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Subject: Sub-Saharan Migrants in the Sinai latest news

Milan, May 20, 2011. In recent months EveryOne Group has received reports of a number of operations being carried out by Egyptian authorities against traffickers. These operations have led to many arrests and a reduction of human trafficking, so much so that today we have news of only small groups of prisoners from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and other sub-Saharan countries still in the hands of kidnappers.

There have been no more sightings of the large groups that were reported in the past, (particularly before the revolution that led to the fall of the Mubarak regime) each of which included up to 250/300 individuals. The authorities of al-Arish - where the headquarters of the governorate of North Sinai is situated - have confirmed that they have strengthened the security forces involved in combating the smuggling of migrants and stepped up the defence of police stations and prisons where in the past gangs of traffickers carried out raids to liberate their accomplices thanks to the superiority of their weapons and means of transport, something that currently seems to have been scaled down. The problem still exists of the "bosses" of human organs, weapons and drugs trafficking, who move unhindered between Egyptian Sinai and the Palestinian Territories. Their names are well known to the Egyptian and international authorities: Abu Khaled, Abu Ahmed, Abu Hitler, the Sawarka family, Aba Abdallah (a Palestinian trafficker known by this honorary title which means "Servant of Allah for Humanity") and Yesuf Bahlul. EveryOne Group has documented the link between these traffickers, jihadist fundamentalism and Arab terrorism, and has repeatedly asked the Palestinian authorities and the Hamas movement (as well as the United Nations, the European Union and other Middle East states) to pursue those responsible for the trafficking of migrants. Several groups of sub-Saharan refugees have been released in recent weeks by the smugglers. Among these the group of Eritreans, Ethiopians and Sudanese whose ransom was paid through an international network whose activities in the Sinai was promoted by EveryOne itself. The scenes following this extraordinary liberation show the migrants being taken in by Israel. The

event was witnessed and filmed by the president of Radio Azzurra, Antonio Di Rosario.

96 refugees were arrested near Eilat yesterday by Israeli security forces after they had been wandering for four days in southern Sinai, fortunately without falling into the hands of traffickers. The mayor of Eilat, Meir Yitzhak Halevy, gave the news and summarized the data on migration in 2011: "So far, 2,600 migrants - most of them sub-Saharan - have managed to reach Israel, including the 500 who crossed the border this month." *

We must point out, though, that the Jewish state has begun the construction of a 250 km long barrier along the border with Egypt to stem this flow.

Our group, together with other NGOs in Israel, has expressed its concern with this project, and is asking the Israeli Government to set up a study and a reception system for those fleeing persecution and in search of asylum. At the same time Israel has approved the project for the construction of a detention centre for illegal migrants who are not entitled to political asylum or international protection. We have asked, for this project too, that NGOs and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees will always have the opportunity to meet with the migrants and ensure their rights are being respected.

* <http://english.ahram.org.eg/ / NewsContent/2/8/12415/World/Region/-African-migrants-detained-entering-Israel.aspx>



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