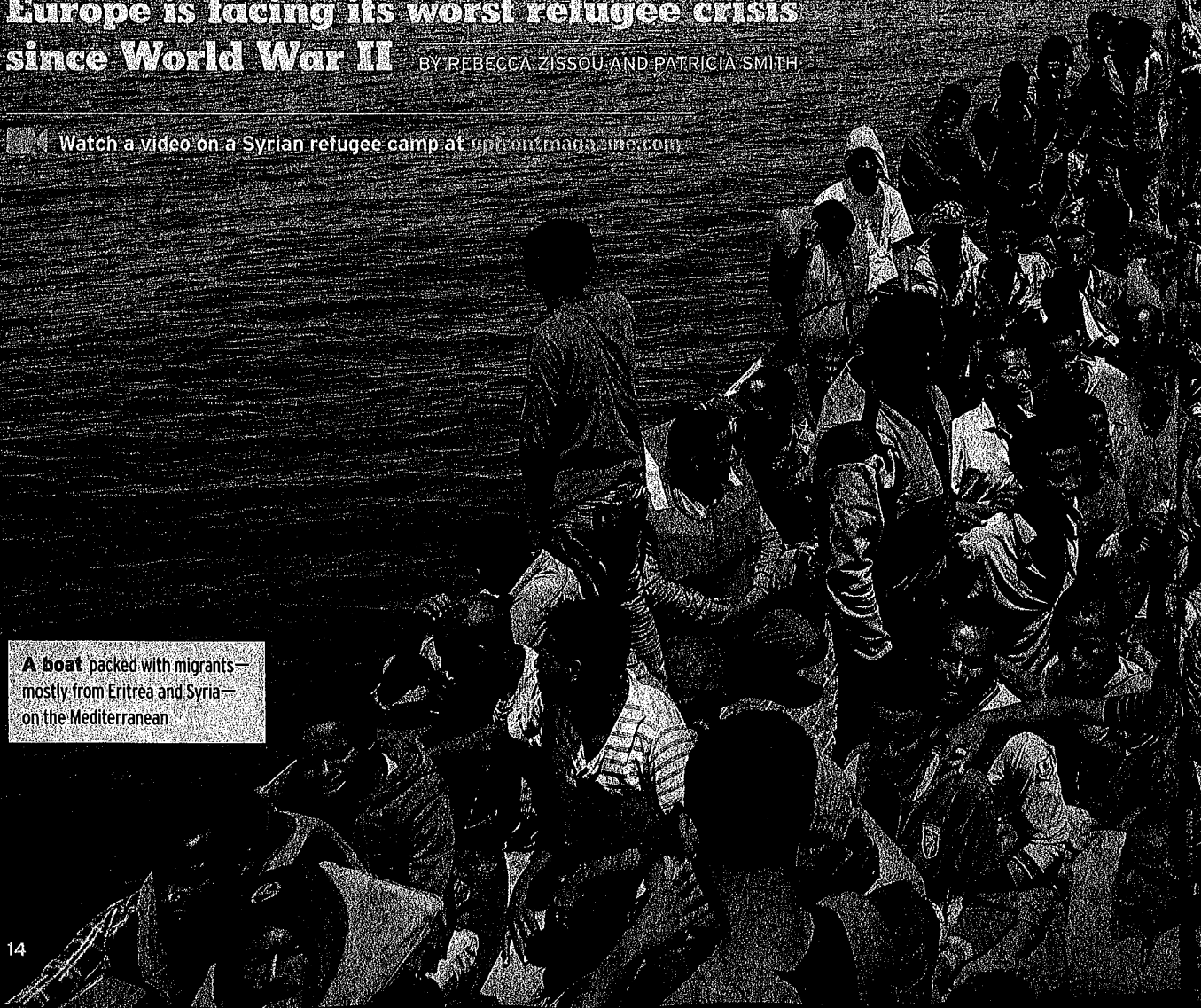


# The Migrant Crisis

**With hundreds of thousands fleeing war and poverty, Europe is facing its worst refugee crisis since World War II** BY REBECCA ZISSOU AND PATRICIA SMITH

Watch a video on a Syrian refugee camp at [up.ion/magazine.com](http://up.ion/magazine.com)

A boat packed with migrants—mostly from Eritrea and Syria—on the Mediterranean



**E**arly one morning this spring, 15-year-old Ali\* sat in an inflatable plastic boat on the Mediterranean Sea. It had been three months since he left his home in Somalia in the back of a pickup truck. Desperate to escape the violence and poverty there, he'd arranged for smugglers to take him 4,400 miles across the African desert to the coast of Libya.

Now, crammed inside the small boat with about 70 other migrants, he dreamed of starting a new life in Europe, a couple hundred miles away.

But after a few hours at sea, a hole appeared in the front of the boat and air started leaking out. Some of the passengers tried desperately to cover the opening, while others used a satellite phone to call the Italian coast guard. It took six hours for help to arrive.

"Those six hours were the worst moments of my life," says Ali, who survived, along with everyone else on board.

Ali and his fellow travelers represent just a fraction of the growing number of desperate migrants who have attempted to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe this year. Many are escaping

violence, poverty, or persecution in the Middle East and Africa. According to the United Nations, more than 350,000 migrants have arrived in Europe by boat so far in 2015.

Most, like Ali, are packed into rickety vessels that were never meant for the high seas. The boats often lack life jackets and navigation equipment. Severely overloaded, many have capsized, and more than 2,700 people have drowned this year alone.

In September, Abdullah Kurdi, a refugee from Syria, lost his wife and two young sons when the raft smugglers had provided to take them from Turkey to Greece flipped over and they drowned. The tragic image of Kurdi's 3-year-old son lying face down on a Turkish beach shot around the world on social media. The photo encapsulated the horror of the situation and the human cost of Europe's failure to come up with a coordinated response to the migrant crisis.

"There is a new realization," says Prime Minister Joseph Muscat of Malta, "that if Europe doesn't act as a team, history will judge it very harshly."

With tens of thousands of migrants moving through Europe—

\*Ali's name has been changed to protect his privacy.



many fleeing wars in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan—the situation has become more chaotic and desperate by the day. In August, the decomposing bodies of 71 migrants were found in the back of a truck parked on the side of the road in Austria. At Budapest's main train station, Hungarian police struggled to hold back thousands of migrants determined to get on trains bound for Germany, which has Europe's strongest economy and has been more generous than many other countries in receiving the refugees.

The migrants are also going by bus, paying smugglers to be loaded into trucks, and in some cases walking. Many are coming north from Greece, sneaking across borders through the Balkans, toward Hungary, which is part of the European Union (see map, below).

Once inside the E.U., the migrants have moved relatively freely since there have been no border checks since 1995. But that seems to be changing as countries like Germany and Austria introduce border checks to control the flow of migrants. For months, the 28 E.U. countries have been bickering over what to do, so there's been little coordinated response to the unfolding disaster.

### Most Refugees Since WWII

There's also mounting pressure for the United States to take more of the migrants. Despite concerns that terrorists could attempt to get into the country among the refugees, President Obama has pledged to accept 10,000 Syrians over the next year.



Migrants storm a train at Keleti Station in Budapest, Hungary, in August.

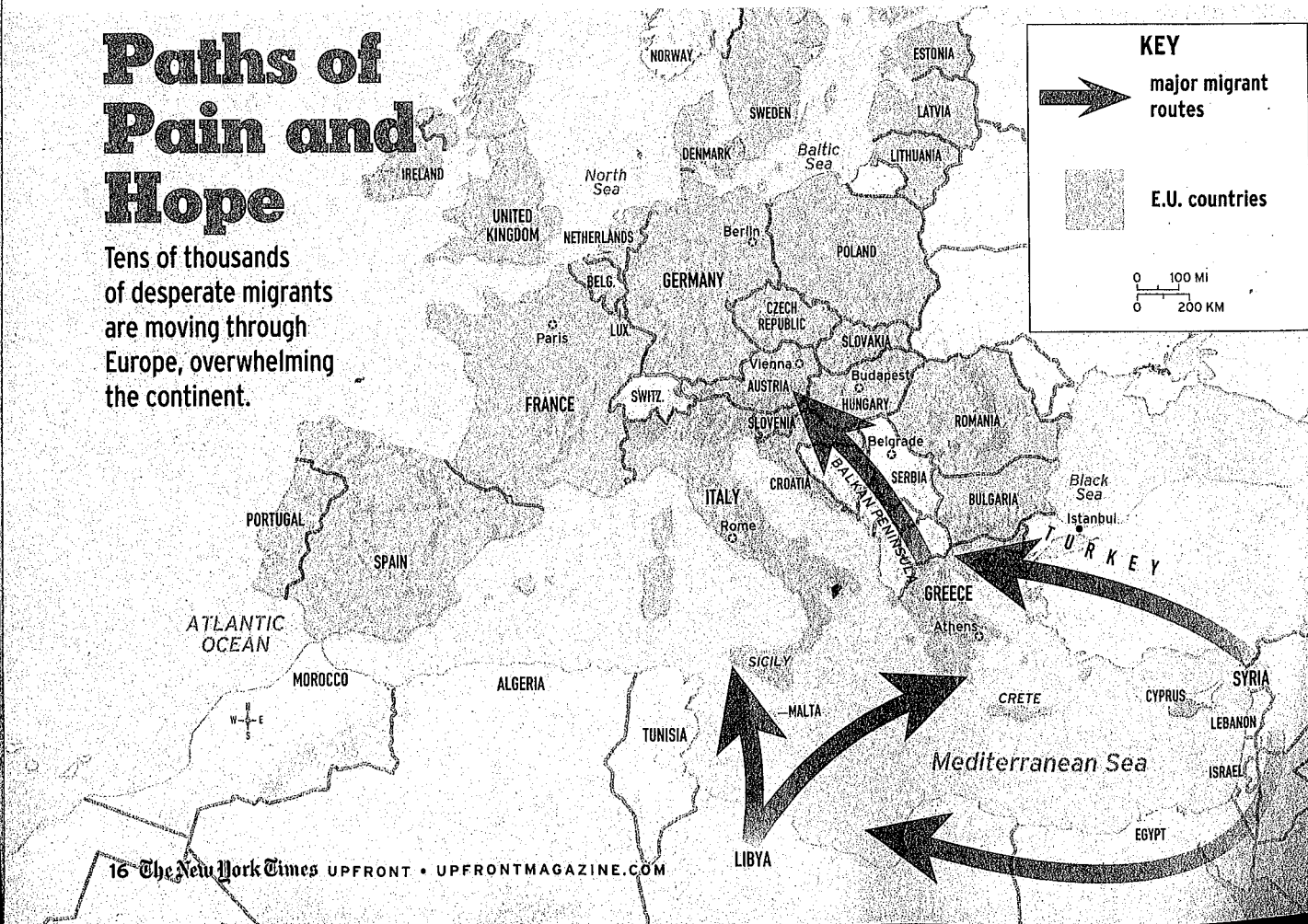
The struggles of migrants are nothing new, but the scope of the current wave is vast. Today, the U.N. estimates that nearly 60 million people are displaced worldwide—more than at any other time since World War II (1939-45).

Syria's violent civil war, which is tearing that nation apart, is responsible for a sizable portion of the migrant crisis. Since the fighting began in 2011, more than 250,000 people have been killed, 7.6 million have been displaced within Syria, and another 4 million have fled the country.

Thousands of others are running from poor, unstable countries in Africa. In Somalia, where Ali was born, a terror-

## Paths of Pain and Hope

Tens of thousands of desperate migrants are moving through Europe, overwhelming the continent.





**Crawling under razor wire on the border between Serbia and Hungary**

ist group known as al-Shabaab has been wreaking havoc for years. The group's aim: to overthrow the country's Western-backed government and impose strict Islamic law.

"In my country, there is no peace," says Ali.

In January, Ali decided that it was finally time to flee. He left Somalia with a 19-year-old friend, whose father paid smugglers to take the two teens to Libya. As they traveled north through the Sahara Desert—where temperatures can reach as high as 110 degrees Fahrenheit—they were given little food or water. Then one day, Ali's friend fell out of the back of the pickup truck as it sped through the Sahara.

"[He] didn't make it," says Ali. "We buried him in the desert."

Weeks later, Ali arrived in Libya alone and afraid. Security along the Mediterranean coast of this North African country is virtually nonexistent, allowing smugglers to operate freely. Conor Fortune of Amnesty International says smuggling networks in Libya charge thousands of dollars for a spot on a ship.

"They promise that it'll be a very sturdy, seaworthy boat," he says. "But those often turn out to be false promises."

Instead, hundreds of people are crammed onto small vessels made out of wood or plastic. The smugglers often abandon the ships, says Fortune, leaving the passengers to fend for themselves.

"The boats don't have enough fuel to make it across," he says. "They end up drifting on the high seas for days on end."

### 'Only Going to Get Worse'

For the migrants who reach Europe, the future is unclear. Some make their way north toward whatever country they hope to settle in, often using social media to help guide them (*see box, above*). Others, like Ali, are taken to refugee centers, where they receive food, shelter, and medical care. Some end up staying there for months while European officials decide their fates.

Many of the people who wind up being classified as refugees—those escaping war or persecution at home—may be granted asylum, which allows them to stay in Europe permanently. But thousands of other migrants are eventually sent back.

There's a growing reluctance among European leaders to accept newcomers. With unemployment rates already stagger-

## Why Smartphones Are a Migrant's Best Friend

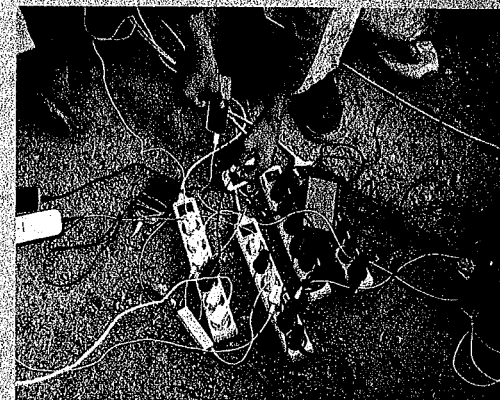
The migrants flooding into Europe certainly need food, water, and shelter. But there's something else they swear they can't live without: a smartphone charging station.

"Every time I go to a new country, I buy a SIM card and activate the Internet and download the map to locate myself," said Osama Aljaseem, a 32-year-old music teacher from Syria, as he sat in Belgrade, Serbia, considering his next move northward.

Technology has transformed this migrant crisis. Smartphone maps, social media, and WhatsApp have become essential tools. Migrants depend on them to post real-time updates about

routes, arrests, border guard movements, and transport, as well as places to stay and prices, while keeping in touch with family and friends.

Aid agencies are responding to the need: The U.N. has distributed more than 33,000 SIM cards and 85,000 solar lanterns to use as charging stations.



**Afghan migrants charge their phones in France.**

ingly high in several southern European countries—including 25 percent in Greece, which barely avoided bankruptcy this summer—many people fear having to also compete with the migrants for jobs. Some worry that welcoming refugees encourages others to try to enter Europe illegally. (This is similar to the argument in the U.S. that providing some kind of legal status for undocumented immigrants will only encourage more illegal immigration.) Fear of the newcomers has led Hungary to build a wall along its border with Serbia to keep migrants out and led Denmark to put ads in Lebanese newspapers warning Syrian refugees that they would not be welcome.

Despite the challenges, humanitarian groups say much more needs to be done.

"The scale of the displacement crisis is enormous and is only going to get worse," says Alexander Betts, a professor of refugee studies at the University of Oxford, in the United Kingdom.

For Ali, the dangerous journey has been worth it. After reaching Italy, he's looking forward to starting over. He hopes he's allowed to stay so he can continue his education and find a job.

His goal is one countless immigrants have pursued throughout history. "I'm looking for a better life," he says. ◉

*With reporting by Matthew Brunwasser of The New York Times.*

## Determine Word Meaning

### Word Watch

Use context clues to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words as you read the article, and jot down your inferred meanings. After reading the article, use a dictionary to check meanings and write those down too. Note each word's part of speech and origin, if available.

**WORD:** \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_ Part of speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Inferred meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Word origin or root: \_\_\_\_\_

**WORD:** \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_ Part of speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Inferred meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Word origin or root: \_\_\_\_\_

**WORD:** \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_ Part of speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Inferred meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Word origin or root: \_\_\_\_\_

**WORD:** \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_ Part of speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Inferred meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Word origin or root: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Word Watch (continued)**

**WORD:** \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_ Part of speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Inferred meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary definition: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Word origin or root: \_\_\_\_\_

**WORD:** \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_ Part of speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Inferred meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary definition: \_\_\_\_\_

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Word origin or root: \_\_\_\_\_

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**CLOSE READING**

For use with "The Migrant Crisis" on p. 14 of the magazine

# Up Close

## The Migrant Crisis

Read the article (on pages 14-17) closely, then answer each question below. Write two to five sentences for each response, using evidence from the text to support your answers. Use a separate sheet of paper if you need more space.

**1.** Summarize the article's central idea.

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**2.** What is the author's purpose in sharing the anecdote about 15-year-old Ali (the first four paragraphs of the article)?

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**3.** Why do you think many people, like Malta's Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, say that Europe must "act as a team" to address the refugee crisis?

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**4.** Use context clues in the article to distinguish between "migrants" and "refugees."

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**5.** What evidence does the author provide to support the claim that "there's a growing reluctance among European leaders to accept newcomers"?

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**6.** Study the map that appears with the article. What does it add to your understanding of the topic?

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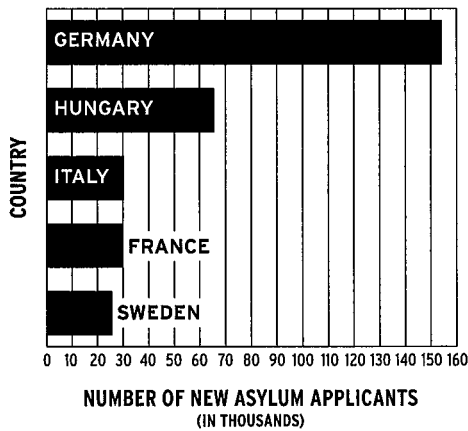
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# Knocking on Europe's Doors

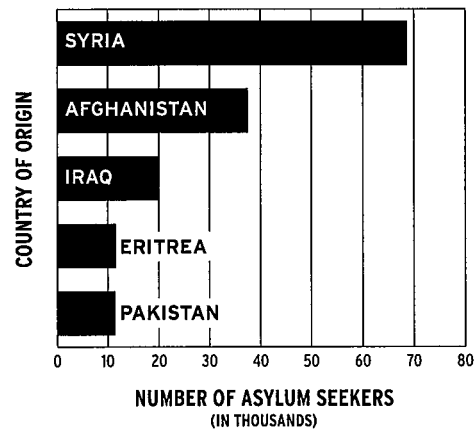
Europe is facing a migrant crisis (see article, p. 14). Hundreds of thousands of migrants fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and Africa have arrived there in 2015. To legally remain in any of the 28 member nations of the European Union, migrants must apply for asylum, or protection. Many apply in the nations where they arrive. Others try to reach nations they think will be more accommodating.

The graph on the left shows the European countries that had the most asylum applicants from January 2015 through June 2015. The graph on the right shows selected countries of origin for Europe's asylum seekers during that period.

**TOP EUROPEAN DESTINATION COUNTRIES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS**



**SELECTED COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS IN EUROPE**



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SOURCE: UNICEF (NOTE: DATA FOR CHINA IS NOT INCLUDED ON GRAPH.)

**ANALYZE THE GRAPH**

- The nation that received the second-highest number of asylum applicants was \_\_\_\_.
  - Syria was the country of origin for \_\_\_\_.
  - Italy received \_\_\_\_.
  - During this time, Germany granted some form of legal protection to 44 percent, or about \_\_\_\_, of its applicants.
  - Almost three fourths of the asylum seekers from Pakistan, or about \_\_\_\_, had their applications rejected.
- |   |   |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Afghanistan</li> <li>Hungary</li> <li>France</li> <li>Eritrea</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>57,000 migrants</li> <li>81,000 migrants</li> <li>almost twice as many migrants as Afghanistan</li> <li>almost three times as many migrants as Pakistan</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>about 5,000 applicants than Sweden</li> <li>about the same number of applicants as France</li> <li>about 30,000 applicants</li> <li>all of the above</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>34,000</li> <li>42,000</li> <li>67,000</li> <li>83,000</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8,000</li> <li>10,000</li> <li>11,000</li> <li>none of the above</li> </ol> |
|---|---|--|--|--|

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What factors should be considered when deciding whether to grant migrants asylum or send them back?
- Some countries have rejected most asylum seekers. How might that affect neighboring nations?
- German Chancellor Angela Merkel has called for European Union countries to work together toward a "fair distribution" of refugees. Do you think a fair distribution would mean an equal number of refugees in each country? Explain. Do you think Merkel's goal of a unified plan is realistic?





JASON FLORIO

### **Analyze the Photo**

(See pp. 14-15 in magazine.)

- 1.** How would you describe the conditions on this boat carrying migrants across the Mediterranean?
- 2.** What do you notice about the life vests? Does this surprise you? Explain.
- 3.** What factors do you think might motivate a person to migrate under conditions like these?

### **ESSAY**

In the past year, thousands of migrants have died in boats on the Mediterranean. Who do you think should bear the responsibility for protecting migrants like these?

## The Migrant Crisis

Choose the best answer for each of the following questions.

### CHECK COMPREHENSION

- 1. According to the article, many of the migrants arriving in Europe have been fleeing a civil war in**
  - a Somalia.
  - b Greece.
  - c Syria.
  - d Libya.
- 2. Which European country is building a wall to keep migrants out?**
  - a Sweden
  - b Hungary
  - c Greece
  - d Spain
- 3. According to the article, most of the migrants arriving in Europe have crossed the**
  - a Atlantic Ocean.
  - b Sahara Desert.
  - c Mediterranean Sea.
  - d Baltic Sea.
- 4. For migrants, what is the main benefit of receiving asylum?**
  - a It allows them to travel safely to Europe through international waters.
  - b It helps them locate food and water.
  - c It helps them sneak past the strict border checks between European Union nations.
  - d It allows them to stay in Europe permanently.

### ANALYZE THE TEXT

- 5. You can infer that \_\_\_ are profiting from the wave of migrants fleeing the Middle East and Africa.**
  - a refugee centers
  - b American corporations
  - c European officials
  - d smugglers
- 6. Which sentence from the article supports your answer to question 5?**
  - a "Despite the challenges, humanitarian groups say much more needs to be done."
  - b "... smuggling networks in Libya charge thousands of dollars for a spot on a ship."
  - c "President Obama has pledged to accept 10,000 Syrians over the next year."
  - d "Others, like Ali, are taken to refugee centers, where they receive food, shelter, and medical care."
- 7. The author discusses the terrorist group al-Shabaab to**
  - a show why many migrants have left Somalia.
  - b illustrate a danger boats face on the Mediterranean.
  - c explain the origins of the civil war in Syria.
  - d none of the above
- 8. In the article, Prime Minister Muscat of Malta says "if Europe doesn't act as a team, history will judge it very harshly." His tone can be described as**
  - a complimentary.
  - b sarcastic.
  - c sentimental.
  - d urgent.

### IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS Please use the other side of this paper for your responses.

- 9. Why do you think the difficult journey is worth it for migrants like Ali?**
- 10. Why do you think professor Alexander Betts argues that the migrant crisis "is only going to get worse"? Do you agree? Why or why not?**