With the "migration crisis", in 2012 - 2015, citizens from the Horn of Africa have been arriving irregularly in Europe in unprecedented numbers, whilst featuring disproportionately amongst the fatalities. This has prompted the launch of the Khartoum Process, a partnership between the 28 member states of the European Union (EU) and East and North African states, to respond to human smuggling and trafficking. This brief critically and unfavourably evaluates this framework. The Khartoum Process is not only unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes, but, more importantly, it is likely to pose a risk to the better governance and development of the Horn of Africa.
The Human Conveyor Belt Broken

Jointly with the Institute for Security Studies, the Global Initiative published The Khartoum process (Nov 2016) as part of a research project on human smuggling from Africa to Europe, funded by the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF). Our research team sat down with smugglers themselves in Libya, Turkey, in the Sahel and in Sub-Saharan Africa to understand who are the smugglers behind Europe’s migration crisis, to understand how they operate, what drew them into the trade, and how they are responding to international community efforts to end illicit migration. The Khartoum Process created a platform for international engagement on an issue that is both urgent and, by its very nature, of international concern. There are various projects and initiatives being carried out under this framework, many of which are still at relatively early stages of implementation.

Smuggling and trafficking in human beings has developed into a transnational business operated by criminal networks, whose members often come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Within this context, those interviewed made a clear distinction between smuggling and trafficking. Most saw at least some smuggling as a form of protection and assistance; although they also recognised that abuses occurred, particularly where people fell into the hands of traffickers.