Introduction

In March 2011, 72 men, women and small children from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Nigeria escaped the violence-ridden Libyan capital of Tripoli as they boarded a small boat set to carry them to the Italian island of Lampedusa. Quickly, though, the boat’s fuel tanks ran dry and they began to drift aimlessly around on the vast Mediterranean Sea. Survivors later told of how an Italian helicopter marked “army” had dropped water and cookies onto the boat and then left again. Several days later, two helicopters from a nearby French warship also flew over the boat, and even though the passengers held up two small babies to the sky in order to show their desperate plight, these pilots also turned away. Despite the Ghanian captain’s repeated satellite phone calls for help, no help emerged from a Mediterranean Sea filled with NATO warships helping to oust the Libyan dictator Gaddafi. As one day followed the other, the passengers of the boat began to starve to death. An Ethiopian survivor told how “Every morning we would wake up and find more bodies, which we would leave for 24 hours and then throw away.” As the parents of the two small babies died, the survivors saved a bottle of water to keep the babies alive, but to no avail. They also passed away two days later. When the boat finally, after 16 days, washed back up on the shores of Libya, 61 of its 72 passengers had died.¹

This tragic case is not unique. More than a thousand people drowned in the Mediterranean following the North African spring and, according to the NGO United Against Racism, 15,551 people have died since 1993 in the attempt

to reach European territory (United Against Racism website).\textsuperscript{2} The hazardous conditions facing migrants in the Euro-African borderlands illustrate the contested nature of immigration and border control, and how border control posits a moral and political dilemma between states’ rights to sovereign discretion over their borders on the one hand and migrants’ right to seek and be granted protection in states’ other than their own. Globally speaking, this tension has grown since the end of the cold war and has created several geopolitical hot spots, such as the US-Mexican border, the Mediterranean Sea and the Maghreb at the EU’s southern borderlands. In this chapter I examine the state of migrants’ rights in the Euro-African borderlands.

The chapter is structured in the following manner: First I problematize a conventional and widespread view on border control by way of critical geography and the conceptual framework of \textit{borderscapes}. Then I develop this framework by discussing the EU’s cooperation with third countries on border control as externalization and notes an often-stated EU justification for this policy. At this point I then illustrate how the borderscape model is capable of appraising a number of central and worrisome developments and restructuring processes, which have taken place in the management of the EU borders. Thus, I trace and discuss the European policy drive to export migrant detention camps to North Africa in the period up to the rebellions, which toppled Maghreb rulers like Gaddafi, Ben Ali and Mubarrak. Thereafter, I complement these findings with attention to the creation and major operations of the Frontex Agency, and, finally, how the use of deportations has been systematized and the dynamics of the EUROSUR system.

At the end I conclude that analyses of these reconfigurations of the EU borderscapes’ control infrastructure show how the union’s border control is multi-local, relational and does not create protection elsewhere for vulner-

\textsuperscript{2} United Against Racism reports that while 2000 people had died up until mid-2001, that number increased to 3026 by 2002, to 3750 by 2003, 4500 by 2004, 6300 by 2005, 7182 by 2006, 8800 by 2007, 11,105 by 2008 and 13,250 by 2009, 13,621 by 2010 and 15,551 by mid-2011. Analyzing the numbers between 2001 and 2009 two significant trends stand out: While 4500 people died trying to reach European territory from 1993 to 2004, the number reached 11,051 fatalities between 2005 to 2011. Moreover, while the average annual rate of migrant fatalities from 2001 to 2004 was 833, it rose to 1688 in the years from 2008 to 2011. These numbers, moreover, are almost certainly too low as EU Member States are reluctant to undertake any systematic registration of fatalities connected with their border control and because of the massive difficulties of media sources in gathering information on fatalities among European-bound migrants, which occur long before these get close to European territory. (United Against Racism website. Available at: http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/pages/underframeFatalRealitiesFortressEurope.htm).