



Roundtable II: Responses by Alexandra Ricard-Guay

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What are the intended/unintended consequences of anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking policies?

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The migration context within the Central Mediterranean route lays bare not only the strong interconnections (and at times confusion) between trafficking and smuggling, but also the intersection of asylum flows and trafficking. Policies in each of these areas have implications, collateral or not, on the others.

Looking at the situation in Italy, two types of situations illustrate the challenges of the trafficking/smuggling nexus in gaining or being denied international protection. First, the phenomenon of trafficking involving Nigerian women and girls (far from new in Italy) has become a prime example of how smuggling and



trafficking networks are superimposed on one another, and of how the asylum and irregular migration channels are being used by traffickers.

The IOM estimates extremely high numbers of potential trafficking victims in Nigeria, and being Nigerian and a woman (or girl) has become a key trafficking indicator. This has the effect of overshadowing other vulnerable groups and forms of trafficking, and poses the risk of labelling one group as being primarily a victim.

Further, there is a hierarchy of claims for international protection: refusing to self-identify as a victim of trafficking diminishes the potential of getting international protection. Second, a delicate tension arises in situations where migrants are accused of smuggling, because they have taken part in driving the boat for example. Such situations are becoming more frequent, and as investigative actions start in the search and rescue operations, they jeopardize fair access to international protection.

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