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## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **A statement by the Network of African national human rights institutions (NANHRI) on the death of over 23 migrants in Morocco**

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**June 28, 2022**

**Harare, Zimbabwe**

The Network of African National Human Rights institutions (NANHRI) is deeply shocked and appalled by reports of the death of more than 23 migrants and injuries to many others including security officers in Morocco's Nador region on June 24, 2022.

It is deeply concerning that in spite of the numerous calls for a human-rights based approach to migration, as guided by the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), emigration from Africa to Europe has remained tragic. The Mediterranean Sea is now a grave for many of our youth fleeing from the harsh economic and political conditions in their countries of origin, including armed conflicts.

In the last six months, about 600 asylum seekers, refugees and migrants have perished in the Mediterranean Sea alone, according to the International Organisation for Migration<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees<sup>2</sup> reported 3,231 and 1,881 deaths or missing in the year 2021 and 2020 respectively. Similarly, in 2019, at least 1,510 cases of deaths or missing migrants were reported in the Mediterranean Sea. These numbers exclude those who perish en-route to the gates of Europe. These grim statistics, which have been on the rise over the last three years, should worry all authorities charged with the responsibility for respecting and protecting the sanctity of life. With the economic hardships in Africa and the globe aggravated by the war in Ukraine, the irregular migration trend is likely to get worse.

It is disheartening to note that African and European States have resorted to violence in their response to an inevitable phenomenon, a situation that puts the security agents and the migrants at friction. It is degrading, dehumanising and disturbing when excess force is

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/40816/600-people-die-crossing-mediterranean-so-far-in-2022#:~:text=The%20International%20Organization%20for%20Migration,highest%20such%20figure%20since%202014.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/6/62a2f90a1a/unhcr-data-visualization-mediterranean-crossings-charts-rising-death-toll.html>

applied on already vulnerable people yet success in deterring the mass movement remains dismal.

***We, the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions:***

- Reiterate the call of several stakeholders, including United Nations bodies to conduct a prompt and thorough investigation into the death of migrants and hold those responsible to account;
- Specifically call upon the African Union to treat this matter as very urgent and consider constituting and dispatching a team of investigators drawn from various countries. Such a taskforce should comprise the NHRC of Morocco, which is also the chair of the NANHRI Working Group on Migration;
- Recommend that the findings of the investigations inform short term, medium-term and long-term solutions, complemented by the GCM, to the migration crisis in the northern frontier and across the continent;
- Reiterate our full support to the National Human Rights Council of Morocco for establishing a fact-finding mission to probe the incident and we will be keen to receiving findings;
- Call on African and European Union States to expand the pathways for safe orderly and regular migration and guarantee and respect the right to seek and receive asylum;
- Call on all States to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and to commit to implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Meanwhile, we sincerely condole with the families and relatives of the casualties of this latest brutality and wish for quickest recovery of the injured.

Dr Elasto H. Mugwadi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Mugwadi', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

Chairperson, NANHRI