

# Roles and responsibilities of the IOM and UNHCR in combating illegal immigration in Niger.

## Abstract:

This study highlights the roles and responsibilities of the IOM and UNHCR in combating illegal immigration in Niger. Indeed, these two organizations, namely the IOM and UNHCR, work complementary but distinct roles. For example, the IOM manages migration flows more broadly, providing aid services, policy advice, and promoting safe and orderly migration, including assistance for voluntary return, while the UNHCR focuses on the protection of refugees, ensuring that their right to seek asylum is respected and combating forced return. Together, they work to ensure respect for international law and to find sustainable solutions, sharing the responsibility of protecting vulnerable populations while acknowledging that primary responsibility lies with the States. A qualitative method is used in data collection.

The results obtained relate to the Protection of refugees, the fight against refoulement, and the search for solutions: furthermore, it is possible to note assistance to states in managing migratory flows, providing policy advice to governments on migration policies, offering specialized assistance to vulnerable migrants, and ensuring that migration is taken into account in the sustainable development goals and works towards inclusive and safe migration.

**Keywords :** migration, illegal immigration, refugee protection, voluntary return, refoulement.

## Résumé :

Cette étude fait ressortir les rôles et responsabilité de l'OIM et du HCR dans la lutte contre l'immigration clandestine au Niger. En effet, ces deux organisations à savoir l'OIM et le HCR jouent des rôles complémentaires mais distincts. Par exemple l'OIM gère l'ensemble des mouvements de migration de manière plus générale, en fournissant des services d'aide, des conseils politiques, et en favorisant les migrations sûres et ordonnées, y compris l'aide au retour volontaire et le HCR se concentre sur la protection des réfugiés, en s'assurant que leur droit de demander asile est respecté et en luttant contre le refoulement forcé. Ensemble, ils travaillent à garantir le respect du droit international et à trouver des solutions durables, partageant la responsabilité de protéger les populations vulnérables tout en reconnaissant que la responsabilité première incombe aux États. La méthode qualitative est utilisée dans la collecte des données.

Les résultats obtenus se rapportent à la Protection des réfugiés, à la Lutte contre le refoulement et à la Recherche de solutions : En outre, on peut noter l'Aide aux Etats à gérer les flux migratoires, fournir des conseils politiques aux gouvernements sur les politiques migratoires, offrir une assistance spécialisée aux migrants vulnérables, et s'assurer que la migration est prise en compte dans les objectifs de développement durable et œuvre à une migration inclusive et sûre.

**Mots -clés :** migration, immigration clandestine, protection des réfugiés, retour volontaire, refoulement.

## Introduction

42 The European Union's common external policy regarding blocking migrants before they reach  
43 Europe, which was gripped by a migration crisis in 2015, is the result of several rounds of  
44 negotiations, partnership frameworks, summits, conferences, and bilateral and multilateral  
45 dialogues. These include, among others, the neighborhood policy with the Maghreb countries  
46 located on the migration route, the Euro-African Summit in Rabat, the Khartoum Dialogue,  
47 and many other frameworks such as meetings between the European Union and the African  
48 Union, and finally, bilateral partnership relations between countries on both sides of the  
49 Mediterranean. These partnerships have led to agreements aimed at modifying the legal  
50 framework of African countries to incorporate laws into their legal systems whose sole  
51 objective is the repression of migrants attempting to reach Europe. And that is why a whole  
52 diplomatic arsenal, accompanied by colossal financial resources, has been deployed to force  
53 certain countries of origin, such as Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco, and Mali, to close their  
54 borders and push migrants to find other routes to reach Europe. Among these, Brachet (2009)  
55 and Bensaad (2004) highlighted the route from Niger to Libya, Algeria, and Morocco.

56 Since the 1990s, Niger, due to its geographical location, and particularly the Agadez region,  
57 situated at the intersection of the Agadez-Algeria and Agadez-Libya routes, has become a  
58 crucial transit point for migrants from West and Central Africa seeking to reach Libya and,  
59 for some, Europe. Aware of the closure of other routes and the destabilization of Libya  
60 following the assassination of President Muammar Gaddafi, Niger was identified at the  
61 Valletta Summit as a "guinea pig" country for the externalization of European policy in West  
62 Africa. Thus, as a major transit country for migrants heading to Europe through the Sahel and  
63 Libya, Niger has become a central player in the European Union's (EU) strategy of  
64 externalizing its borders. This cooperation enabled Niger to adopt Law 2015-036, which  
65 criminalizes the transport of migrants.

66 The implementation of this law in 2016 shaped the interventions of several security,  
67 humanitarian, and development actors. European organizations, such as EUCAP-Sahel,  
68 established for this purpose and present in Niger to strengthen the state in the fight against  
69 terrorism, which was escalating in the Liptako-Gourma and Lake Chad regions, shifted their  
70 focus to combating irregular migration. Similarly, organizations like the IOM and UNHCR  
71 seized the opportunity presented by emergency trust fund funding to tailor their humanitarian  
72 projects to a security-focused approach, developing projects related to voluntary assistance for  
73 migrants wishing to return to their countries of origin through the creation of transit centers.  
74 UNHCR, for its part, took advantage of the existing asylum law to conduct activities that  
75 would position it to benefit from the trust fund.

76 In the following sections, we will present the context of the study, the research methodology,  
77 and the study's results.

## 78 I. Study Context:

79 First, it is important to emphasize that migration is the act of changing one's residence for a  
80 long or permanent period. It is one form of mobility. It encompasses two opposing concepts  
81 as follows: emigration is leaving the country of origin, while immigration is entering the  
82 country of destination. Thus, an emigrant is someone who leaves their country, an emigrant is  
83 someone who has left their country, an immigrant is someone who enters their host country,  
84 an immigrant is someone who has settled in their host country, and a migrant is someone who  
85 is currently migrating.

86 Generally, we distinguish between two types of migration or human mobility, without  
87 resorting to current concepts such as internally displaced persons, returnees, deportees, and  
88 readmitted persons, among others. Economic migration refers to and concerns the act of  
89 leaving home to seek better living conditions by carrying out various lawful activities with the  
90 aim of having economic benefits that allow the individual to provide for their own needs and  
91 those of their family through sending money, transferring funds or materials necessary for the  
92 family's development.

93 It is important to note that this study focuses on clandestine, illegal, or irregular immigration,  
94 which is the illegal, illicit, or covert entry into a national territory of foreigners who have not  
95 completed the required formalities. This immigration is considered illegitimate because it  
96 differs from regular immigration due to the existence of legislation, treaties, legal precedents,  
97 or other sometimes strict regulations established by nation-states that are circumvented.  
98 Illegality is characterized by the fact that these foreign nationals do not possess the documents  
99 or meet the conditions required by law or treaties to authorize their entry, or by the  
100 continuation of their stay after their documents have expired. Depending on the legislation, it  
101 may also involve smugglers. Covertness is characterized by the fact that entry and stay are  
102 concealed, that is, carried out with a certain degree of discretion, sometimes out of sight.  
103 Irregularity is characterized by the failure to comply with the various rules in force, including  
104 laws, regulations, and procedures relating to the stay of a foreigner.

105 Within this sector, organizations like the IOM and UNHCR fight against irregular migration in  
106 Niger. The adoption of this law on the eve of the Valletta Summit, which criminalizes  
107 materially motivated assistance to emigration or illegal immigration, housing assistance, and  
108 the production of false documents, is a strong signal of Niger's commitment to waging a  
109 relentless battle against irregular migration, trafficking, and human trafficking—a  
110 commitment that aligns with the European Union's objectives. It is this position, so eagerly  
111 awaited by the EU, that Niger has leveraged to become a key partner in managing the  
112 thousands of Africans transiting through its territory to reach the Maghreb, some via Europe.  
113 The implementation of this law in 2016, under political pressure from the European Union  
114 through financial, military, and technical incentives, led to the adoption of various security  
115 and humanitarian measures over approximately eight years. Indeed, during this period,  
116 activities related to the fight against irregular migration became a kind of windfall, even a  
117 lucrative one, for recipient countries, European countries and their agencies, as well as  
118 international NGOs such as the IOM, UNHCR, and national NGOs. In practice, some actors  
119 whose primary mission was focused on combating terrorism and providing humanitarian aid  
120 immediately transformed into veritable agents of repression, taking on various forms.

121 Therefore, in the absence of other actors involved in this entire process, we will rely on the  
122 IOM and UNHCR, which have been at the heart of migration in Niger since 2006 and whose  
123 activities have also evolved from humanitarian aid to a security-focused approach, in order to  
124 understand the hidden reasons for all these interventions and the sustainability of the results  
125 they achieved after the repeal of this law. Thus, adopting these questions from Florence Boyer  
126 (2019): How has the issue of migration become a revealer of policies and challenges related to  
127 security, development, and protection? How is this issue transforming mobility systems, as  
128 well as Niger's place and role in the Sahel-Saharan region? How is this grid-like structure of  
129 Nigerien territory gradually becoming a form of redefining the borders of the State of Niger?  
130 How do displaced persons cope with this increasingly entrenched border? How do  
131 international organizations like IOM and UNHCR negotiate their place in this security  
132 system, given their humanitarian mandates?

133 II. Methodology:

134 In addition to documentary research and online consultations, a qualitative approach was  
135 used. Data saturation was employed in data collection. Specifically, the aim was to gather the  
136 opinions and experiences of individuals experiencing irregular migration, particularly in  
137 reception centers, through rigorous triangulation, which allowed for saturation to be reached  
138 during the first ten days of September 2025. Saturation refers to the point at which, in  
139 research, any new data adds no new elements to the understanding of the phenomenon under  
140 study.

141 III. Results:

142 3.1. IOM's Role in Combating Irregular Migration:

143 It is important to note that IOM, established in 1951 and part of the United Nations system, is  
144 the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. It has 175 Member States  
145 and 8 Observer States, and offices in 171 countries. IOM works to promote orderly and  
146 humane migration for the benefit of all. To this end, it assists migrants worldwide by  
147 developing effective responses to evolving migration dynamics and providing guidance on  
148 migration policies and practices.

149 The Organization collaborates with governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental  
150 partners to strengthen the resilience of migrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations. It  
151 also works closely with governments to manage all forms of mobility and their impacts. The  
152 activities undertaken in this context include operations conducted in some of the world's most  
153 complex emergency situations. The IOM Constitution recognizes the link between migration  
154 and economic, social, and cultural development, as well as the right to freedom of movement.

155 Therefore, IOM's work is focused on the following three objectives:

- 156 • Saving lives and protecting migrants: To achieve this goal, IOM prioritizes the safety,  
157 dignity, and protection of people in the most challenging crisis situations.
- 158 • Finding solutions to displacement: To achieve this, IOM works to reduce the risks and  
159 impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, conflict, and instability faced  
160 by communities affected by or at risk of displacement.
- 161 • Facilitating regular migration pathways: To achieve this, IOM prioritizes approaches  
162 that involve all levels of government and society to safely connect people, goods,  
163 services, knowledge, and innovation. In addition, it primarily focuses on migrant  
164 assistance and voluntary return through programs and projects such as AVR, MRRM,  
165 SURNI, SUDENI, AGAMI, and its flagship border management program. IOM also  
166 returned nearly 15,000 migrants from Niger to their countries of origin, mainly in  
167 West and Central Africa. Two IOM projects funded by the EUF totaling €22 million—  
168 MRRM (€7 million) and SURNI (€15 million)—support the accommodation and  
169 provision of six centers, migrant outreach, rescue operations, support for state  
170 structures, and reintegration. The pilot phase was funded by Italy and the United  
171 Kingdom.

172 The Migrant Response and Resource Mechanism (MRRM) project was one of the first  
173 approved for the Sahel and Lake Chad window in January 2016. It represents the  
174 implementation of a "comprehensive approach" proposed by the IOM in June 2015, which led

175 to the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Protection and Reintegration, funded with €638 million  
176 under the EU Fund and implemented in 27 African countries, including Niger.

177 3.2 UNHCR's Role in Combating Irregular Migration: The Office of the United Nations High  
178 Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, based in  
179 Geneva, is a program of the United Nations. Its original purpose is to protect refugees, find  
180 durable solutions to help them rebuild their lives, and ensure the implementation of the 1951  
181 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

182 At the end of 2020, more than 82.4 million people worldwide were forced to flee their homes.  
183 Among them were almost 26.4 million refugees, more than half of whom were under 18.

184 However, UNHCR's assistance policy was coupled with a policy of migrant control. This  
185 second, more unofficial aspect of UNHCR policy gained increasing importance from the  
186 1990s onward, with UNHCR thus participating in the development of the European Union's  
187 (EU) immigration policy, which it supports in a complex and ambiguous manner. Thus,  
188 UNHCR significantly increased its presence in Morocco in 2004, the year of Hague Program,  
189 which institutionalized in the EU the "externalization of asylum" policies initiated in the late  
190 1990s.

191

192 More specifically, the role of UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Program) aims to:

193

194  Protect refugees: Focuses specifically on refugees, ensuring that their fundamental rights,  
195 such as the right to seek asylum, are respected.

196

197  Combat refoulement: Ensures that people are not forcibly returned to countries where their  
198 life or safety is threatened, which is a violation of the principle of non-refoulement.

199

200  Find solutions: Works with governments and NGOs to find durable solutions for refugees,  
201 such as resettlement.

202

203 3.3. The practical activities of these NGOs in the fight against illegal migration:

204 During the investigation, we witnessed the arrival of Nigerien migrants deported from Algeria  
205 on September 17, 2025, at 2:30 p.m. These migrants—men, women, and children—visibly  
206 tired and exhausted, got out of the vehicles, their hearts heavy with despair. Some headed  
207 towards the profiling committee to line up, while others went to the restaurant and water  
208 fountains in search of water and sandwiches while waiting for the profiling process to begin  
209 so they could receive their meal tickets. During the interviews, even though they unanimously  
210 requested anonymity or asked not to disclose their villages of origin, these survivors of the

211 ordeal are Hausa, and more specifically from the Zinder region. I approached the committee  
212 to learn more. For several years, this committee has coordinated the repatriation of Nigerien  
213 nationals expelled from Algeria and sometimes Libya. On December 17th, 573 of them—503  
214 men, 36 women, and 34 boys, including young children—arrived at the transit center for  
215 Nigerien deportees in the Salkat neighborhood. Upon their arrival, the screening committee  
216 received the envelopes accompanying these migrants and conducted further screening to  
217 check for stowaways and, most importantly, to provide them with meal vouchers. To be  
218 honest, I witnessed another life, another world, and a different perspective on the brothers,  
219 sisters, unaccompanied children, and minors whose dreams were shattered in Algeria. Their  
220 possessions—phones, money, clothes, and more—were confiscated by the police and then  
221 transported back to Niger in large trucks, like animals. This situation should concern the  
222 authorities because these young people have nothing left to return home. The profiling  
223 committee is composed of representatives from the town hall, the regional directorate of civil  
224 status and refugees, the representative of the permanent secretariat, etc. Its role is to register  
225 those expelled from Algeria by establishing their full names, date and place of birth, country  
226 of origin, length of stay in that country, and other contact information. The committee then  
227 asks each migrant for their region, department, municipality, and village. It is after this  
228 identification that the committee provides these newcomers with meal tickets.

229 Restaurants. At the beginning of the operation, the state provided meals in the center and  
230 transportation for these Nigerien migrants for a period of about 10 years, starting in 2011. The  
231 IOM also provided them with non-food kits such as buckets, mats, toothpaste, sheets,  
232 ointment, etc.

233 In terms of testimonies, we can note that Faiza Aliou expressed herself in these terms: “I just  
234 returned from Woharam (Algeria). I spent three years there. I work as a cleaner and earn  
235 30,000 CFA francs per month. This was the first time I had left, and it was the people who  
236 had returned who encouraged me to leave because they came back with money. Given the  
237 poverty I was in, I sold my ox to leave. I was arrested when we took the bus to go to work; the  
238 police stopped us.” In the vehicle, they made all the Black people get out and put them in their  
239 vehicle. The police wouldn't let us leave to get our luggage, which is at home, or even to see  
240 our relatives. They take money and cell phones but don't imprison people. Then, during our  
241 stay with them, while waiting for the day of our return, they give us food and water. However,  
242 the living conditions in their detention camp are poor because there is no freedom and people  
243 are crammed together like animals. We returned without a single franc. We are going to try to  
244 reach some of our relatives who are in the city while we wait for our relatives in the village to  
245 send us money to go home. Go home? I don't know, I'll see later when I've rested. Today,  
246 where I am, I have nothing and I have to call my family to send money and go home.

247

248 And Aicha Amadou, 25, added: “I just returned from Woharam. I was only there for five  
249 months, and I was with my husband. My husband was first arrested at the market, and he  
250 didn't even call to tell me he was there. Then the police came and arrested us too. The reason  
251 for our trip was to find work. Back home, the land isn't productive; you can farm and get  
252 nothing. Besides, the fields are barren and fragmented, and we have children. So what are we  
253 supposed to do, if not go to Algeria and come back with money like everyone else? When the  
254 police arrested us, they took my money and my cell phone. Now, what we're going to do  
255 depends on my husband, but I don't think it's possible to go back home because we have  
256 nothing. It's truly shameful to hear that we came back with nothing.” It's better to stay in

257 Agadez and look for another jobs in the meantime because even transportation to get to  
258 Adaydayta and back to the city is lacking. We came back empty-handed.” As for Issa Seydou,  
259 33 years old, he recounts: “I was there for eight months and I work as a bricklayer. It wasn't  
260 my first time going to Algeria. I earn 150,000 CFA francs a month. I left from the Agadez bus  
261 station in a Hilux. The reasons for leaving are quite simple. Here in Niger, outside of the rainy  
262 season, there are no other activities. And this agriculture doesn't provide a living because of  
263 the fragmentation of the land, the infertility of the soil, and the population pressure, because at  
264 33, I have two wives and eight children. The day of my arrest, very early in the morning, I  
265 was leaving for work when the police immediately set up camp in front of my house.” She  
266 took me to the deportation center, and then she brought us here. The police imprison and beat  
267 people, especially those who go to the gold mining sites. While I was there, I sent money to  
268 my family. I'm going to call them to send me the transportation costs, and then I'm going  
269 home. Deportation is a tradition, and that's why as soon as we earn something, we send it to  
270 our families.” Our interview with the permanent secretary of the management system for the  
271 camps for deportees in Niger, dated September 1, 2025, reveals that: “In terms of support,  
272 only sub-Saharan migrants benefit from it; Nigerien migrants do not, hence a form of  
273 segregation and discrimination. The same treatment could be given to them to develop micro-  
274 projects and stay in their own countries.” But we still see flows of migrants, pushbacks and  
275 expulsions, and migrants getting lost and dying during their journey. Algeria pushed people  
276 back without consultation, as does Libya. Niger has become a dumping ground for migrants  
277 deemed undesirable by them.”

278

279 The remarks of a member of the migration observatory on September 15, 2025, highlight this  
280 analysis: “How can we understand that institutions like the IOM and even the State negotiate  
281 the handling of migrants pushed back to Niger, on Nigerien soil, taking in foreign nationals?”

282 They put them in centers, feed them and provide everything they need, transport them in  
283 luxury vehicles or by plane, and finally, give them integration allowances, leaving Nigeriens  
284 to be left behind.”

### 285 3.4 The Main Security Actors in Charge of Law Enforcement

286 Law 2015-036 also paved the way for a proliferation of security and humanitarian actors in  
287 northern Niger. In addition to national forces, international NGOs, UN agencies (IOM,  
288 UNHCR, UNODC), and European security cooperation mechanisms (such as EUCAP Sahel)  
289 have established a presence.

290 Each of these actors operates according to its own logic: humanitarian for some, security-  
291 related for others, and even diplomatic or economic. This plurality of actors has created a  
292 fragmented security landscape, with challenges related to coordination, but also conflicts of  
293 legitimacy. Niger has thus found itself caught in a web of strategies, often developed outside  
294 the country and sometimes disconnected from the needs of local populations.

295 Finally, the intertwining of security aid and development assistance has reinforced Niger's  
296 dependence on its foreign partners, particularly European ones. In exchange for funding, the  
297 state has had to adapt its security priorities, at the risk of seeing its political room for  
298 maneuver reduced. Documentary analysis of project fact sheets and the approaches of certain  
299 authors highlights the following actors and their missions:

300 The European Union: it participated in the development of the national internal security  
301 strategy and its action plan in 2017 and 2018, and the national strategy to combat irregular  
302 migration with the assistance of a Viennese think tank (International Centre for Migration  
303 Policy Development).

304 EUCAP-Sahel: Present in Niger since 2012, initially mandated to combat terrorism, it deploys  
305 European police forces and security experts to enhance the capabilities of the defense and  
306 security forces, including the national police, the national guard, and the gendarmerie. In  
307 2015, its mandate expanded to include combating irregular migration with the opening of an  
308 office in Agadez. Until the end of its mandate, one of its main missions was to support the  
309 defense and security forces in order to better control migration flows, combat irregular  
310 migration, and fight criminal activity. Its final mandate involved launching more operational  
311 training programs for on-the-ground support and monitoring, in which European police  
312 officers assist their Nigerien counterparts. From 2012 to 2018, it trained 13,000 security  
313 personnel in the areas of travel document forgery, investigative techniques, and providing  
314 advisory support to forensic science. It comprises 130 security experts from 15 EU Member  
315 States and approximately 70 Nigerien staff. Its budget was €8.7 million in 2012 and €64  
316 million for the two-year period of its fourth mandate.

317 ECI: Joint Investigation Team: combating criminal networks, irregular immigration,  
318 trafficking, and migrant smuggling. It includes French, Spanish, and 12 Nigerien police  
319 officers. It works along the criminal justice chain, from data collection to intelligence analysis  
320 on terrorist and migration threats. It has made 266 arrests and implicated 69 criminal  
321 networks. This project is managed by FIIAPP, a Spanish public institution.

322 AJUSEN: budget support and training. With a budget of €80 million, it supports the 2016-  
323 2020 budget for strengthening state institutions in the areas of security, border control, justice,  
324 and public finance. €10 million is allocated to training programs for the Nigerien judiciary  
325 and eight different security forces in border management.

326 AFD: The French Development Agency often plays a role in governance, policing, and border  
327 initiatives in the region.

328 CIVIPOL: A partly private French company owned by French arms manufacturers Thales,  
329 Airbus, and Safran. It has influenced EU policy to secure training activities for the security  
330 forces: police, gendarmerie, national guard, intelligence services, and customs.

331 GAR-SI: Rapid Action-Surveillance and Intervention Group. Since its creation in 2019, it has  
332 conducted patrols along the borders of Burkina Faso and Mali. They seized weapons and  
333 explosives but arrested no smugglers or migrants.

334 FRONFEX: This force is composed of European security forces, some of which, such as  
335 Spain, Germany, and the European Union, have liaison officers in Niger. Its direct  
336 interlocutor is the Directorate of Territorial Security.

337 GIZ: The German Agency for International Cooperation, it has built 11 French posts.

338 Border guards at the Nigerian border were equipped with motorcycles and computers. The  
339 organization developed border security training modules and delivered equipment to the  
340 forensic police. Its funders include the German Federal Foreign Office and the European

341 Union. This support has amounted to approximately €90 million since 2017. The G5 Sahel,  
342 initially funded with €363 million, was created in 2017 by heads of state in Paris with a  
343 budget of €250 million. It comprises the armed forces of five countries: Burkina Faso, Mali,  
344 Mauritania, Chad, and Niger. Its mission was initially to combat terrorism, but its focus has  
345 shifted to combating migrant smuggling by blocking departures and transit routes to Libya.  
346 The FIIAPP is a Spanish public institution working to reform the public sector. But its  
347 mandate has expanded to include the provision of equipment such as drones, IMS-Catcher  
348 telephone interception equipment, and data analysis to complement the Niamey telephone  
349 monitoring center.

350 CIAUD: International Committee for Emergency Aid and Development. It intervenes in the  
351 context of monitoring migration flows at borders, and the identification and assistance of  
352 minors and unaccompanied children is funded by national and international NGOs.

353 Nigerien Red Cross: Humanitarian assistance and protection of migrant populations in transit  
354 in Agadez-Arlit and Dirkou.

355 However, for a better understanding of the roles played by these different actors during their  
356 deployment in the territory, it is necessary to describe the intervention mechanism put in place  
357 in relation to the meager results they have achieved.

### 358 3.5. Intervention Mechanisms:

359 The implementation of Law 2015-036 was based on a repressive apparatus deliberately  
360 designed to blanket Niger in an attempt to halt all forms of movement related to irregular  
361 migration, both within the country and at its borders. Based on the work of Laura Lambert  
362 (2020) and Rhoumour Ahmet Tchilouta (2023), this apparatus is aligned with the national  
363 defense forces but directed by external security forces according to their own agenda. Even  
364 though we don't know the operational or command structure to understand the level of  
365 dysfunction, it functions according to the following pattern:

366 The Directorate of Territorial Surveillance (DST): it works in collaboration with the joint  
367 investigation team composed of Spanish, French, and Nigerien police officers in the regions  
368 of Agadez, Niamey, Tahoua, and Zinder, led by the International and Ibero-American  
369 Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP). These interventions aim to  
370 combat "irregular migration and human trafficking." However, their missions extend to: "the  
371 collection and analysis of data on land and air traffic of people entering and leaving the city of  
372 Agadez, as well as entry and exit at border crossings."

373

374 The police force is equipped with mobile border control companies (CMCF) deployed by  
375 EUCAP-SAHEL and the IOM. Three of these companies are currently operational in the  
376 Maradi, Konni, and Téra regions, with their primary mission being border management and  
377 security. Plans are underway to establish additional units in the Diffa and Zinder regions. No  
378 such unit is planned for Agadez, as the ECI (Emergency Community Intervention) and the  
379 IOM's mobile border post prototype already exist in Arlit for migrants transiting to Algeria.

380 The gendarmerie has been entrusted with the GAR-SI-Sahel Rapid Action Group, a sub-  
381 regional program involving the G5 Sahel countries and implemented by FILAPP. This

382 program aims to provide the G5 Sahel gendarmerie forces with a coordination tool for  
383 combating irregular migration and human trafficking, as well as to strengthen their  
384 operational capacities for effective territorial control. Implementation is ensured by the Swiss  
385 NGO COGINTA with funding from the FFUA.

386 The National Guard has been equipped with a multi-purpose squadron, whose mandate has  
387 been expanded to include combating human trafficking in remote areas of the country. The  
388 EP-GNN (National Guard Training Center) will also draw on EUCAP Sahel's expertise in this  
389 area and will serve as a liaison between the National Guard and other actors, notably the  
390 CMCF (National Security Councils) and GAR-SI Sahel (Regional Security and Intervention  
391 Groups). These GAR-SI are equipped with the EP-GNN multi-purpose squadron, which is  
392 implemented by COGINTA.

393 Finally, joint commands; eight (8) joint command posts composed of the National Guard, the  
394 police, the gendarmerie, and customs are deployed in the eight (8) regions and established by  
395 CIVIPOL in collaboration with EUCAP-SAHEL.

396 It is also important to note that the experience of mobile border control companies initiated by  
397 the United States was adopted by EUCAP-SAHEL in the following way: The model of  
398 Mobile Border Control Companies (MBCCs), introduced in 2016 by the US military, inspired  
399 EUCAP to create other units. The first unit, funded by the United States and overseen by the  
400 US and the FBI, comprises 250 police officers in the Maradi crossroads of trade and  
401 migration on the border with Nigeria. During the first eight months of 2018, the unit handed  
402 over 110 people to the judicial authorities, including for attempting to enter the country  
403 irregularly. Inspired by this initiative, EUCAP Sahel Niger supported the creation of a second  
404 mobile unit of 252 police officers, which was to be deployed in October 2019 in another  
405 border town with Nigeria, Birni-N'Konni. It will be trained and equipped by EUCAP with the  
406 participation of several European security forces and Frontex, and financed by Germany (€6  
407 million) and the Netherlands (€4 million). A third unit is planned for Zinder.

408 In short, the combination of all these interventions following the implementation of Law  
409 2015-036 has had both positive and negative effects on the living conditions of migrants  
410 through the arrests of smugglers or anyone suspected of being so, on the free movement of  
411 people and their property, including Nigerien nationals, on the number of people rescued by  
412 IOM missions in collaboration with civil protection, on the number of refugees and asylum  
413 seekers, those deported from Libya and Algeria, and on the number of migrants entering and  
414 leaving Nigerien territory. 3.6 Critical Analysis:

415 These incessant pushbacks raise questions about the effectiveness of the implementation of  
416 the free movement agreements between Niger and Algeria, and about the African Union's  
417 capacity to make integration a lever for development. These pushback practices, coupled with  
418 the policy of externalizing European borders to southern neighboring countries, particularly  
419 Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, and supported by massive funding, hinder free  
420 movement between sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb countries, which in recent years  
421 have become the guardians or guinea pigs of the European Union. Otherwise, how can we  
422 understand that despite the growing and real labor needs of these perpetually developing  
423 countries, they are turning their backs on rhetoric about integration for a united Africa, on  
424 humanism, and on the ratification of international human rights instruments, while continually  
425 arresting and detaining human beings who aspire to life and the realization of their dreams?

427 **Conclusion:**

428 Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that the IOM and UNHCR have played a crucial role in  
 429 the fight against irregular migration in Niger. Indeed, the externalization of European policies  
 430 in Africa regarding the fight against irregular migration has dealt a severe blow to Niger,  
 431 particularly in the Agadez region and especially the urban commune. The widespread  
 432 presence of security forces throughout Niger has had a considerable impact on the region.  
 433 Among the key and influential actors in the implementation of Law 2015-036 are large  
 434 international structures such as EUCAP-Sahel, ECI, GAR-SI, IOM, UNHCR and European  
 435 subcontracting companies such as CIVIPOL FIIAP COGINTA which are financed by the EU  
 436 FFU, the UN and countries such as the United States, Japan, for the implementation of a  
 437 security system deliberately conceived from the outside whose objectives are to control the  
 438 territory of Niger, to absolve the State of its sovereign functions in order to immobilize and  
 439 contain all movements of migrants towards the north of Agadez.

440

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