

Illegal Migration to Europe: The Case of Algerian Haraga

1. Introduction

"Better Eaten by the Fish than by the Worms" is the slogan of the Algerian haraga who are ready to die in the Sea to reach the land where success is possible: Europe. This poster offers a general insight into this phenomenon.

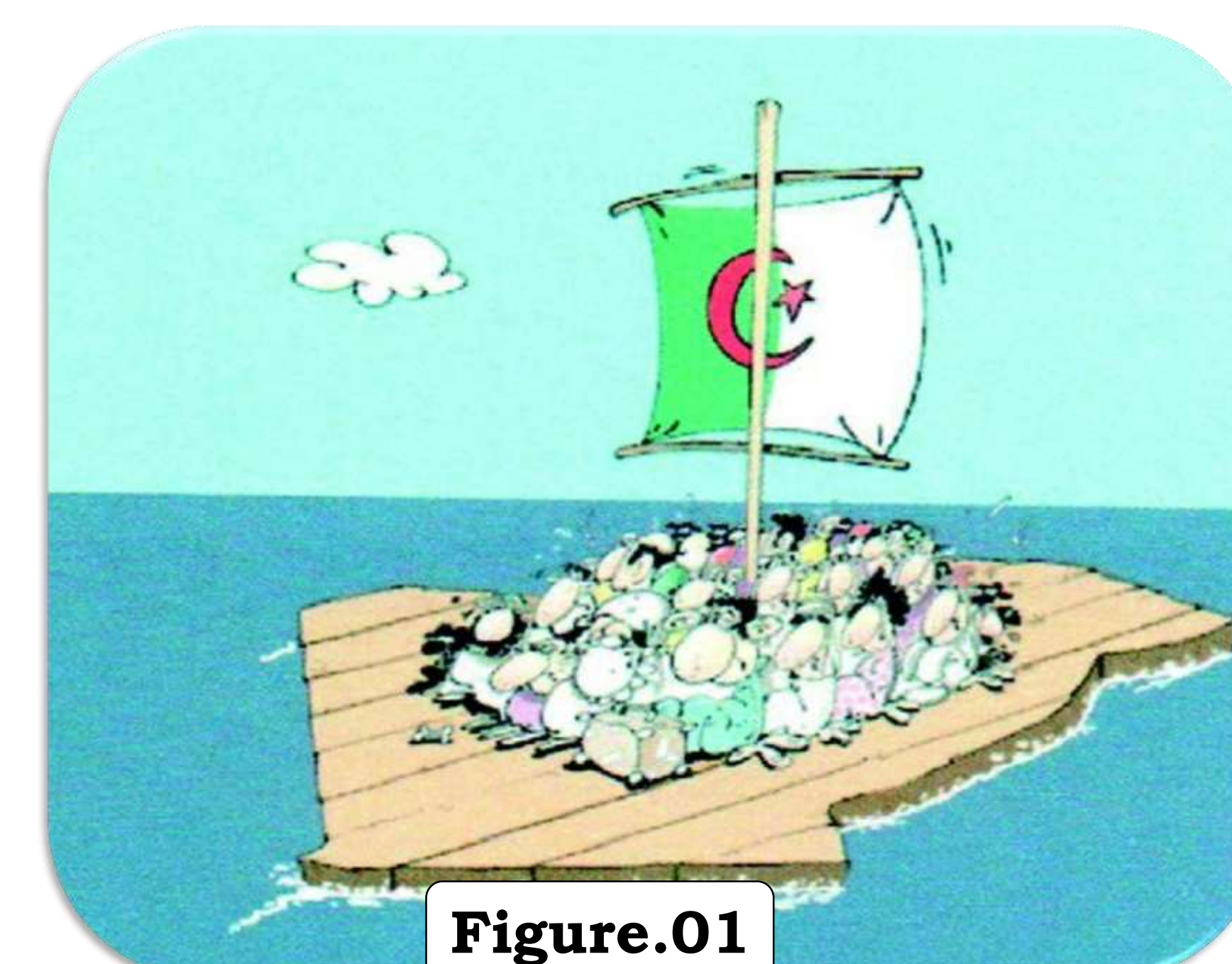


Figure.01

2. What is "Haraga"? What are its Causes?

Haraga (noun) is a type of irregular migration. In the Maghrebi dialect, haraga (adjective) means literally those who burn the borders (figure.01) and "figuratively those who burn their papers to avoid deportation once in Europe"¹. These border burners, who leave the country on fishing boats, are heroes for the Algerians but criminals for the Algerian authorities.

Causes: "Unemployment, the lack of housing, the poor infrastructures, the corruption, the elite's contempt of the poorer groups, the high cost of living, restrictive migration policies"² and social media.



Figure.02

3. Highlighting the Role of Social Media in Encouraging the Haraga:

Social media play a crucial role in encouraging people to cross the Mediterranean Sea illegally. While some platforms share the image of a beautiful life in Europe, other ones provide information on how to leave Algeria to France illegally (e.g. the amount of money needed, what to do upon arrival, getting a job & accommodation, arranged marriages for papers, etc.) Recent activities on Instagram of the so-called Algerian influencers who are living in Europe, France mainly, has contributed to the construction of the new image of freedom and success and, thus, jealousy to live the same life. They are sharing many details concerning city-breaks in Europe, fashion, health and beauty details. They explain indirectly that it is not expensive to afford the same happy life. However, on YouTube and Facebook, the Haraga post many videos that they filmed during their haraga to Europe³. While showing off their happiness, they narrate how they crossed to France either from Spain, Italy, Greece or Turkey. As a result, all these daily posts on social media are increasingly fueling "the desire to leave".

4. The Covid-19 Haraga Scandal

Despite the lockdown restrictions in Algeria following the outbreak of coronavirus in the country, 400 haraga reached Spanish shores on 29 July 2020. Spanish authorities registered 7 cases of covid-19 among the ones they rescued⁴. Abroad the 31 boats of the haraga, there were a pregnant woman, a father and his toddler (figure.02). Other subsequent haraga attempts followed and the most recent one was early this week. This strong desire to flee to Europe during the pandemic put the new government under harsh criticism from its people and urges us to reflect on the post-Hirak period in Algeria.

5. Conclusion

To deal with the issue of haraga, the Algerian government has been trying to reduce the level of unemployment in the country by offering loans for small business and by criminalising haraga. However, the influence of social media is so strong that nothing seems to work and the desire to leave is getting stronger as the country is struggling with corruption economically and politically.

References:

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5. Figure.01, <https://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/2827?lang=ar>
6. Figure. 02, <https://arabic.euronews.com/2020/07/27/more-than-400-illegal-immigrants-arrive-from-algeria-to-spain-within-24-hours>