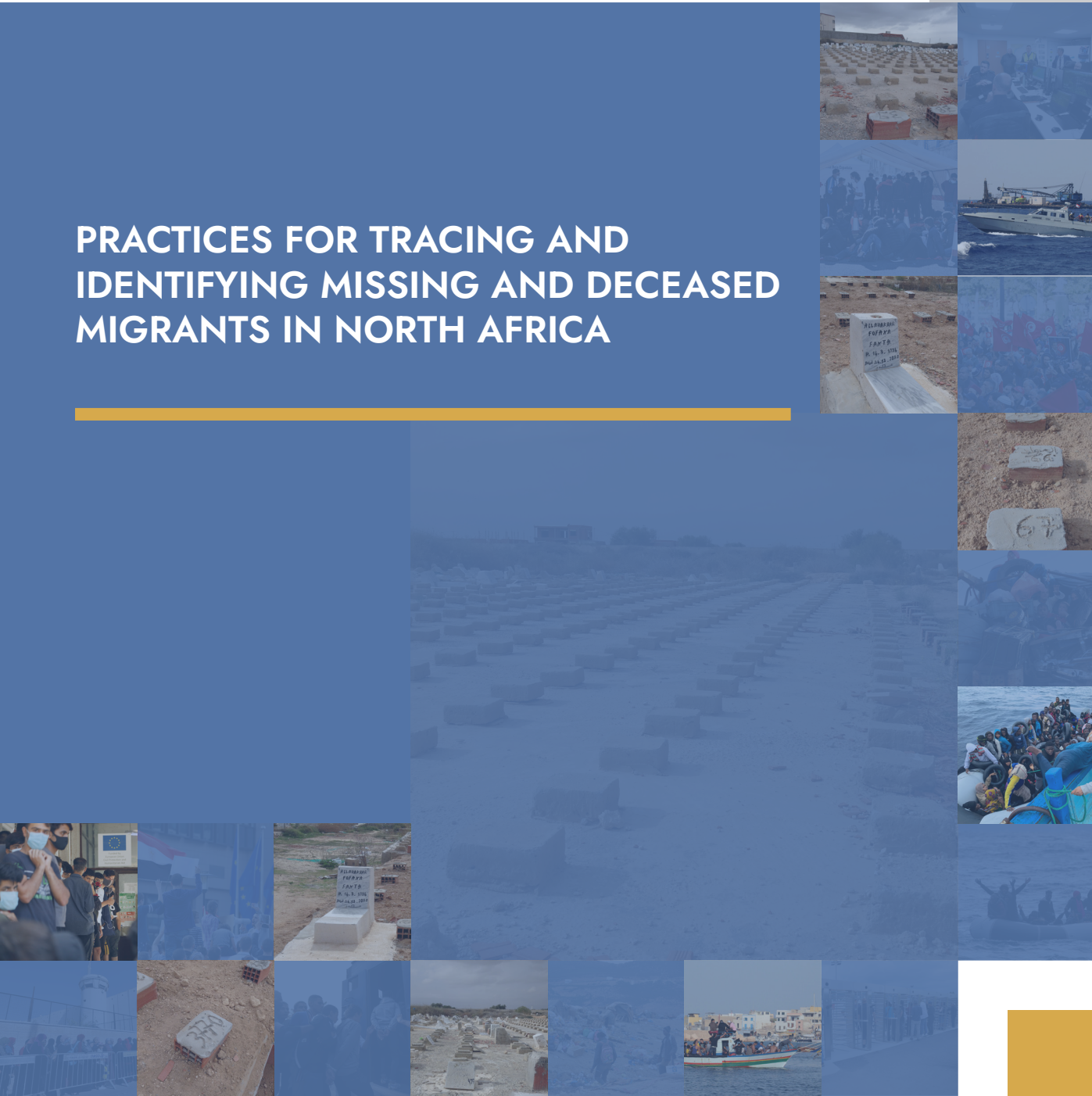
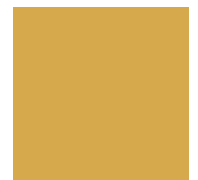


**PRACTICES FOR TRACING AND
IDENTIFYING MISSING AND DECEASED
MIGRANTS IN NORTH AFRICA**



JULY 2023



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ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organisations
FTDES	Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (Forum tunisien pour les droits économiques et sociaux)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN	United Nations



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS	7
REGIONAL FRAMEWORK, NATIONAL CONTEXT, LOCAL RESPONSES	8
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN NORTH AFRICA	18
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	26
ANNEXES	29
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	37

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the project “Protecting the rights of migrants and refugees in the Maghreb region and supporting the work of civil society organisations (CSOs) in this field” implemented from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2023 with the support of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, EuroMed Rights carried out a series of activities on the issue of missing and deceased migrants in North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya).

These activities were aimed at (i) analysing national mechanisms for the search for and identification of missing or deceased migrants in North Africa, and (ii) mapping the civil society actors who have mobilised and are mobilising on this subject. The following report presents the results of this project.

The analysis of the regional framework and national mechanisms led to the publication of fact sheets in February 2022 that present the evolution of the situation in the different countries. This reading makes it possible to better understand this issue and contextualise it country by country, albeit in the knowledge that some data are not accessible in all countries.

In October 2022, EuroMed Rights organised a workshop in Rabat aimed at (i) examining in depth the concrete reality of the different countries, and (ii) acquiring an overview of the role and practices of the authorities on different subjects (registration of deaths or disappearances during migration, search procedures in support of families, recovery/discovery and management of bodies, etc.) through the observations of various international organisations operating in the region (International Committee of the Red Cross, International Organization for Migration) and actors on the ground in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

This analysis, accompanied by a more detailed research into the different normative and administrative mechanisms, revealed the absence of a specific intervention framework on the part of the national authorities. The increase in the number of bodies found on the coast of the city of Sfax, Tunisia, between the end of 2022 and the first months of 2023 has overburdened a mechanism (local and national) that was not able to absorb an occurrence of this magnitude. This research has shown how the relationships of civil society actors with national authorities take shape, according to different criteria: the level of involvement of national authorities in the search and identification of foreign persons or their own citizens,

the level of established trust, the level of responsibility (direct or indirect, established or presumed) of national actors in case of deaths or disappearances.

A mapping carried out between March and June 2023 has made it possible to integrate the institutional perspective. The purpose of this mapping is to analyse the activities carried out by civil society organisations engaged in the search for or identification of persons who have disappeared or died during their migration. Through a questionnaire submitted to 21 organisations operating at the local, national or transnational level, it was possible to profile these actors and their projects, and to identify specific needs and suggestions for strengthening their cooperation and response capacity.

The report is divided into three sections. The first part presents the regional and national framework that has been developed on the basis of the available information. We note a 'significant' disparity in this information, linked to the level of transparency and availability of the various national authorities. The second part represents the results of the mapping of actors (with attached methodological elements that illustrate the approach and constraints of the research) carried out on the basis of the analysis of the fieldwork of civil society actors. The third part contains recommendations that can be addressed to international organisations and national authorities. These recommendations aim to make the search and identification of persons who have disappeared or died during their migration more effective and transparent, while respecting the needs and the requests of the families.



SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

The civil society actors who took part in this research expressed a series of needs and suggestions to be taken into consideration in order to strengthen their intervention capacity on the ground and their capacity for cooperation with other actors, national and international, at the institutional or project level. These suggestions concern the practical organisation of the fieldwork, the capacity and possibility to collect, archive and share data and the modalities of interaction with national authorities.

As a result of this analytical work, recommendations were made to international organisations and national authorities.

Recommendations to international organisations include requesting additional engagement on a number of fronts:

1. at the level of activities in which they intervene directly (analysis of the general situation and specific cases, recovery of victims' bodies, debriefing of survivors, identification activities, collection of testimonies, support for families);
2. the support they provide to national authorities in the tracing of victims, taking care of survivors, supporting families with tracing, and the material and administrative management of victims' bodies, with greater emphasis on respect for fundamental rights;
3. in their relations with relevant civil society actors, in the interest of the families and relatives of victims, and the dignity of deceased or missing persons.

The recommendations addressed to the national authorities are grouped according to the different institutions. They call for greater transparency regarding the responsibilities and causes of disappearances and deaths. They also highlight the need for additional commitment with regard to the functioning of search mechanisms of missing persons and the recovery of bodies, identification processes, administrative procedures and physical practices for the management of bodies, in the interest of the families and with respect for the dignity of the victims.



REGIONAL FRAMEWORK, NATIONAL CONTEXT, LOCAL RESPONSES

At the international level and specifically in the Euro-Mediterranean context, the issue of people who have died or disappeared while migrating has been debated for more than 30 years. And for good reason, the number of victims at EU borders and at sea continues to increase. The figures revealing this situation and the methods used to obtain them are themselves the subject of controversy: the numbers of cases recorded by organisations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the International Organization for Migration (IOM, [Missing Migrants Project](#)) are systematically lower than the numbers of civil society actors ([Caminando Fronteras](#), [UNITED for Intercultural Action](#)), obtained through university research projects or by journalists. The use of this data can be twofold: the data can be used to discourage and stem migration at the outset or to help denounce the dangerous and deadly aspect of migration routes.

Developments in the Euro-Mediterranean region

The polarisation observed is increasingly explicit, at the international, national and local levels. It requires a reflection on the responsibilities, capacities and political and practical will of the different countries (origin, transit, departure) as well as a complementary reflection on the capacities and margins of action of civil society.

Although sometimes attempts are made to conceal it (especially when involving the direct or indirect responsibility of a national or international actor), the reality of deaths and disappearances in migration is now obvious. At the international level, it is enshrined in the 2018 Global Compact on Migration (Goal 8: [Saving Lives and Implementing Coordinated International Action to Find Missing Migrants](#)). At the state level, it is true that states do not intervene directly to limit the causes of mortality. The security prism trumps the humanitarian perspective. However, several countries have mobilised to put in place mechanisms to regulate and structure victim tracing

practices as well as body identification procedures, sometimes with the support of international organisations.

Northern Mediterranean

With regard to the northern Mediterranean, the International Committee of the Red Cross published the report "[Counting the Dead](#)" (2022), which takes up the work of mapping the graves of migrants who died at sea, carried out within the framework of the [Human Costs of Border Control](#) project of the University of Amsterdam, and updates the data for 2014-2019 (the update is ongoing). This report presents in an analytical way the functioning of the body management system (from their recovery at sea to burial or repatriation) for Italy, Greece and Spain, and highlights the flaws of the system, while illustrating major developments (for example, the implementation of the [specific Protocols](#) in Italy under the coordination of the Special Commissioner for Missing Persons).

This issue has also been the subject of several mobilisations by international civil society actors (for example, Last Rights in the [Mytiline Declaration](#)), as well as research and analysis reports. Various actors in the field have also produced a whole series of practical information and research tools ([Caminando Fronteras](#), [Refugee Support Aegean](#), [Boats4people](#)...).

It is increasingly clear that a problem of practical management (from the point of view of health, logistics, urban planning, etc.) and normative management (from the legal, forensic and administrative point of view) arises for the states. It also concerns a specific perspective on mobilisation and commitment for civil society, which supports families, demanding truth and justice. The problem of the 'counting' of victims is already extremely problematic, but the fact is that increasingly additional questions arise: **what about the management of bodies (or their abandonment) on the part of the national authorities and the procedures for finding missing persons initiated by the families?**

Looking at this issue overall, we can examine the way in which the body management system and the protocols for the search for missing persons began to be structured and organised on the northern side of the Mediterranean, particularly in Italy, after 3 October 2013 (creation of the '[Comitato Tre Ottobre](#)'), Greece and Spain. The medico-legal and administrative systems have been adapted to also take care of (foreign) persons who died in migration, in collaboration with international organisations and sometimes with the support of civil society actors. Despite the adaptation of these systems, shortcomings and failures persist.

In this process, there is a fairly explicit trend towards the 'technologicalisation' of practices, which authorities manage almost exclusively by means of forensic devices. This method favours biometric analyses (physical identification) to mixed research and identification methods (so-called 'traditional' by the actors in the field) that involve more families, relatives, witnesses.

North Africa

At present, this 'evolution' is not reflected on the southern side of the Mediterranean. In Morocco and Tunisia, surveys and research on the functioning of the 'national' and local system have revealed structural dynamics, linked to a specific administrative and legal context (particularly with regard to the treatment of the body and confessional and cultural burial practices) that is not

adapted to the migratory dimension (both in terms of availability and approach). In the case of the city of Sfax, this research has made it possible to describe the situation of saturation of the forensic system in the face of the exponential increase in the number of bodies of people who died in migration to be dealt with.

The issue of dead and missing persons in migration highlights the 'limits' of the search or identification of victims (if one adopts the 'majority' point of view, namely the 'biometric' point of view that is forming in Europe). Under increasing pressure, these systems are proving dysfunctional and difficult to reconcile with death management systems that align with cultural and social norms.

These systems are now the subject of a (diversified and varied) offer of reinforcement – technical, logistical. This way, international organisations (ICRC, [International Centre for Migration Policy Development - ICMPPD](#)), humanitarian actors, 'Northern' NGOs and researchers (see the [Migrants Disaster Victim Identification](#) project which refers directly to [Disaster Victims Identifications](#)) propose to the national authorities to strengthen these mechanisms. The twin issues of deaths and disappearances of migrating citizens and foreigners in transit inevitably complicate the analytical framework.

Mobilisation of families and civil society

While state mechanisms (administrative, forensic, etc.) for searching, identifying and managing bodies, especially of foreigners, are now seemingly unable to cope – despite noteworthy changes having been implemented – the capacities of civil society actors, in terms of mobilisation, but also in terms of direct intervention on the ground, research methodologies and identification practices, have gradually taken shape over the years.

This increase is partly explained by the direct involvement of local families directly affected by disappearances or deaths in the process of migration (at least since the early 2000s). It is also explained by the evolution of a series of instruments and techniques (social networks, technical tools, research and data collection methodologies...) that have made it possible, in recent years, to 'democratise' research and strengthen the capacities of these actors (civil society and families) to intervene directly or to play a more active role and become more involved in research and identification practices (counter-counting, counter-investigations, etc.).

In a way, civil society and families occupied a 'vacuum' that the authorities (national and local) had not fully invested or were unwilling to invest in. This historic mobilisation, as early as 2009 for Tunisia, is obviously linked to the fact that the issue of death and disappearance in migration concerns first (traditionally) the families of young citizens who have taken the sea route, and then/by extension any person who disappears or dies in the process of migration.

In North Africa, the mobilisation of families and civil society on this issue falls under political action (as in Latin America, where the actions undertaken parallel commemorations [of victims] as well challenges to the responsibilities of the state), but it also reflects a dynamic that makes it possible to examine the subject from another angle.

As seen on the northern side of the Mediterranean, public investment (institutions, authorities, civil society, experts, international organisations and, in a way, policies that use the issue of

death on migration as an argument to strengthen controls, etc.) has made it possible to quantify the number of victims or, at least, the number of bodies of those who died in the process of migration and received in Europe. This approach has made it possible to take an approximate measure of the phenomenon and to reveal the failures of the body management system, its ambiguities, the differential treatment of bodies as well as certain problematic practices (non-identifications, examinations of superficial bodies, arbitrary displacements, expedited burials, etc.).

However, in North Africa, it is more difficult to access information on disappearances and deaths in the process of migration. This information is often not 'official': for the month of January 2023 and only for the route between Tunisia and Italy, the [Italian government](#) referred to UNHCR figures. According to these figures, 55 people are dead or missing, while civil society actors speak of 416 deaths or disappearances. This discrepancy in the figures testifies to the extreme difficulty of officially recording cases when actors who are able to intervene to save people or recover bodies are kept at bay (NGOs at sea) and when control operations are carried out by state or proto-state actors, as in Libya, who are directly or indirectly responsible for these cases of shipwrecks (as several reports testify).

It was not possible to map the graves of migrants in the region. The causes are manifold: the difficulty of access to the terrain, the dysfunction of the system (problematic management in Morocco or Tunisia, for example, and real abuses and violations of human rights, particularly the mass graves discovered in Libya, or total opacity, in the case of Algeria) and the migration of both citizens and foreigners.

The reluctance of the authorities, the differential functioning of the body management system (between cities and peripheral regions) and other structural variables have not allowed the acquisition of a clear vision of the process of treatment of people who died in the process of migration. The [need for] mediation by international actors who intervene to strengthen the practices of national actors, combined with dramatic situations like in Zarzis (Tunisia) in November 2022 and in the city of Sfax (since 2020, with a peak between September 2022 and April 2023), highlighted the weaknesses of the system, particularly in emergency situations.

It is for this reason that it is necessary to question the actors of civil society who intervene directly on the ground and who follow one or more stages of the process of family tracing or management of bodies and to grasp several elements: the way in which they operate, the persons or entities with whom they collaborate, the means at their disposal or the number of cases for which they mobilise. This approach makes it possible to measure the phenomenon and the impact on local communities, even in a scattered, multifaceted and non-standard manner.

Due to the regional and national political context, the project of mapping the associative actors engaged on the issue of the search for missing persons and the identification processes of persons who died in the process of migration also becomes an extremely useful instrument to measure the engagement of these actors and promote their connection and interaction at the local, national and international levels. In addition, this tool aims to promote the exchange of practices to improve response capacities on the ground, to structure a coordination of civil society at the regional level and to define a common framework for interaction with local, national and regional authorities.

General framework in North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya)

We cannot go into detail here about the geopolitical developments in the Maghreb in recent years or an analysis of the EU's policy of outsourcing migration enforcement in the region. However, these policies at the regional level as well as the evolution of national policies (on several subjects, including migration which has also become a major political theme in the Maghreb) have had several direct and indirect effects:

- An increase in the number of people (citizens or foreigners) who died or disappeared in the process of migration (the number of burials, in Tunisia in the cities of Sfax or Zarzis or in the cities of Nador and Oujda in Morocco, is taken as a parameter);
- Increased media attention for international actors and civil society on this subject (in countries where some visibility is possible; for Libya the 'discovery' of these cases was made through the actions of international organisations such as the UN);
- The retrospective 'discovery', in some regions, of burials dating back to the early 2000s: cases often associated with family or collective (local) memories rather than official documents of the civil registry offices. We can mention here the story of the Red Crescent volunteer fisherman, Chamseddine Marzoug, in Zarzis, who has been trying since 2005 to bury 'with dignity' the bodies found on the beaches of the city. The attention of international civil society has been associated with an increasing mobilisation of local actors on the ground and families who have begun to organise collectively, both in terms of denunciation (for example, commemorations) and for the practical work of research and identification;
- An increase in the number of [departures from Algeria](#) despite the limited information available on the number of missing and deceased persons. In 2022, 2,637 people left Algeria and reached the Balearic Islands, compared to 2,400 in 2021, 1,464 in 2020 and 507 in 2019.

With the situation differing from one country to another, mobilisation at the regional level has encountered several obstacles: 1) the inability of state mechanisms to absorb and manage this problem (quantitatively and qualitatively: from available places to technical capacities of mobilisation through the administrative logic able to integrate this reality), and 2) the reluctance of states to bring visibility to this issue and to make it public, for various reasons, including a lack of interest in the fate and identity of deceased sub-Saharan people (a disinterest often shared by the authorities of the countries of origin) or a willingness to hide the effects of the 'flight' of their own citizens (admitting deaths and disappearances would inevitably amount to admitting a phenomenon that is often minimised).

Political issues, which deserve further reflection and problematisation on the role, responsibilities and duties of States, overlap with more pragmatic and complex forensic, administrative and cultural/denominational issues, which differ from country to country.

State death management systems in North Africa

In general, the management of death in the various countries is subject to legal norms and is organized according to an administrative and public health logic that takes into account a set of cultural values and rules/laws of reference: a framework that is built in a standard way in relation to the population of the country, and therefore to citizens. The management of death from an institutional point of view (death certificate, burial) is therefore organised so as to take into account essentially an identified population and located on the territory, according to practices

that refer to a specific societal framework.

In the Maghreb, the various national laws that regulate the health and administrative management of deaths in general have integrated or adapted to confessional practices: thanatopraxia and ritual cleansing, traditional burial between private and public spaces, etc. (see, for example, for Tunisia, [the law nr. 1957-3 of 1957 regulating civil status](#) or the [Personal Status Code](#); for Morocco, the [Family Code of 2016](#)).

Parallel to this 'normal' or 'daily' management of deaths, state actors have a specific (judicial) system that is supposed to take care of 'exceptional' deaths, for which an investigation procedure and forensic activity are provided, in order to determine the causes and those responsible for these deaths. As with the European countries analysed by the ICRC in the 'Counting the Dead' report, in the Maghreb, the investigator is not required to determine the identity of the victim. They ask the police and forensic authorities to determine the identity of the victim if this can help them in his investigation. **Procedures for identifying bodies therefore remain, in some cases such as migrant deaths/deaths at sea, practices at the discretion of the authorities.**

Without delving deep into the workings of this particular organisation, we can still observe how the management of mortality is structured and modified. This process, dealing with the administrative, scientific, and logistical aspects of death, often balances unequally between cultural traditions, specific customs, and changes in administrative systems and technical methods. This happens irrespective of the occurrence of deaths during migration. These are part of an international standardisation (read homologation) of certain activities based on certain scientific assumptions (such as personal identification practices, with the increasingly systematic use of biometrics). According to the "[Le360](#)" report, in 2022, Morocco had only 24 forensic pathologists.

This imbalance between an administrative-scientific apparatus and traditional practices (in the Maghreb as elsewhere) is also evident in the context of centre-periphery or city-rural zone relations. In urban areas, the handling of deaths has become 'standardised,' with traditional customs gradually fading and being replaced by a unified administrative and scientific approach. In contrast, rural areas continue to preserve traditional practices, both in the routine handling of deaths and in dealing with complex cases.

Governmental mechanisms for dealing with deaths during/as a result of migration

The question of the death and disappearance of migrants is part of this complex framework, as a more problematic issue. System malfunctions and failures are all the more evident when it comes to the deaths of 'unidentified' people, especially when they are on the move, in migration. This is the case for foreigners 'in transit' (in more or less regular situations administratively speaking), but also for citizens who perish or disappear while trying to leave their country, that is to say outside their usual residence/life. These 'marginal' situations of death and disappearance, that is to say outside the structural framework, at geographical and administrative borders, saturate the system which is not organised to take care of them and often does not want to do so.

With regard to search practices and activities for missing persons, none of the analysed countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya) has set up specific search mechanisms. These

activities, which often depend on a search request launched by families or relatives, are delegated to humanitarian actors and international organisations present in-country (International Committee of the Red Cross and International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UNHCR, IOM to a lesser extent, according to the margins of action that the various countries grant them) or endorsed by civil society organisations.

Search for missing persons

Families of missing foreigners are soliciting search activities, mostly from a distance. These activities are not often taken into account by the authorities, except when civil society actors are involved. For example, Sudanese families who requested information on the fate of relatives who disappeared during the events of 24 June 2022 in Nador have received support from Moroccan associations, but have still not received support from the Moroccan state. **At present, Tunisia and Morocco have search procedures which, in theory, may also concern missing persons in the process of migration and to which foreign nationals may also have access. In Algeria and Libya, the capacity to search for missing persons is extremely limited, due to the dysfunction of the State system and the refusal of the authorities to deal with this issue. This research therefore depends exclusively on the efforts of international and humanitarian organisations (or informal community and civil society networks).**

The search for foreign persons is all the more complex when the authorities of the countries of origin do not mobilise: **in April 2023, Senegal** became active in a specific case of shipwreck/disappearance in Tunisia, after receiving information (currently being verified) on the death of several of its nationals. In general, however, it is rare for foreign authorities, even if requested by families or associations, to undertake search procedures with the authorities in the Maghreb.

When it comes to national citizens, the search for missing persons is more structured, since families can directly request the authorities – at least if their disappearance is not the work of a state agent. The people that are being looked for still belong to the national community. At the national level, searches are carried out thanks to the cooperation of local authorities and the mobilisation of families and associations. Searches are more difficult when it comes to cross-border searches, which concern other countries in the region, because of the diplomatic relations that exist between these different countries (for example, Algeria and Tunisia), or EU countries (as in the case of the **commission of inquiry** into the disappearance of 503 people of Tunisian origin in 2015).

Recovery and non-recovery of bodies

Whichever the direct and indirect causes of deaths that need to be investigated elsewhere, one of the major problems related to the management of the bodies of people who died in the process of migration in the Maghreb concerns the **low capacity/willingness to recover bodies, especially in cases of shipwrecks, but also in southern border areas** (desert areas). The recovery of bodies in the territories is sometimes taken care of by civil society actors. They also facilitate identification processes with the authorities if possible (e.g. Oujda, Laayoune). Burial or repatriation operations are usually undertaken by civil society actors and migrant communities where possible.

For shipwrecks at sea, no systematic recovery of the bodies of the deceased is foreseen in

Morocco or Tunisia. For Algeria and Libya, no direct information is available, and information on the bodies found comes exclusively from international organisations. In general, in cases of shipwrecks, the bodies often remain in the water and their recovery takes place only when they arrive on the beaches: this dissociation between event and recovery of the bodies makes the identification operations – which are not systematic – extremely complex (in particular given the degradation of the bodies). This dysfunction is also the cause of the increase in the number of missing persons and the gap between the figures of international organisations (IOM) and those produced by civil society organisations.

Debriefing survivors and gathering information from families and loved ones

None of the countries concerned has set up a systematic debriefing system for survivors of shipwrecks to determine the number and even less the identity of missing persons. The international organisations present at the landings (IOM) ensure these debriefings according to their capacities and access to the territories.

Forensic medicine and administrative management of bodies

Structures and availability

With regard to the management of the bodies of persons who have died as a result of migration (at land borders or in maritime areas), North African countries have not put in place a specific mechanism for action. They rely on forensic services in the territory, according to a distribution that is however not homogeneous: in Algeria, currently, all university hospitals, some specialised hospitals and even other hospital structures are equipped with a forensic service. The same is true in Morocco and Tunisia, although the capacity to respond to cases of deaths in the process of migration (in border regions) remains to be determined. The experience of Sfax testifies to the objective difficulty of a structural mechanism to take care of and manage an exponential increase in the number of bodies, both in terms of forensic practices and available places.

Examinations and collection of DNA samples

With regard to Libya, it is currently very difficult to gather precise information on the functioning of a forensic system, but the testimonies of activists and migrants speak of an expedited treatment of bodies: burials are carried out quickly in peripheral localities, without identification operations being envisaged.

With regard to Algeria, there are also many shortcomings in the information on the procedures for the management of bodies. And according to civil society actors, there is no willingness on the part of the authorities to take charge of this issue. It can be assumed that forensic operations are quite limited and burial operations also expedited. Due to a lack of information and specific organisation (DNA collection, cataloguing/archiving of bodies and biometric elements and objects that would allow identification) and the lack of mapping of burials, it is extremely difficult to quantify the number of recovered bodies and to carry out identification after burial, during the research activities of civil society actors and international organisations.

The opacity of the body management system in Libya and Algeria, and to a lesser extent in Tunisia and Morocco, can also be interpreted as a way of limiting the visibility of the migration

phenomenon that concerns the nationals of the countries concerned.

In Morocco and Tunisia, forensic medical devices and the authorities, with the support of international organisations, are supposed to systematically collect post-mortem information (autopsy reports), collect DNA and catalogue the elements that make it possible to identify bodies (photos, objects), as well as map burials. However, the capacities of the various actors at the local level vary greatly (in terms of human resources, technical resources and available places), which produces incoherent results.

Even in countries where the management of deaths in the process of migration is more or less supported, the increase in the number of bodies to be managed by forensic services and administrations has put pressure on the system in recent years, resulting in dysfunction at the local level. The Tunisian examples of Zarzis (with the creation of two different cemeteries as part of private initiatives – with the support of the municipality) and Sfax are quite explicit. The **crisis of the Sfax system**, linked to the exponential increase in the number of bodies from 2017 to 2023 (with a decrease during the pandemic period), put pressure on forensic services as well as the city's ability to manage burials.

Low identification rate

Even when forensic data collection after death is functioning at its best, any system failures can significantly reduce the success rate of identifying the deceased. If we rely, for example, on the information collected for the city of Sfax or the city of **Nador** (at present, only one of the **23 victims of 24 June 2022** would have been identified), the identification rate is extremely low (no statistical data is available for any of the countries). Several factors significantly reduce the number of people identified, including: lack of commitment on the part of national and local authorities, dysfunction in the recovery of bodies and collection of information from survivors, difficulty in collecting ante-mortem information necessary for identification due to the distance between families and foreign victims and the 'non-legitimacy' of witnesses to provide proof of identity. No official data is available, but through field research at several sites, we can see that people are predominantly buried under X.

There is a higher identification rate (to be checked with the authorities) for nationals of the countries concerned, due to the direct mobilisation capacity of families.

Administrative management and burials

In general, the administrative management of bodies and burials is quite problematic in all the countries under consideration. For Libya and Algeria, no official data is available on the number, location or management of burials. In Libya, the presence of several mass graves has been reported by the United Nations.

With regard to Tunisia and Morocco, field activities carried out by several research teams have made it possible to observe, in urban areas and in peripheral/border regions, the organisation of burial spaces, in pre-existing public cemeteries or in spaces adapted to this function (as for Zarzis). These spaces are organised according to availability and variable care. The observation is however the following, especially for sub-Saharan populations: most burials are anonymous and do not indicate any specific information on the death or recovery of the bodies, making it

impossible to carry out a mapping of the burials and identification operations a posteriori.

Focusing on the city of Sfax, which we've examined in greater detail, we can see how a humanitarian crisis or emergency situation, such as the Lampedusa incident in 2013, can have profound effects on a region and disrupt the functioning of a system that was designed for specific needs. According to the statements of the municipality of Sfax, one of the essential problems concerns, for example, the **impossibility of carrying out the burial** of unidentified bodies, linked to the impossibility of carrying out a burial in accordance with the (confessional) standards. However, in order to respond to this crisis and taking into account all the difficulties, a complex socio-economic situation and a rise in xenophobia in the region, the local authorities and the government, with the support of international organisations such as the ICRC and the Red Crescent Movement, seem to have undertaken a process of reorganisation of the system at the national level. This system will have to deal with a whole series of structural problems, but could ultimately allow a dignified care of the bodies of people who died in the process of migration, local as well as foreign.

Administrative management

The low identification rate and the difficulty of logistical management of burials also have a considerable impact on the processing of administrative files. In the absence of statistical data, there is a general malfunctioning of the body cataloguing system, a great difficulty for families to obtain death certificates when bodies are identified and a lack of information on burials in local government offices (paper registers, very long transcription times, difficulty in accessing data).

Differential treatment

The differences in treatment are still extremely problematic: if the mechanisms for taking care of bodies **are supposed to work** equally for citizens and for foreigners, the differential management of bodies is obvious, at least in **Tunisia** and Morocco. In fact, the presence of families in-country or the possibility for the authorities to find the identity of victims more easily significantly facilitates operations with regard to 'local' victims.

On the one hand, these procedures remain extremely difficult for foreigners (distance from the family, difficulty for members of migrant communities to interact with the authorities out of mistrust or fear, etc.). On the other hand, for practical reasons (difficulties related to identification in particular), but also because of structural racism, the authorities sometimes seem reluctant to engage in a systematic activity of research and identification, in particular of the sub-Saharan population. These differences in treatment are not limited to those who died while migrating; they sometimes concern foreigners who legally reside in Maghreb countries. This responsibility must be shared with the consular authorities of the victims' countries, which rarely intervene effectively.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN NORTH AFRICA

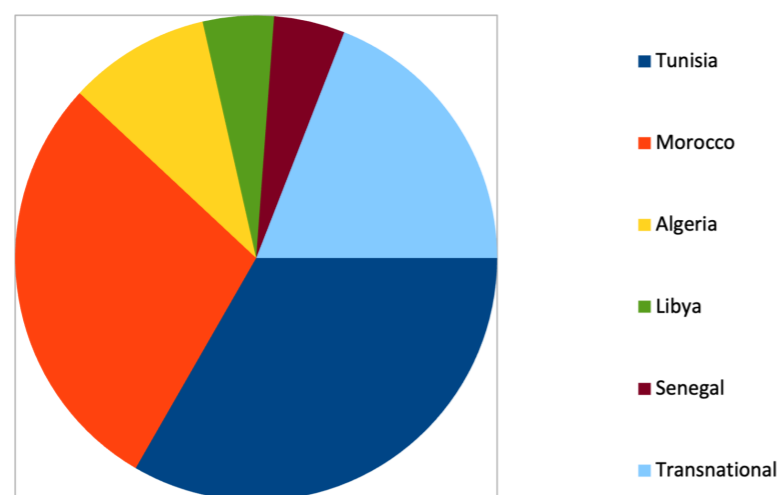


The completion of the questionnaire, the results of which are presented in the context of this report, has not only made it possible to map the activity of civil society actors involved in these activities, but also to draw up an “external” analysis of the functioning of state mechanisms and national authorities.

Typology of actors

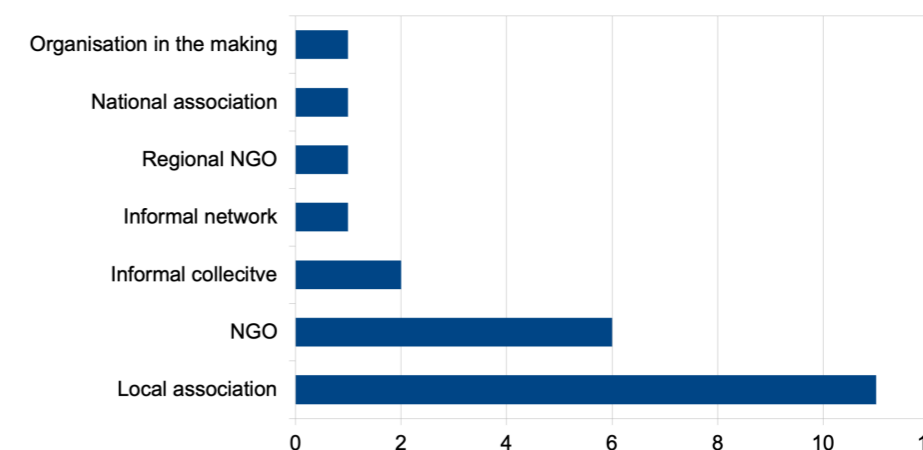
The actors who have responded to date (21) are based in Tunisia (7), Morocco (6), Algeria (2) and Libya (1). One actor is based in Senegal but is active in the Maghreb, another is based in Italy but is very active in Tunisia, and three other actors are transnational.

Actors who answered the survey

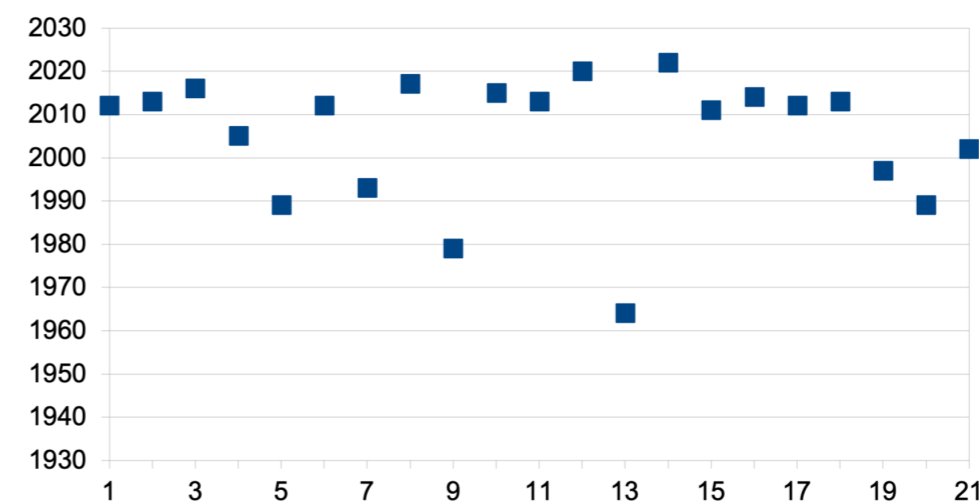


Of these actors, 11 are local associations (enshrined in national law), 7 are NGOs, two define themselves as informal collectives. According to the data collected, 14 actors (2/3) were formed after 2011.

Legal status of the organisation



Year of creation of the organisation



A large part of the actors deal generally with the issue of migration in the country where they operate. Only a minority of actors devote themselves exclusively to the issue of death and disappearance in the process of migration. Eight actors bring together (rarely exclusively) families of people who have died or disappeared in the process of migration. Organisations are usually made up of citizens of the countries where they operate and people from other countries (migrant communities).

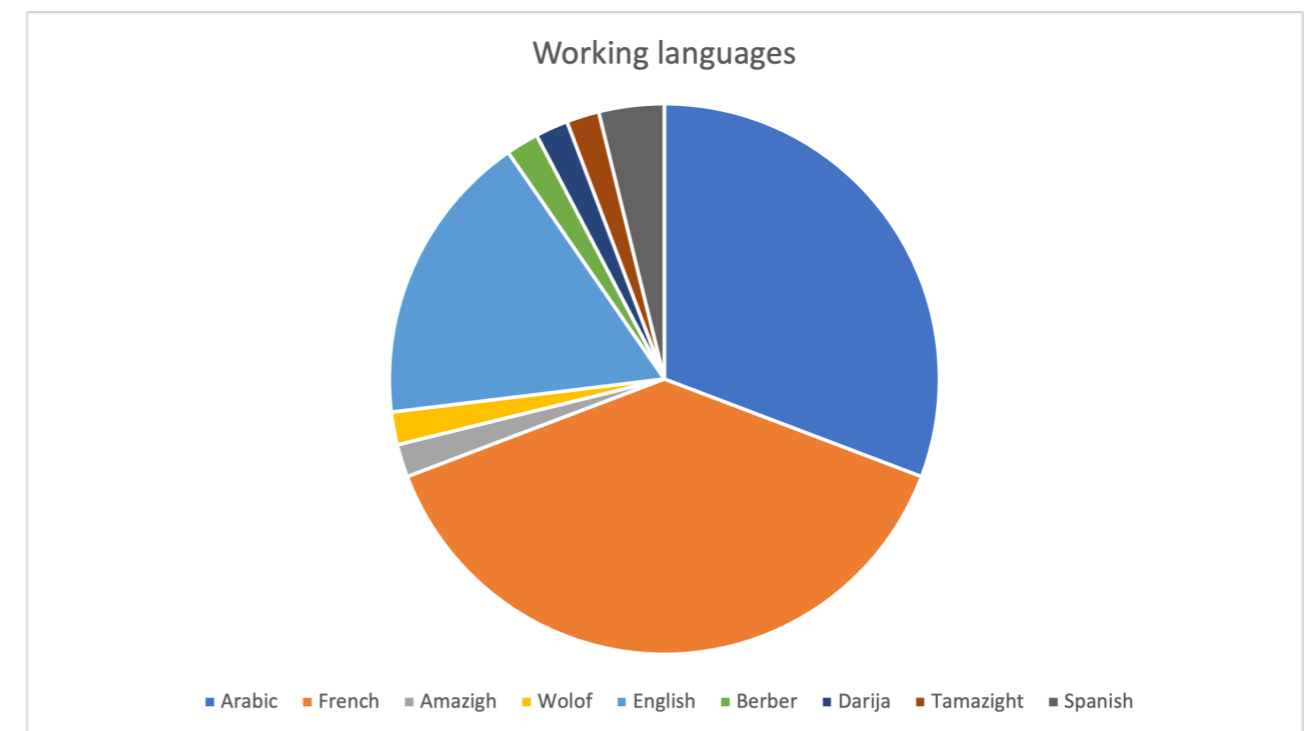
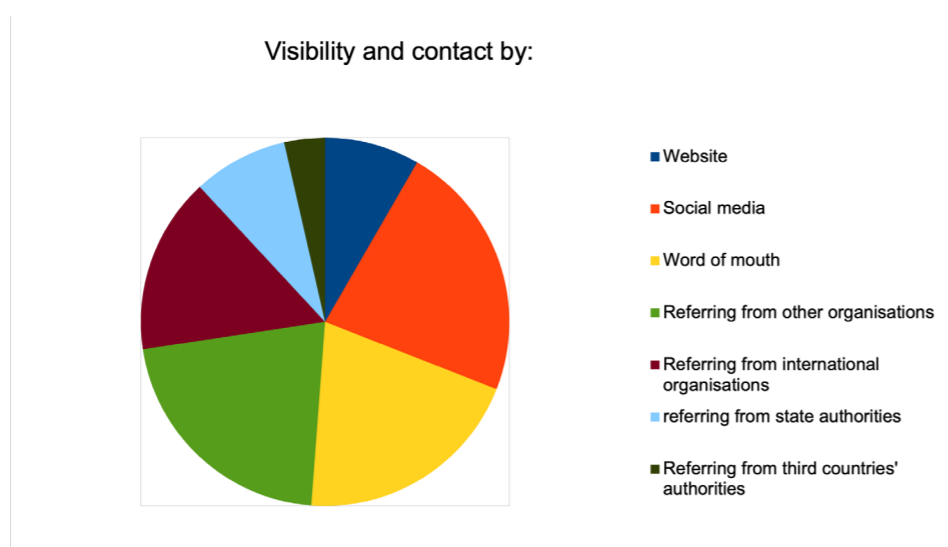
These actors are all based in urban centres (including capitals), but also operate on the ground (at local, national and sometimes regional level). Their work covers a fairly wide range of subjects, particularly in terms of practical, administrative, legal and psychological support for families in search of their loved ones, as well as support in the identification process. Part of the associations have a broader mandate that concerns the support of foreign/migrant populations in the territory.



These different actors are not all the same size. Some organisations operate at the national level and have hundreds of members (they register support for the families of missing persons in a framework of multiple actions), other organisations are small in size and have been formed with the specific purpose of caring for people missing or deceased in the process of migration. The latter organisations are made up in particular of people who have been more or less directly affected (direct family, close relatives) by a case of disappearance (this observation makes it possible to reflect on the motivations and modalities of engagement of the various actors). In general, the organisations concerned include among their members mainly families of missing persons, researchers and activists. The actors concentrate their activity mainly in the Maghreb, at local or national level, with interactions in other countries (relations with countries of the South and North (Italy, Spain)), as well as in the context of transnational network activities or through a remote activity (social networks, etc.).

Visibility and contact

The actors work mainly in Arabic and French, and to a lesser extent in English. They often use interpreters to communicate with families (while formal communications with the authorities are in Arabic and French).



They combine different modes of interaction depending on the situation: virtual and remote connections (email, phone, social networks) as well as in-person appointments (fixed or not) to facilitate access to everyone. They receive on their premises, in third places, including in public spaces, and most move within the territory. They generally have an online activity (site, social networks): they publish information (relay of articles or publications) and disseminate search requests (relay of information from different sources). These different activities make it possible to increase their visibility and identify them more easily in the public space and online. Relations with families or survivors are done at least initially by phone, on social networks (WhatsApp groups, etc.) or by email, while communications with the authorities are done in a more formal way (appointments in person, email, phone or formal letters depending on the case).

There is a wide variety of people, organisations or public actors who come into contact with these actors: they are contacted by families, witnesses or survivors, or by members of migrant communities who are active on behalf of other members, and by national and international organisations seeking their services or information, by international organisations (e.g. ICRC) and even by the authorities (who more or less implicitly acknowledge their capacity for action, their connections with communities and families, and their role as reference points/network points with access to significant information).

Get in touch

Actors are contacted mainly by persons or organisations located in the country where they operate (in the same city, in the region or more broadly in the country), but also by persons or organisations located in the countries of origin of the searched persons or in third countries (EU or extra EU). Contact is made through the visibility of actors on social networks (or websites) or through word of mouth within migrant communities or the general population. Individuals

may also contact them on the advice of international organisations or authorities. Most actors use social networks both to receive information and to get in touch with families or witnesses. One of the criteria often mentioned about the use of social networks concerns the reliability of sources, which leads us to carry out an additional evaluation on the role, function, specificities and limits of virtual network points. These entities perform substantial networking tasks, but they often function on their own. Consequently, they are not included in this mapping. Nevertheless, they remain privileged actors in the 'private'/internal connections of each actor, and often form common connections. Formal contact is mainly made by phone, on social networks or by email.

Search activities for missing migrants

Search requests come largely from families of missing persons (present in the territory where the organisation operates, in the country of origin of the wanted person or in third countries), but also from witnesses/survivors, members of migrant communities in the territory or other associations/organisations.

In addition to research carried out independently or on the basis of a direct request, actors are often called upon to participate in research carried out by other organisations operating in the same country, but also by organisations operating abroad. They are also called upon, to a lesser extent, to contribute to research carried out by international organizations or local authorities, or to support the consular authorities of the countries of origin of the victims (when the organisation counts among its members persons from these countries). This depends on the relationships of trust and collaboration that some actors have been able to forge with institutional actors.

People searching for missing persons provide information on them by means of pre-structured forms (questionnaires). These cards are available online on the pages of the associations or are transmitted during appointments in person. They are also transmitted on social networks and by message. Such information may include photographs of wanted persons or copies of identification documents.

Information is collected directly during in-person interviews, often through paper records that are then retained by the organisation. Remote interviews (videoconferencing or telephone) can also be carried out. Information is collected on both individual and collective cases. Actors usually try to collect information about other missing persons as well, regardless of a specific request. The modality of data collection and its use also depends on technical capacity issues (capacity that can be strengthened with access to complex network analysis tools developed by the National Institute of Applied Sciences/CICR).

In order to continue the research, most of the actors receive a power of attorney from the families and then rely on lawyers from their own structure or external lawyers.

The search strategies are logically adapted according to the circumstances of the disappearance (nationals of the country rather than foreigners in the territory) and the timeframe of the disappearances, with diversified activities if the disappearance is recent or if it has lasted for some time. In general for research, actors carry out specific research (through social networks, etc.), but also call on other organisations (national or international) or migrant communities of the country in which they operate, etc.

At the same time, civil society actors articulate more formal research with national authorities, international organisations, and any actors that may provide useful information. The search for missing persons does not focus exclusively on cases of possible death, but also explores the possibilities of disappearance in other situations (imprisonment, administrative detention, hospitalisation, etc.). It should be noted that the search activity for national authorities as well as for international organisations such as the ICRC and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is based on requests from family members (possibly direct family members) for privacy and data protection reasons.

In the absence of family members on the spot (as is often the case), civil society actors play a mediating and connecting role between the authorities and the family (in the country of origin or in a third country, often by proxy). The legitimacy acquired on the ground by these actors allows them to assume this specific function (unlike, for example, migrant communities and the people who represent them who have much more difficulty in acquiring legitimacy due in particular to their precarious situation in the territory). This activity, which is based on mutual knowledge and trust, is inevitably more effective at the local level, thanks to interpersonal connections, than at the national or transnational level (the articulation of collaborations with international actors can therefore guarantee more efficiency).

Research is often carried out at the national level, with more focused mobilisations at the local level. Extensions are also possible at the international level. For searches that concern longer-term disappearances, approaches to the same actors (institutional or other organisations) are made taking into account the possibilities related to a broader timeframe.

If the searched person is found alive, the actors mobilise according to the person's specific situation, trying to intervene directly with the authorities or sometimes limiting themselves to informing the family of the results of the search (possibly reporting the case to other more specific actors).

If the searched person is found dead, most actors mobilise to support the family in the identification processes, or help with burial or repatriation.

If the person is still missing after a certain period of time (3 months, 6 months), some actors tend to interrupt searches, others try to pursue them and carry out additional searches more or less proactively, or try to provide regular follow-up to families and psychologically support them. The choice to continue the research depends on different variables: the availability of the association (in terms of human resources and research resources/time) and the conditions and context of the research itself. The aspect of research monitoring is crucial and varies from individual assistance to collective support through the establishment of discussion groups. These groups, which can meet in person or virtually, provide families and loved ones with a platform to share experiences and support each other.

Involvement in identification processes

If the discovery (verification/identification) of the body of the searched person is likely, most actors mobilise and make themselves available to accompany families and relatives in the complex operations of identification with the various competent authorities (police, services of the town hall, hospitals and institute of forensic medicine, etc.).

The actors undertake either to support families when they go on site for identification or to accompany them remotely (power of attorney) for administrative procedures and identification procedures. Some actors also engage in post burial identification procedures if the situation allows.

When a body is found without any exchange or correspondence with the family, actors tend to also collect information from witnesses, to try to contact the family directly, to provide information to other organisations that may be in contact with their family, or to retain the information if a family subsequently comes forward with a search request. In the same way, actors are sometimes solicited by other actors to find the families of victims or to provide additional information and/or to collect testimonies that could be useful for searches.

When a body is recovered as a result of a shipwreck, the terms of engagement are roughly the same. Actors act as a link and connection between families in search of relatives (when they are immediately active because they have exchanges with their relatives and because they have lost contact, or because they receive information from witnesses) and actors involved in the management of victims' bodies (where possible).

Information on shipwreck cases is then organised to try to establish links between the information concerning the event in question and the search requests compatible with these cases, which may arrive in subsequent days.

In order to promote the identification of victims and/or missing persons, a basic notation is used to record cases – departure of the boat, date, time, number of passengers (men, women, children), nationalities. This method already makes it possible to identify the different cases. Whenever possible, attempts are made to make a more detailed notation, recording the names and personal information of victims or wanted persons. This information is then cross-referenced with information related to the search cases and information about the bodies of the found victims.

The capacity of civil society actors in connection with the families of wanted persons becomes fundamental in providing lists of potential victims to international actors (who use them in their interactions with the authorities) or directly to the authorities in charge of victim recovery and identification operations.

When it comes to a death in hospital or in similar contexts (with confirmation of the identity of the victim), most actors mobilise to support families at the level of management of the body (on site or remotely) or to report the death to families who are not aware (especially in third countries). Most involved parties also participate in the burial or repatriation processes of the deceased. Whenever possible, they connect with the families to assist them with legal and administrative tasks.

Work tools

The developed tools concern both the search methods, by means of forms or search notices (online or on paper) which deal with individual cases and collective cases, and the methods of archiving information. Some files are written in paper 'registers' and other information is digitised, which makes it possible to follow the cases, but also ideally to link them more easily with each other (as part of a specific activity or in relation to the research of other actors).

The format and typology of archived information vary: photos, videos, audio tracks, but also texts that can be archived in their raw state or that can be processed and analysed beforehand. Information is shared primarily with families, but can also be made available to research teams, other organisations and even local authorities if necessary and useful for research. The modalities of sharing depend on the internal organisation of the actors, the relations they maintain with their partners and interlocutors, and the conditions of security, reliability and trust that surround these relations.

When it comes to research, the various participants usually engage a broad and diverse range of contacts. These can include connections with similar organisations in other countries, as well as links with local authorities. This type of connection is often articulated on a case-by-case basis and is not systematised: the objective of a shared repertoire of actors could promote and facilitate these collaborations.

Possible needs and linkages with civil society actors

The needs identified 'internally' concern in particular a request for training/competence/systematisation on legal, administrative and psychological support and on the methods of archiving, management and possible sharing of data (security, privacy, etc.). From the perspective of external partners, the primary need identified is **establishing a standardised framework for interaction with other organisations, international bodies, and authorities. This framework should take into account the power dynamics, the balance of collaboration, and the roles and rights of each participant.**

The suggestions expressed are aimed at finding, internally and vis-à-vis external actors, practical modalities for joint action, facilitating the exchange of practices and cooperation (development of common databases, etc.) to meet the stated needs. The restitution of the mapping process could promote a pooling of these needs and the initiation of a collective process to develop common practices and shared working strategies.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The mobilisation, since 2011-2012, of actors who were already dealing with the migration or socio-economic issue in general as well as the creation of many structures explicitly aimed at supporting families in search of relatives who disappeared in the process of migration or in identification processes testify to a progressive engagement of civil society on this issue. Thus, civil society is aware of the need to respond in an organised manner to a lack of response to long-term disappearances and to the recent increase in the number of disappearances and deaths in the process of migration. **This mobilisation is linked to the inaction (or resistance) of national authorities (also in relation to their possible responsibilities), the lack of collaboration and support, the practical, legal and administrative obstacles faced by the families of missing persons (local or foreign), and also the difficulty of international organisations to intervene effectively (obsolete or inappropriate search and intervention modalities) in the context of disappearances in migration.**

From the point of view of national authorities, notwithstanding the inclusion in **Goal 8 of the Global Compact for Migration** (which calls on States to prevent cases of death and disappearance in the process of migration, to support families in tracing and to participate in procedures for the recovery and identification of victims) and the attempt by some countries to organise a suitable mechanism (for example, in Italy with the Special Commissioner for Missing Persons), at the international level and at the Maghreb level in particular, no effective tracing and identification mechanism has been established. On the contrary, **in countries where the management of the migration phenomenon remains extremely problematic, we note that practices contrary to fundamental rights (mass graves in Libya, extremely limited forensic practices to collect data, etc.) or practices that fall under differential and discriminatory treatment on a racial basis (non-identification of the bodies of people supposedly of sub-Saharan origin in the absence of a request for repatriation – paradox – in Tunisia) persist, not to mention forms of non-collaboration by the authorities in the face of requests for search and identification of families (for example, in Morocco, in the context of the massacre of 24 June 2022).**

International organisations (ICRC, IOM, UNHCR) have tried, in part and in different ways, to put in place appropriate support and research mechanisms, which still prove to be deficient today in the face of the lack of collaboration of national authorities, an inadequate internal organisation (modalities of engagement at the level of research – for example, restoration of family links, international movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent; effectiveness in cooperation with the authorities with regard to identification processes) and a research technology and methodology that is still being developed and perfected. Yet actors such as the ICRC (in collaboration with research centres such as the National Institute of Applied Sciences) or research teams (as part of interdisciplinary research programmes) have over the years developed mapping instruments, complex research tools and forensic techniques that can currently guarantee more efficient and rapid working arrangements. It would be important to further promote access to these research approaches, practices and tools for civil society actors involved in these activities.

The technical, logistical and organisational gap of civil society actors has gradually been reduced thanks to the willingness of civil society organisations to address a structural gap and to gradually organise themselves to develop more effective working tools. It has also been mitigated by the increasing engagement of researchers, activists, activists and specialists, who have been able to support processes of organizing activities by providing increasingly sophisticated technical and practical support.

Possible Joint Actions

The considerations and suggestions reported here correspond to a first reading of the situation in the light of the 21 replies received. They make it possible to identify rather specific requests and to formulate 1) proposals for the actors concerned, which have a more technical/practical nature aimed at strengthening knowledge/skills, capacities for action on the ground, organisational arrangements and cooperation. Based on the evaluation of relations with institutional actors, local authorities and international organisations, 2) other observations, to be implemented in the form of recommendations or advocacy, should be formulated in a collegial way by the actors involved in the research, and presented appropriately at the national and international level.

Many suggestions and requests are already apparent from the analysis of the questionnaires. They are related to specific shortcomings observed in the direct experience of the actors or, more generally, with regard to a more or less problematic overall situation in the different countries.

Based on the needs expressed and the suggestions provided, it is possible to organise a series of proposals to be submitted for evaluation and collective discussion by the actors concerned both in terms of their specific activity, local and national collaborations and international collaborations:

- Online or in-person workshop on the analysis of official (local and national) standard procedures for search and identification, and verification based on specific experiences of discrepancies/inconsistencies in practice.
- Development of a common mapping of the actors active on the subject: a detailed internal version and a synthetic public version accessible to families. Based on the information collected, an online page was created to indicate the location of each of the actors and describe the characteristics of their activities.

- Production of a practical vademecum (by country) on what a civil society actor can do at different levels, how they can interact with authorities and international organisations.
- Workshop (online or in the presence of) thematic discussions: research, identification, support for families.
- Self-training workshop (online or in-person) on the use and development of research tools.
- Self-study workshop (online or in-person) on data collection, data archiving, data sharing conditions and modalities.
- Workshop on legal constraints related to the collection and sharing of sensitive data at the national and international level.
- Definition of a practical cooperation protocol between national actors.
- Proposal for an international cooperation protocol with other civil society actors.
- Definition of common practices to identify the needs of families and adapt the activity to this demand.
- Evaluation of the conditions for the creation of a coordinating actor (associated with a research centre), which would promote the exchange, sharing and analysis of data, and which could function as an interface with the authorities of third countries in transnational approaches, and with international organisations.

Recommendations

The comparison of the different actors concerned in the light of the analysis of the regional context and national situations allowed the actors who participated in the research project to formulate a series of recommendations, which could be communicated to other local or international organisations for the defense of rights (Amnesty, Last Rights...) or those who deal with this theme, as well as to the national authorities.

International organisations (UN, IOM, ICRC, UNHCR):

- Request for a report on the management of the bodies of people who died while migrating in the Maghreb (equivalent to the ICRC's 2022 'Counting the Dead' report).
- Development of a protocol for cooperation between civil society actors and international organisations in the exchange of information and collaboration with respect for the privacy and dignity of individuals.
- Report and advocacy with UN agencies and specific working groups (UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances) to support advocacy with national authorities.
- Request for the creation of an international support system for families of migrants who have disappeared or died in the process of migration (to promote searches, family mobility, support in identification procedures, obtaining death certificates, burial and repatriation operations, etc.).
- Request for technical support to strengthen the capacity of states in their search for missing persons and identification procedures with respect for fundamental rights and with a fundamental view to supporting families.
- Request for support from migrant communities and request for awareness-raising from consular services in countries of origin with a view to fostering collaboration with North African States to support research and identification processes.

National authorities

- Development of a standard procedure for searching national authorities, requesting access to data and cooperating with institutional actors, in line with country-specific conditions.
- Request for cooperation in the census of graves of people who died in the process of migration (identified and unidentified).
- Request for transparency on identification procedures.
- Request for cooperation in the search for migrants (national or foreign) who have disappeared in the national territory.
- Request for cooperation with international organisations and third country authorities in the search for missing persons on the move.
- Involvement in body retrieval procedures.
- Participation, alongside international organisations and civil society actors, in debriefing processes of survivors in order to identify missing persons and victims.
- Compliance with Goal 8 of the Global Compact for Migration and assessment of countries' effective engagement, gaps and room for improvement in the support for families.

ANNEXES

Methodology

The methodology applied to the project is adapted to different research contexts:

- online research to collect institutional information;
- requests for clarification (interviews) to the authorities (not satisfied);
- collecting information on the activity of the authorities through the experience of civil society actors and international organisations;
- distribution of a questionnaire to civil society actors;
- organisation of two discussion workshops;
- the methodology used with civil society actors is likely to produce dynamics of confrontation and cooperation that could lead to a continuation of the project and the organisation of the activities suggested and recommended by the various actors.

Analysis of state mechanisms and participation of civil society

The participation of state actors in the case of deaths and disappearances of migrants is considered to be relatively low, including when it comes to their own nationals (as highlighted by the FTDES in relation to the work of the Tunisian commission of inquiry officially launched in 2015 to determine the fate of 503 people of Tunisian origin who disappeared between Tunisia and Italy in 2011). The central part of this work is based on a questionnaire distributed with the aim of collecting field experiences and identifying the different operating methods that each actor has developed in its territory of action in relation to national authorities and in dialogue with international organisations.

For the methodological organisation of the research, it was necessary to take into account the general situation (at Euro-Mediterranean level), national situations and local contexts: the questionnaire submitted to the different actors was designed to allow each actor to position itself within a very broad horizon (that of mobilisations on research and on identifications) according

to its own specificity, and to illustrate the shortcomings both in their autonomous activity, in their relations with other civil society organisations and vis-à-vis the authorities (local and national). In parallel with the distribution of the questionnaire to civil society actors, an analysis of the regional, national and local framework made it possible to take into account the functioning of the institutional system, in order to better position the action of civil society actors and to understand the action modalities they have adopted according to the context in which they operate.

The mapping of actors aimed at identifying the structures (associations, collectives, others) that are mobilising on this subject, to understand their modalities of intervention and the context in which they operate.

The intention of this work has been to foster collaboration between the various actors in the field, to promote the exchange of practices and tools and the co-construction of a compatible and connected operational modality, which, without distorting the specificities of each, can facilitate individual and collective work, particularly in terms of the ability to respond to the various requests of families who are looking for a missing close person or who are engaged in identification processes (often at a distance).

Distribution of the questionnaire and reactions

The questionnaire was first sent to 10 actors in Morocco, 1 in Libya, 3 in Algeria, 10 in Tunisia, and 4 external actors (Caminando Fronteras, AP, Missing at the borders, Boza fili/APS). These actors have already consolidated connections and collaborate with actors in the Maghreb. The questionnaire was then sent to other stakeholders as part of a broadening of the pool of interlocutors through interpersonal exchanges, suggestions from stakeholders or researchers in the field.

In June 2023, there were 21 responses: 7 in Tunisia, 6 in Morocco, 2 in Algeria, 1 in Libya, 1 in Senegal, and 4 from transnational actors. It is possible to leave the questionnaire accessible for a new period of time, in order to allow other actors, mobilised during the process or who have not been able to answer until now, to contribute.

The responsiveness has varied significantly, which could be attributed to several factors. One such factor is the timing of when the questionnaire was distributed. Actors who were already in contact with the researcher or who were already registered in the approach launched by EuroMed Rights obtained it more easily, while less 'close' actors had to be solicited several times (by providing a more detailed explanation of the project).

Secondly, even among direct contacts, a certain reluctance to fill in the document was observed. This reluctance is perhaps linked to complex relations between local actors (Morocco, Tunisia) or to relations to be reframed with EuroMed Rights, in terms of legitimacy, public recognition of the activities being carried out, competition between actors and dynamics of collaboration within the network.

Thirdly, some of the actors said they were available as a matter of principle, but took time to react (or still have to) due to a specific delicate situation (different depending on the context) and precautions regarding collaboration with international/European actors that could expose activists more (Algeria, Libya). With regard to actors registered within migrant communities in Tunisia, the situation in recent months has weakened their position and limited their availability.

Finally, the distribution of the document shortly before Ramadan may also have slowed down the response process somewhat.

Compilation of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed in French. The English version was distributed only to certain actors. Other actors wished to respond in Arabic (Libya).

Ad hoc interviews were organised with specific interlocutors, with the objective of focusing attention on certain specific approaches and certain consolidated field practices, which could be shared with other actors.

The questionnaire largely offered multiple-choice answers: the actors were therefore able to select several answers or choose not to answer certain questions. If the suggested answer was unsatisfactory or had to be completed, the possibility of providing an additional (other) answer was provided.

Complex network(s)

The obtained answers highlight the way in which the actors involved interact on the ground. A varying number of both formal and informal parties are involved. Specifically, local migrant communities and individual participants play a significant role, primarily operating online. They receive information or requests for information or search inquiries, which they then pass on to their association contacts.

This level of connection, which is more difficult to map, constitutes an indispensable level in the action of the main actors which must nevertheless be taken into account with the necessary precautions (both to protect their action and to respect the relationships of trust they have established with associative actors more visible in the public space). Their 'position' in the mapping is not explained and their visibility will be successively evaluated.

Civil society and national institutions

The analysis of the responses also made it possible to identify a series of institutional actors, humanitarian and international organisations that interact in an ad hoc or more structured way with associative actors: ad hoc interviews – at a distance or present – were carried out with these institutional/international actors to evaluate and deepen the conditions of interaction (current or potential) from their point of view (their formal requirements, political and ethical positions, as well as the levels of compatibility and trust). The purpose of this evaluation is to further define and organise the possible relationships and cooperation between the actors identified in the questionnaire and these organisations/institutions.

If the initial ambition had been to carry out interviews with national authorities and specific devices for the treatment of bodies (forensic medical institutes, national guard, etc.), the reluctance of the authorities not to respond to requests for appointments or the availability of certain actors conditioned on the authorisation of certain institutions (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Home Affairs) have in fact limited the capacity to report directly on the functioning of state actors. International actors were able to communicate their specific perspective (International Committee

of the Red Cross, International Organization for Migration within the framework of the Missing Migrants Project) which, in a way, indirectly illustrates the functioning of national authorities. As no direct data is available, it is currently only possible to approximate an analysis of the functioning of these state mechanisms: functioning that can be further developed later as long as subsequent access becomes possible.

Relationships between actors

From the point of view of the actors identified, fragmentation and non-cooperation among some of them is a problematic dimension that must be taken into account. What still needs evaluation is the feasibility of the practical collaboration proposed at the conclusion of the mapping project. Such cooperation should be considered in a differentiated manner. Modalities of cooperation may concern some actors and not others, but it is possible to envisage a fundamental convergence on certain issues which will then be declined according to the different situations.

One of the variables to be considered will also be related to the conditions and limits of interaction with national authorities and international organisations. The relationship between some participants and national authorities is complex, characterized by fear, distrust, exclusion from research and identification processes, and even discrimination. Similar complexities exist with international organizations such as IOM, UNHCR, and ICRC. Factors contributing to these complexities include a lack of trust, lack of transparency in their operations, a perceived colonial aspect of 'extractions', and insufficient visibility and response/feedback. As such, the nature of interactions with these entities still needs to be further clarified and defined.

Adjustment related to contingencies

In Tunisia, the complex situation in February-March 2023 prevented the planned field mission to Tunis and Sfax from being carried out. It was therefore carried out in mid-April 2023. Relations with stakeholders associated with migrant communities, especially in Sfax, faced disruption. However, efforts were made to re-establish these connections, enabling the mission to proceed in April 2023. During this mission, interactions with community organisations provided a deeper understanding of different perspectives. These perspectives came from parties who didn't take part in the questionnaire but played a crucial role as local connectors. These connectors bridge the gap between migrant communities, civil society actors, and authorities, despite the challenges posed by the vulnerability of migrant communities and the extreme instability of the local situation. They are part of the informal actor network, where civil society actors collaborate, exchange, and share information. Interviews with the ICRC and IOM were conducted on site or remotely, in order to assess the specific local situation, which is currently a context of emergence (due to the figures and the saturation of the local body management system). This context must therefore be considered in a specific way.

As far as Algeria is concerned, it is the current political situation that limits the connection with actors on the ground. The possibility of contributing to research is linked to the personal and professional situation of certain actors. This contribution may expose them to risks due to cooperation with foreign/international actors even on a mainly humanitarian issue such as the search for missing persons on migration (in relation to potential political responsibilities in cases of enforced disappearances). A similar scenario concerns Libya, where associative actors operate in a situation of extreme fragility: their capacity to participate in the questionnaire

has been limited, and their capacity to work in coordination with transnational actors is also limited. However, at the meeting held in Tunis, Libyan organisations expressed their willingness to take part in the process, to the extent possible, and to participate in the compilation of the questionnaire thereafter.

In the case of Morocco, the challenge lies in dealing with the fragmentation of various participants and the complexity of on-the-ground conditions. The situation is further complicated by the geographical complexities, including areas like the Canary route, Alboran Sea, and land borders of Ceuta, Melilla, and Algeria. These factors make the task more difficult.

The field mission to Morocco (meeting with international organisations and institutions) was postponed because it was necessary to treat all interlocutors equally, without any disparities in treatment being perceived. Although informal discussions took place in the weeks leading up to the meeting in Tunis, interviews with stakeholders, to deepen certain dimensions of their activity, will be organised in the presence or remotely after the analysis of the responses. An additional difficulty concerns the situation of tension in certain contexts with the authorities (for example, Nador) due to the latest events (24 June 2022), which do not facilitate the exchange with certain actors more exposed vis-à-vis the authorities.

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Endnotes

1 The significant decrease in the number of bodies arriving in Europe, Malta and Italy from 2018 corresponds to an exponential increase in the number of bodies found on the Tunisian or Libyan coasts. These bodies are treated expeditiously and often unidentified, but are inevitably more or less visible in the spaces devoted to their burial, even if they are very precarious.



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