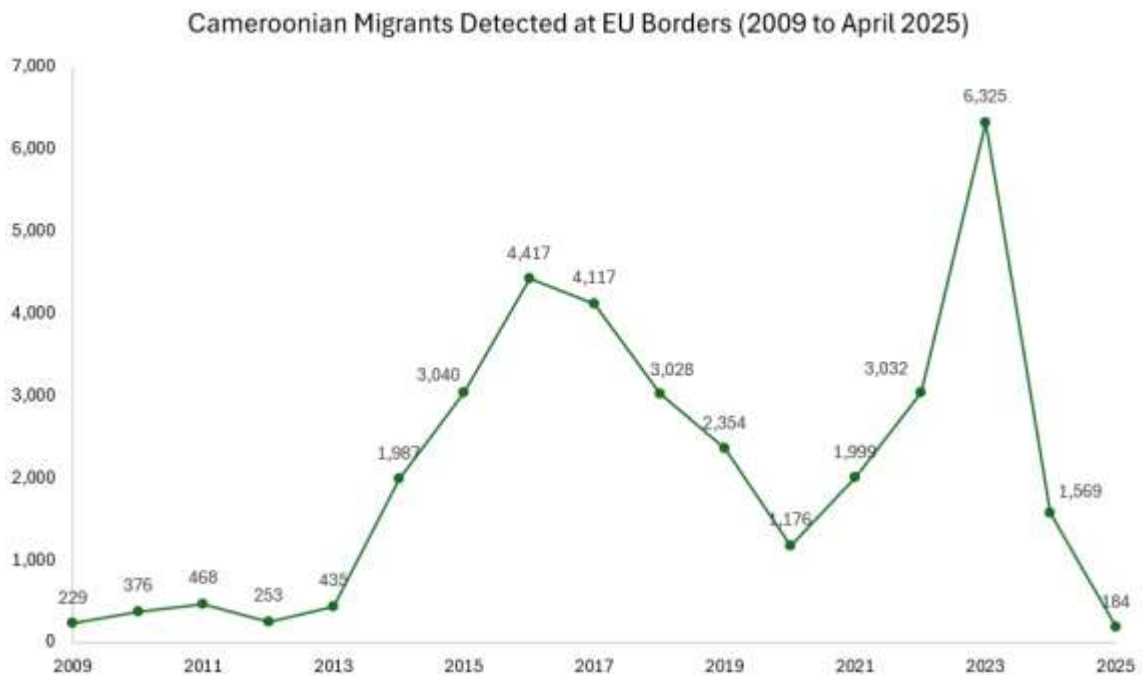




July 2025

Forecast: Potential for More Iranian Migration

- Iran remains one of the least desirable places on earth to live due to poverty, authoritarianism, and a lack of political freedom.
- COVID-19 aggravated the economic pressure in Iran, and the "Women Life Freedom" movement and its aftermath increased "push factor" pressure.
- Since October 7th, 2023, Iran has been in essentially open war with Israel. This has included attacks on Iran itself, with the prospect of more future strikes.
- Statistics show that Iranians frequently attempt to escape their country, and this can often ebb and flow in response to political and economic developments in the Middle East, such as the Arab Spring.
- European policy announcements can and do drive Iranian migration patterns, and any announcements in this area would likely influence movements.



Data Source: FRONTEX. Chart by Orunmila Research.

Executive Summary

Iran is a country characterized by poverty, political authoritarianism, and most recently, war. Since the October 7th attacks in 2023, Iran has been at war with Israel. This could well drive



more Iranians to seek to migrate outwards to escape poverty, war, and the increasingly harsh political crackdowns of the regime. Interestingly, analysis of migrant statistics in the recent past has shown Iranians are detected in higher numbers when events similar to those currently unfolding occur. Iranian migration also tends to follow announcements by European governments, such as the visa-free travel deal with Serbia and Iran that helped increase migration via the Balkans route. English Channel data show that Iranians have been strongly represented in irregular migrant flows. We predict that Iranians will migrate in greater numbers in the near future.

Analysis and Implications

Unemployment and Economic Pressure in Iran Disproportionately Impacts Young People

Around 70 percent of the unemployed population of Iran are young people (18-35 years-old).(i) This population is also the section that is most young and fit, and therefore most able to make an irregular journey out of Iran.

Poverty and Inflation Continue to Act as Push Factors

Since 2020, Iran has seen inflation rates of around 35-40 percent per year, which severely undercuts the ability of working people to meet the cost of living.(ii) This adds to the economic incentives to leave the country altogether.

Iranian Migration to Europe Spiked in 2015

In 2015, FRONTEX data show that 26,808 Iranians were detected at EU borders, a 5,000 percent increase on the previous year.(iii) The highest year on record for Iranian migration to Europe was 2015. The war in Syria, a loose border regime in Turkey, and the Iranian government's desire to allow outward migration to release domestic pressure all explain this.

European Policy Announcements Can Drive Iranian Migration

In 2010, Serbia announced visa-free travel for Iranians. This saw the number of Iranians encountered in Europe double between 2009 and 2010.(iv) As several European countries debate refugee policies easing Palestinian migration, Iranians may also be offered such refugee schemes, which would drive up numbers.

Increasing Repression in Iran May Push People to Leave

The aftermath of the Women Life Freedom protests, and the crackdown on critics of the regime in the years since, has created an increasingly repressive atmosphere. Executions,



many of them politically motivated, have increased, and by 2025, more executions took place than the whole of 2022.(v) This will increase the desire to leave, especially given the physical danger posed to dissidents for speaking out.

Orunmila Research is a consultancy specializing in migration analysis, international affairs, and geopolitical risk. We provide independent, evidence-based, data-driven analysis at the intersection of migration, conflict, and policy. We help governments, NGOs, and institutions understand the deeper, complex drivers behind border movements and instability to allow for a more informed and impactful debate.

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