary and forced movements driven by various factors, including economic, political, social, and environmental (Mach 2020: 48). This observation is highly relevant to the migration trends in the Mediterranean region.

There are two main migration routes across the Mediterranean: one spans the eastern Mediterranean, connecting Türkiye to Greece; the other encompasses the central Mediterranean, linking North Africa with Italy and Malta. The eastern Mediterranean route comprises three primary pathways, which in 2015 converged in Türkiye and led to a substantial surge in arrivals in Greece. These are as follows:

i.   A neighbourhood route originating in Syria and Iraq that navigates towards Türkiye's southern border, then passes through cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Mersin, and Adana to eventually reach Izmir and the Greek islands.
ii. A Middle Eastern regional route, originating in the Middle East, including Afghanistan and sometimes Pakistan, that travels through Iran into eastern Türkiye (Van); there is alternative Middle Eastern route from Lebanon, overland or by ferry to southern Türkiye (Antakya and Mersin), and further proceeding through Ankara and/or Istanbul to reach the Aegean coast.
iii. A Middle Eastern and North African (mostly MENA) route beginning in such countries as Sudan, Egypt, Somalia, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Gulf countries (UAE, Oman) and destined first for Türkiye, before continuing as outlined in the previous routes (Crawley et al. 2016: 23).

Similarly, the central Mediterranean route has four primary pathways; these merge in Libya as they travel towards Europe:

i.   A North African route beginning in Morocco, Tunisia, Libya or Egypt.
ii. A West African route initiating in western and central African nations, which involves complex, often protracted journeys with numerous intermediate points, eventually converging in Burkina Faso and Mali before proceeding to Niger on the route to Libya.
iii. An East African route that begins in the Horn of Africa. This journey is also intricate and lengthy due to multiple stops, and often originates in towns or refugee camps in Ethiopia or Sudan.
iv. Routes from elsewhere, i.e., nations beyond Africa, such as Syria (involving air travel to Egypt and then traveling overland to Libya), Pakistan and Bangladesh (entailing air travel to Libya). These migration routes also intersect within Libya (Crawley et al. 2016: 23).

In sum, there are various pathways that merge to create the eastern and central Mediterranean routes leading to Europe through Türkiye and Libya.

The migrant phenomenon prompts several important questions: What factors explain the choice to migrate? Furthermore, what factors determine the choice between eventual return vs permanent relocation? Migration in the Mediterranean region is driven by many factors, e.g., armed conflicts, persecution based on political beliefs, religion, sexual orientation, or nationality, the last qualifying for legal protection under the 1951 Geneva Convention.[6] Other factors include climate change, demographic pressures, and structural poverty.

While migration is most often a natural occurrence, there are many instances when it occurs within the context of emergency and crisis; in these cases, it is considered an extraordinary phenomenon (Attinà 2018: 50). Since 2015 this latter has been the more common situation, especially in the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, even in 2012 the UN High Com-

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6   UNHCR. The UN Refugee Agency. The 1951 Refugee Convention. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention.

missioner for Refugees (UNHCR) designated the Mediterranean as globally the most perilous water migration route due to the high number of fatalities and disappearances in 2011 (UNHCR 2012). The eastern Mediterranean route reached its peak in 2015 when over one million refugees, primarily those fleeing the Syrian conflict, took this route to Europe, while the central Mediterranean route had an extended peak spanning from mid-2013 to mid-2017.[7]

In the aftermath of the devastating events of October 2013, when over 360 people perished in the tragic sinking of two boats near the Italian island Lampedusa, the IOM initiated a project to document information on migrants, specifically, those who either die or go missing as they migrate (IOM 2021:31). This newer initiative falls within the organization's general Missing Migrants Project.[8] In the period 2014-2020, the Mediterranean Sea witnessed its most tragic period, with over 21,200 deaths attributed to migration (IOM 2021: 31). Since 2014, the eastern Mediterranean has recorded nearly 1,700 deaths and missing person cases, almost half of these (803) occurring in 2015 (IOM 2021: 31); moreover, almost 500 children lost their lives on this route, a significant number of whom were younger than five.[9] As of October 26, 2023, a total of 28,196 migrants have been recorded as missing in the Mediterranean since 2014.[10] In 2023, between January 1 and the end of June, there were 87,908 arrivals to Europe, the majority (79,258) having travelled by sea.[11] In this 6-month period alone, tragically, 1,997 migrants were reported dead or missing.[12]

The many migrant deaths and disappearances in the Mediterranean cannot be attributed solely to overloaded vessels. Also to blame is intentional negligence, by national coastguards as well as other bodies/parties involved in migration oversight. Moreover, framing migration/refugee movements as hybrid threats has even legitimized military operations and led to stringent controls on human mobility, while also denying protection and security for these vulnerable populations (Kinacioglu 2023: 3). This perspective on migrants has led many states to ignore their legal obligations and, as a result, has led to serious human rights violations. In fact, there are recent studies that have identified the Mediterranean as a region where strategies and interests of states often diverge from their international duties to migrants and refugees. Research by Cusumano and Riddervold (2023) indicates that European countries continue to entrust Libya with the task of migration governance, despite Libya's unstable institutions and documented mistreatment of migrants. Galani (2020) contends that while the EU and its member states have made certain strides in maritime security (ship safety and environmental protection), there is a pressing need to integrate human rights protection into these efforts, arguing that there are legal frameworks that require EU countries to uphold human rights at sea, i.e., under the law of the sea, human rights law and EU law. Similarly, Koka and Veshi (2019) aver that the EU response to the influx of irregular migrants (those fleeing regional conflicts) has exposed legal discrepancies in search and rescue regulations and human rights law, highlighting a significant gap in states' legal accountability to conduct rescues. A Grech and Wohlfeld (2016) study is also a critical reminder that--despite the heated political discourse surrounding migration-- international law mandates the protection of migrant and refugee rights. These recent investigations reveal a pervasive pattern wherein states' interests take precedence over legal and humanitarian imperatives.

Climate change aggravates the situation further, as it worsens any extant security threats. Current efforts to address these challenges are largely fragmented, insofar as they tackle migration as unrelated to such security issues as climate change. While both areas must be better addressed, working with them separately is increasingly understood to be inadequate.[13] Thus, in the subsequent section the interconnected issues of climate change and migration are explored, recognizing them as intersecting points of human security threats in the region.

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7   See FRONTEX. European Border and Coast Guard Agency. Migratory Routes. Available at: https://www.frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-routes/eastern-mediterranean-route/.

8   Missing Migrant Project. Available at: https://missingmigrants.iom.int.

9   Missing Migrant Project. (n.d.). *Migration within the Mediterranean*. Available at: https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean.

10   See International Organization for Migration (IOM). (n.d.). *Migration within the Mediterranean*. Retrieved October 26, 2023 from https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean

11   International Organization for Migration (IOM). (n.d.).

12   See International Organization for Migration (IOM). (n.d.). *Migration flow to Europe: arrivals*. Retrieved October 26, 2023 from https://dtm.iom.int/europe/arrivals. See also Tagaris K.& S. Prousalis (2023). At least 79 drown, hundreds missing in migrant shipwreck off Greece, June 14. Reuters. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/seventeen-drown-100-rescued-after-migrant-shipwreck-off-greece-2023-06-14/.

13   See United Nations Development Programme (2022). New threats to human security in the Anthropocene: Demanding greater solidarity. [Special Report]. Retrieved November 14, 2023 from https://hs.hdr.undp.org/pdf/srhs2022.pdf.

2.
ANTICIPATING FURTHER CHALLENGES DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

In the last ten years, natural disasters, mainly flooding, have resulted in a minimum of 1.5 million cases of internal displacement in the Middle East and North Africa (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre nd: 61). While the degree to which climate change influences migration is intensely debated, most agree that it will increasingly serve as a catalyst, whether directly or indirectly, for forced migrations.

Reports predict higher temperatures, more frequent heatwaves, and reduced rainfall in the Mediterranean region (Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East Climate Change Initiative 2022), which is recognized as vulnerable to climate change. Already we can point to extreme weather events and deteriorating air quality, and in this predominantly arid region with low levels of soil absorption and poor drainage, rainfall often results in riverine, flash, and urban floods. Toward the end of this century, annual severe heatwaves are predicted to affect large areas in the Middle East and North Africa (Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East Climate Change Initiative 2022: 2).

While such climate-related challenges are anticipated to worsen in the near future, the region has already suffered from weather-related crises in addition to political upheaval. For example, in 2010, Russia experienced an unprecedented heatwave, resulting in drought conditions and crop failure, while in the same year many in the Arab world rose up to protest exorbitant food prices, poor governance and widespread corruption (SIPRI 2022: 35), which resulted in the most significant displacement in the Middle East in recent history. The armed conflicts, violence, and turmoil ensuing from the Arab Spring demonstrations forced millions to abandon their homes.

Cyprus has been seriously affected by these recent crises, due primarily to a marked surge in the number of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants: in the six-month period from January to September 2023 alone, the RoC registered 8,092 new asylum applications. There is now a backlog of over 26,995 cases pending at the Asylum Service and an additional 5,033 appeals at the International Protection Administrative Court (UNHCR 2023a), while the RoC is providing shelter to 18,103 individuals who have been granted international protection. More recently, the arrival of 18,836 Ukrainian refugees under temporary protection in Cyprus has added a further challenge (UNHCR 2023a).

This situation is unlikely to improve, considering the scale of climate change and the various ongoing conflicts in the region. We should anticipate an increase in migrants embarking on hazardous journeys, risking their lives, susceptible to exploitation and abuse in the eastern Mediterranean, and also greater challenges for the nations receiving them. In this regard, the RoC is currently aided by the European Commission, via, e.g., funding, expert knowledge, and a permanent staff posting in Nicosia. Further support is provided by the ongoing presence of Frontex, EUAA, and Europol, among other EU agencies, with whom the RoC also has a cooperative Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to address migration. The MoU ensures that the efforts and resources of all involved bodies within the EU and the RoC are efficiently coordinated. These encompass everything from the initial reception of migrants to the processes of asylum, integration, and repatriation.

Even when migrants have safely reached their destination, they face further obstacles, especially in accessing essential services like electricity, water, and healthcare. Therefore, we argue that RoC migration policy must include a human security focus, wherein the above issues are addressed.

3.

MIGRATION AND ENERGY NEXUS

A recent UNHCR sustainable energy report found that only 10 percent of refugees have access to Tier 1-2 electricity, i.e., four hours of power daily (UNHCR 2020:1). Energy is a new focus of the humanitarian agenda, finally recognized as both a crucial resource and a fundamental human right (Rosenberg-Jansen 2020: 36). And while energy is now an official sustainable development goal, the UN has paid it scant attention in its humanitarian crisis management system. In the humanitarian domain, energy refers to the sustainable and fossil fuel energy sources in displacement scenarios, including refugee camps, urban areas, self-settled refugees, host communities, and internally displaced populations. Various policy initiatives, such as the 2017 Moving Energy Initiative[14] and the 2015 SAFE initiative,[15] have the support of major humanitarian agencies. Furthermore, in 2014 the UNHCR introduced an energy strategy,[16] and more recently (2019) launched an innovative global energy strategy.[17] Despite these advances, energy has not been officially integrated into the humanitarian response system—in other words, it has no institutional representation within the UN OCHA cluster system (Rosenberg-Jansen 2020: 37).[18]

National and global energy initiatives rarely consider the displaced, and energy needs are not seen as high priority in humanitarian aid efforts. The energy sector consistently lacks adequate funding, resulting in financial and environmental burdens for both refugees and host countries. In Syria, for example, energy shortages have affected fundamental necessities like access to clean water and healthcare services; in fact, these energy deficits have become critical to the extent that they have directly influenced patterns of displacement and migration (Omar et al. 2023). Energy deficits also directly affect the quality of healthcare, and are another important reason for raising the profile of energy needs.

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14 Chatham House. Moving Energy Initiative: Sustainable Energy for Refugees and Displaced People. Available at:https://www.chatham-house.org/about-us/our-departments/environment-and-society-centre/moving-energy-initiative-sustainable-energy.

15 World Food Programme (WFP). SAFE Initiative. Available at: https://www.wfp.org/publications/safe-initiative.

16 UNHCR. Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE). A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-strategy-safe-access-fuel-and-energy-safe.

17 UNHCR. Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy 2019-2025. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/fr-fr/en/media/global-strategy-sustainable-energy-2019-2025#:~:text=The%20UNHCR%20Global%20Strategy%20for,response%20is%20also%20environmentally%20sustainable.

18 For the cluster system see UNHCR. Cluster Approach (IASC). Available at: https://emergency.unhcr.org/coordination-and-communication/cluster-system/cluster-approach-iasc.

4.

MIGRATION AND HEALTH NEXUS

In the Mediterranean region, health security --particularly that of displaced populations (OCHA 2023) --is seriously impacted by emergencies, where already compromised healthcare systems oftentimes cannot meet the new and greater demand. Mobile populations, particularly, encounter barriers to accessing adequate healthcare due to factors such as their geographic location, legal status during transit, and the conditions in host countries, including the cost of healthcare services and negative societal perceptions (OCHA 2023). Recognition of this situation has led to a greater focus on raising awareness of the connection between health and migration. And, in fact, goal 3 of the UN Sustainable Development strategy addresses health risks associated with climate change and its impact on the vulnerable, such as migrants and other mobile populations.[19] Furthermore, such strategy aligns closely with the recently endorsed Rabat Declaration (June 2023), [20] which targets improving the health and well-being of refugees and migrants.

It is important to also recognize that migration can be a consequence of climate change impact on public health systems. For example, extreme climate events can disrupt healthcare systems that are already under stress; lack of healthcare access, then, can cause populations to relocate. This may not improve things, however, as migration often leads to a life in overcrowded refugee camps, with restricted access to clean water and poor sanitation conditions that are conducive to the transmission of various diseases. As extreme heat events become more frequent, climate change will exacerbate vector-borne diseases in regions hosting large refugee populations, where there is a real threat of the appearance of tropical communicable diseases like Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika, and Crimean-Congo fever (Silenzi et al. 2023: 41-42).

While it is crucial to protect both refugees and the host communities from these threats (WHO 2015: 4-5), the immediate threat to millions of forcibly displaced individuals from Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, as well as international migrants, is access to safe drinking water. This issue is of grave concern in the eastern Mediterranean, significantly elevating public health risks. The subsequent section delves deeper into the link between migration and access to clean water.

19 See UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Sustainable Development Goal 3. Available at: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3.
20 WHO (2023). *Rabat Declaration adopted to improve refugee and migrant health.* June 16. Available at: https://www.who.int/news/item/16-06-2023-rabat-declaration-adopted-to-improve-refugee-and-migrant-health.

5.

MIGRATION AND WATER NEXUS

Environmental deterioration, water scarcity, population expansion, and economic and social instability are growing concerns in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. In Jordan and Lebanon, the available water resources can no longer meet drinking, sanitation, agriculture, and industry needs (Al-Ajarma et al. 2022). Despite this, these two nations also accommodate refugees from nearby countries—recently, an unexpected and large influx of forcibly displaced individuals that places a significant strain on public services and also exerts environmental consequences on land, water, and other natural resources.[21] How do we address the United Nations General Assembly's decree that access to water and sanitation is a fundamental human right? And, specifically, that a minimum of 20 litres per person per day is required for personal and domestic purposes?[22]

Countries across the region have been consistently working to enhance sanitation and hygiene standards in both urban and rural areas, focusing on environmental protection and the overall well-being of their citizens. They have not only undertaken significant initiatives and projects in the sanitation sector, but many of these nations have, since the 1980s, established national strategies and programs to establish/upgrade sanitation facilities (Borgomeo et al. 2021:39). The recent COVID-19 pandemic has sparked concern about water supply and sanitation—issues that are particularly significant in the Mediterranean region as it is recognized as one of the most water-scarce regions worldwide. When a nation is faced with an influx of population, its ability to deliver fundamental services, such as the provision of clean drinking water and the management of wastewater, is challenged. Such an influx of people also places a strain on water resources, and eventually affects the water quality.

Shifting the focus from the broader Mediterranean context to the more localized perspective of Cyprus highlights the regional human security challenges, particularly those at the intersection of migration, water, energy, and health. As the EU member state with the highest per capita number of asylum applications, Cyprus has an urgent need to establish efficient migrant management strategies.

The peculiar circumstances of Cyprus are further examined in the ensuing chapter, which looks at the complex and varied issues related to human security in the island's particular political setting. The divided island's position(s) on the migrant issue reveals the possibility of collective action to respond to these transboundary threats. The following discussion aims to provide a more complete picture of how Cyprus is negotiating these converging challenges of migration, energy, water, and health by examining the policies already in place on both sides of the divide.

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21 See World Bank (2018). Beyond Scarcity: Water Security in the Middle East and North Africa. MENA Development Report. Washington, DC: World Bank. http://hdl.handle.net/10986/27659 License: CC BY 3.0 IGO. See also World Bank (2017). The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria. Washington, DC: World Bank. This report includes a sectoral assessment of the impact of the war in Syria on water and sanitation.

22 See UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Available at: https://sr-watersanitation.ohchr.org/en/rightstowater_5.html.

6.
A HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AGENDA FOR CYPRUS TO ADDRESS THE MIGRATION SITUATION

While we recognize that the various and interrelated challenges presented above are regional in scope, they nevertheless demand a concerted response at the local level. In this context, it is imperative that Cyprus and the surrounding region work together to alleviate hardship and uphold the dignity of those most in need. A first crucial step in this direction is a better understanding of the requirements of those seeking protection. Below, an overview of the current situation in Cyprus is presented.

6.1 COMPLEXITIES OF CURRENT MIGRATION INFLUXES IN CYPRUS: ENERGY, CLEAN WATER, AND HEALTHCARE DIMENSIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DIVIDE

First and foremost, it is recognized that the challenges extend beyond mere capacity for reception—the full spectrum of human security issues affecting the broader region, including access to energy, clean water, and healthcare, are noticeably present across the island. And while we recognize the difficult relationship between the two sides of the island, it is crucial to investigate ways to foster a shared sense of responsibility to provide safe and dignified conditions for irregular migrants. In essence, a broader grasp of the challenges facing each side has the potential to transform the narrative from an obligatory 'we must' approach to a cooperative 'we can try.'

South

The Pournara Reception Center, established in Nicosia in 2014, exemplifies the acute challenges of unexpected and acute migration influxes. Originally designed for short-term stays and built to accommodate 350 individuals, the Center has been pushed beyond its limits to the extent that by November 2023, it was hosting approximately 2,000 people including vulnerable unaccompanied minors (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs 2023). This not only strains resources but it also exacerbates the potential for violence, compromising the Center's ability to provide a safe space. The health services at Pournara, which include medical screenings and vulnerability assessments, are a critical component of any human security framework. However, the migrants' limited freedom of movement and extended confinement can easily lead to mental health challenges, which

demand a more holistic approach to health and well-being, one that extends beyond simple physical health screenings (AIDA 2023).

Conditions at Pournara Reception Center highlight the importance of providing basic human needs, such as consistent access to energy and water. The Center's prefabricated housing units and tents, some of which lack reliable electricity and heating, point to the challenges of infrastructure in meeting essential needs (AIDA 2023). We note also the relationship between migration and water: a 2022 AIDA report noted that children are often allotted just one bottle of water to suffice for the entire day (AIDA 2023).[23] Securing accommodation in the community also presents significant challenges: conditions in the apartment buildings / hotel apartments where refugees are housed are often deplorable, lacking basic amenities such as running water and suffering from serious structural, electrical, and sewage problems (AIDA 2023).

The Kofinou Reception Centre is another government-run facility for migrants (International Protection Applicants), with a capacity of up to 350 people. The UNHCR considers this Center to be well administered, and one that continuously aims to improve its infrastructure and services (UNHCR 2023b). To assist with the migration overflow, the European Commission has allocated the RoC approximately €67 million, some of which is for the creation of another Reception Center in Limnes to accommodate international protection applicants (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs 2023).

North

In the north of Cyprus, too, there are migration issues, albeit distinctly different from those in the south. Because north Cyprus is not internationally recognized, it has no legal obligations towards irregular migrants; thus, the north most often detains and then swiftly deports these individuals. This situation makes it difficult to apply the analytical framework of the human security threat nexus—as we did for the southern part of the island in the context of reception centers. In

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23 See also E. Hazou (2021). MPs shocked at state of Pournara refugee centre. *Cyprus Mail*, 13 December. Retrieved October 31, 2023 from https://cyprus-mail.com/2021/12/13/mps-shocked-at-state-of-pournara-refugee-centre/.

the north, there is neither an established system nor a legal requirement to provide asylum status. The UNHCR can only provide a letter of protection to individuals seeking refuge; this serves as a *sui generis*, temporary, and unofficial means of granting migrants access to the job market, healthcare, and, in the case of children, education. This action mainly prevents their deportation. The situation is problematic and is exacerbated by the fact that the RoC does not acknowledge the protection claims for those who cross the Green Line.[24]

The present situation in Cyprus can only be remediated through a collaborative and strategic approach, whereby local and regional stakeholders on both sides work together for solutions. It is within this context -- advocating for a joint and integrated migration management system across the divide-- that Cyprus may be ready for a paradigm shift. Such a system would not only address the immediate (migration) needs but also explore collective action pathways for developing other sustainable strategies within Cyprus. The following analysis focuses on cooperative and bi-communal approaches and strategies in this context.

6.2 COLLABORATIVE RESPONSES AND STRATEGIES

To address the many challenges resulting from migration influxes, a comprehensive, island-wide, and sustainable strategy that focuses (initially) on the urgent needs of the displaced is imperative. This should be followed by a long-term approach that recognizes and strategizes the interconnectedness of energy, water, and healthcare, while acknowledging Cyprus's available resources and capabilities.

An Integrated Bi-communal Humanitarian Assistance Response in Cyprus

Any humanitarian assistance plan for Cyprus will be most effective if it can rely on intercommunal cooperation. Pooling resources and expertise will create the necessary supportive framework for humanitarian efforts across the island and will ensure that migrant centers guarantee a consistent power supply, offer access to clean water, and provide robust sanitation infrastructure. Recognizing both the current migration influxes and the challenges facing the south, and the inadequate response mechanisms in the north, we propose some measures and responses that can be undertaken together.

Proposed Responses

i. Establishment of a Bi-communal Rapid Response Committee:

This joint committee would be established by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders with the involvement of the United Nations and would comprise representatives from both communities. Each community would nominate one member, and the third member would be a UNHCR- appointed individual subject to approval from both sides. The UNHCR would work in close partnership with EU entities, including the Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), and FRONTEX.

The committee will discuss immediate strategies and ones tailored to the specific Cyprus context. For example, this could mean setting up temporary shelters equipped with basic needs including electricity, clean water, and medical facilities especially in areas with a high influx of migrants. Such a strategy requires an island-wide, integrated human security approach to effectively manage interconnected issues. Experts in crisis management and specialists in electricity and water infrastructure, alongside non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, legal experts, social workers, and healthcare providers from both communities, as crucial stakeholders, would be responsible for compiling and providing detailed, systematic reports about the immediate needs on the ground.

ii. Building a Reception Center in the UN Buffer Zone:

A suggested strategy is a reception center that operates with joint governance from both communities. Such a center could offer several advantages, e.g., targeted resource allocation for optimal utilization of funds and materials. Moreover, such a project would likely attract global attention, generate offers of financial aid and specialized knowledge, and importantly, would also elevate Cyprus's international standing as a proactive humanitarian actor. It will be crucial to first run feasibility studies that examine the project in light of the legal intricacies of international law, the RoC's legal framework, and UN regulations. Such studies will ensure that all aspects of the center's setup and functioning are in compliance with the applicable legal standards and protocols, both internationally and within the RoC.

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24 See Achiri (2022). Helping Asylum Seekers in Northern Cyprus Project Syndicate, July 26. Retrieved October 31, 2023 from https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/northern-cyprus-asylum-seekers-unhcr-eu-protection-by-emmanuel-achiri-2022-07.

7.

CONCLUSION

In the current geopolitical context, the eastern Mediterranean region emerges as a central stage for some of the most persistent and serious global crises, notably migration influxes. This positions the region on the frontlines with regard to responding to/attending to displaced populations. Cyprus, situated within this milieu, assumes a critical position. The island has become a prominent migration hub, drawing not only economic migrants but also, significantly, individuals affected by the continuing conflicts in the Middle East. This dynamic has led to a considerable increase in the number of political asylum seekers and refugees, such that Cyprus is now faced with an urgent need to devise policies to address the issue. This report has highlighted the threats and risks linked to escalating displacement (e.g., climate change and regional conflicts) and argues for a collaborative response from both sides of the divide in Cyprus. Further, it suggests that the most effective way to manage migration challenges is to address them with policies related to energy, water, and health. Significantly, a cooperative effort in this arena has the potential to help bi-communal activities progress far beyond symbolic displays of amity and shared heritage in Cyprus.

What is needed is an all-encompassing bi-communal strategy--one that will facilitate integration horizontally across the north-south divide in Cyprus as well as vertically through key areas of human security challenges, including migration, access to clean water, energy availability, and healthcare services. To address the migration crisis in Cyprus it is imperative to conceive and implement innovative approaches; these will be most effective if they bridge the island's division. This strategic alignment is critical, as it represents the cornerstone of achieving stability and sustainability across all of Cyprus and potentially beyond in the wider region.

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BEYOND THE DIVIDE IN CYPRUS: A CALL FOR A COLLABORATIVE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AGENDA TO ADDRESS THE MIGRATION CRISES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

This report provides an in-depth investigation of the complex security challenges that pervade the Mediterranean region, with a focus on the ongoing migration crisis and its relationship to key issues such as electricity, water, and health. The report, which employs a human security perspective, challenges the limitations of traditional state-focused security measures and underscores the humanitarian toll on receiving countries.

It finishes with proposals for a cohesive, community-based strategy in Cyprus to address the acute needs of migrants and refugees while supporting regional peace and security. These strategic recommendations are intended to guide policy development towards not only resolving the immediate issues but also strengthening the collaborative ties between the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus.