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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-56120

Title: *Roles and responsibilities of the IOM and UNHCR in combating illegal immigration in Niger*

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.....

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality			✓	
Clarity	✓			
Significance		✓		

Reviewer Name: Faheem Abdul Muneeb

Reviewer's Comment

This manuscript examines the roles and responsibilities of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in addressing irregular migration in Niger within the broader context of European migration externalization policies. Situating Niger as a key transit country in Sahel–Mediterranean migration routes, the study explores how international organizations operate at the intersection of humanitarian protection, migration management, and security-oriented border control. Drawing on qualitative methods, documentary analysis, and field observations, the paper highlights the complementary yet distinct mandates of the IOM and UNHCR, while also interrogating the political and institutional constraints shaping their interventions. The topic is highly relevant to debates on migration governance, humanitarianism, sovereignty, and international cooperation in West Africa and beyond.

Scientific Contribution and Empirical Strength

The manuscript's principal contribution lies in its critical and context-sensitive analysis of how humanitarian organizations function within a securitized migration regime. By documenting the evolution

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of IOM and UNHCR interventions following the adoption of Niger's Law 2015-036, the study offers valuable insight into the operational realities of migration management under strong external pressure from the European Union. The empirical sections detailing voluntary return programs, transit centers, profiling committees, and deportation processes—supported by direct testimonies of returned migrants—add significant depth and human dimension to the analysis. These narratives effectively illustrate the socio-economic consequences of forced returns and border externalization policies. While the study does not aim at statistical generalization, the richness of qualitative evidence sufficiently supports its analytical claims.

Methodology and Analytical Approach

The qualitative research design, combining documentary research, online sources, and field-based data collection, is appropriate for examining institutional practices and migrant experiences in a sensitive and complex policy environment. The use of data saturation as a guiding principle in fieldwork enhances methodological credibility. The integration of migrant testimonies with institutional analysis allows for triangulation between official narratives and lived realities. Minor clarification regarding sampling procedures, interview protocols, and ethical safeguards—particularly given the vulnerability of participants—would further strengthen methodological transparency, but these issues do not undermine the overall rigor of the study.

Structure, Style, and Presentation

The manuscript is comprehensive and well documented, reflecting substantial engagement with policy documents, academic literature, and empirical material. Its structure logically progresses from contextual background and conceptual clarification to institutional roles, empirical findings, and critical analysis. However, the paper is lengthy, and several sections—particularly those describing security actors and intervention mechanisms—contain extensive descriptive detail that could be moderately condensed. Streamlining these sections and strengthening analytical synthesis would improve readability and focus. Minor language editing is also recommended to address grammatical inconsistencies and improve clarity, especially in longer narrative passages. These are editorial issues rather than substantive weaknesses.

Final Recommendation

This manuscript provides a timely, empirically grounded, and analytically relevant contribution to the study of migration governance and humanitarian intervention in Niger. It successfully illuminates the

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complex positioning of the IOM and UNHCR within a highly securitized migration regime and raises important normative and policy questions regarding protection, sovereignty, and externalization. With **minor revisions** focused on condensation, editorial refinement, and limited methodological clarification, the manuscript will be well suited for publication.

Decision: Accepted with minor revisions.