

**MMC Asia and the Pacific**

**QUARTER 4 2024**



# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Asia and the Pacific

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers Asia and the Pacific. The core countries of focus for this region are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Australia. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any of the countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels.

For more information on MMC and the quarterly updates from other regions, visit [mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and subscribe to the [MMC newsletter](#) to receive our latest research. Follow us on BlueSky [@mixedmigration.org](#), on X [@Mixed\\_Migration](#) and LinkedIn [@mixedmigration-centre](#).

### **MMC's understanding of mixed migration**

"Mixed migration" refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people engaged in mixed migration have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Mixed migration describes migrants travelling along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly, and wholly or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

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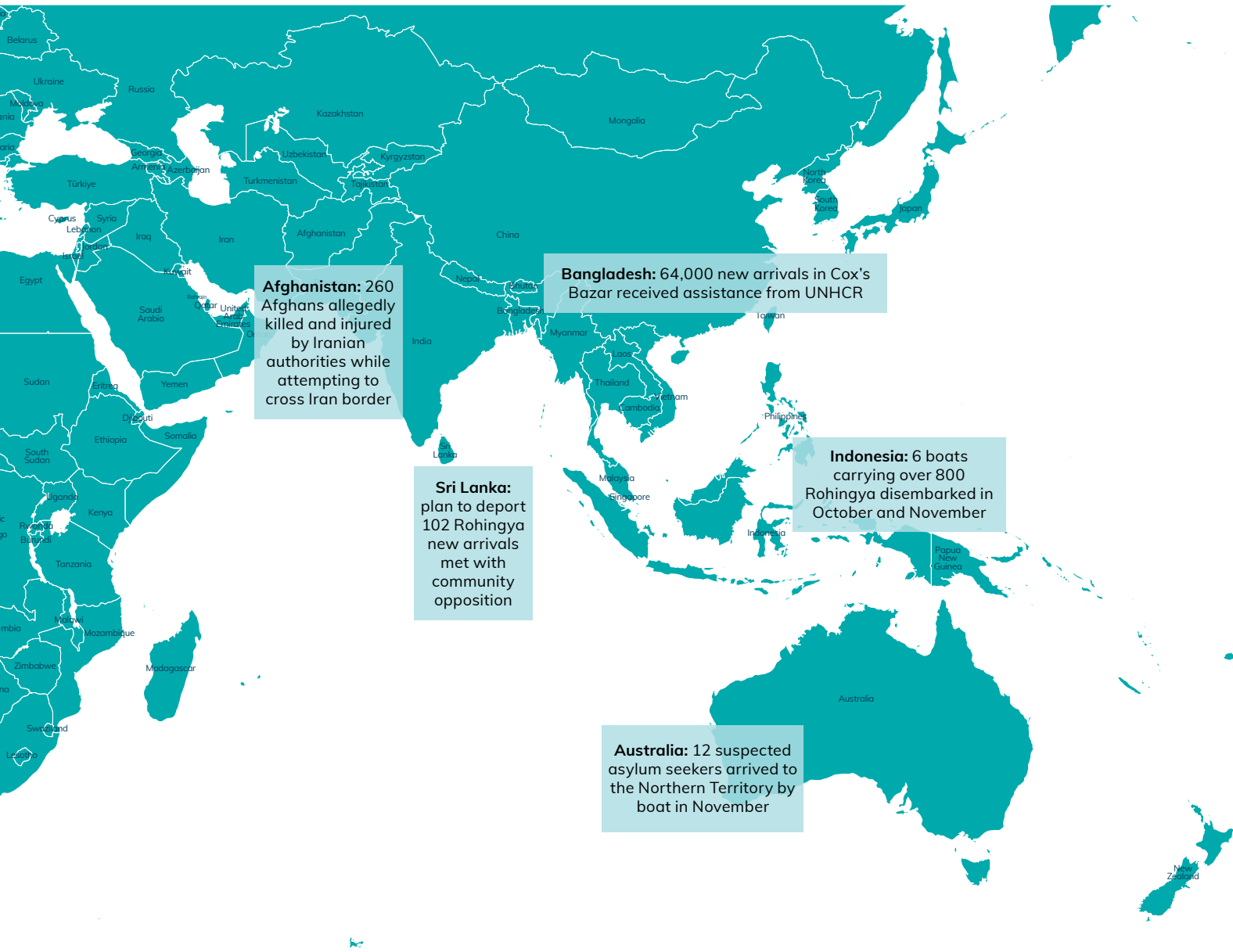
# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Asia and the Pacific

## Quarter 4 - 2024

### Key Updates

- **Afghans continue facing threats of detention and deportation:** Afghans in [Iran](#), [Türkiye](#), and [Tajikistan](#) continued facing increasing threats of detention and deportation this quarter, as well as alleged violence at the hands of state officials.
- **Worsened situation for Rohingya refugees in [Rakhine, Myanmar and Cox's Bazar Bangladesh](#) leads to a surge in movements:** The number of Rohingya embarking on maritime journeys [more than doubled in 2024 compared to 2023](#). This quarter, six boats arrived in Indonesia and one in [Sri Lanka](#), while another was [pushed back twice](#) by members of the local Indonesian community.
- **Stricter refugee policies in India:** Refugees from Myanmar face tightening measures in India. In Manipur, the state government [set a deadline of December 10 for refugees](#) to return to Myanmar, while families with children received [an extension until March 2025](#). Meanwhile, in Jammu and Kashmir, authorities have cracked down on [five landlords renting to Rohingya](#) refugees and have [cut off water and power supplies](#) to refugee households.
- **Crackdown on undocumented migrants in Malaysia and Thailand:** As Malaysia's amnesty program for undocumented migrants [nears its December 31 deadline](#), authorities have intensified enforcement measures, with [nearly 1,000 Myanmar nationals](#) detained in December alone. Similarly in Thailand, country-wide crackdown [since June 5](#), has resulted in 256,213 arrests as of the last quarter, including [193,430 Myanmar nationals](#).
- **Australia's strengthened border enforcement and anti-migration laws:** Australia has intensified border enforcement in the Northern Territory, responding to irregular arrivals of [four individuals](#) on Croker Island and [eight individuals in Arnhem Land](#). Offshore detention continues to place significant hardships on asylum seekers in [Nauru](#) and [Papua New Guinea](#), with inadequate weekly allowances for basic needs. Additionally, [new migration laws passed](#) in November expand offshore detention, grant more power to the immigration minister, and introduce stricter detention measures, including the ability to confiscate phones.

## Regional Overview\*



\*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration within and out of Asia and the Pacific.

# Mixed Migration Regional Updates

## Shrinking refuge and increasing hostility for Afghans in the neighbouring countries

This quarter, Afghans in multiple neighbouring countries including Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Türkiye faced continued crackdowns and worsening conditions, underscoring their precarity in the region. Türkiye's deportation practices, partly funded by the European Union's externalisation policies, have come under scrutiny for allegedly facilitating the forced return of migrants to unsafe environments, including Syria and [Afghanistan](#). Reports detail [detention centres where migrants are held under harsh conditions](#) before being expelled, often without proper legal procedures or consideration of the life-threatening risks they face upon return. Critics argue that the EU's financial support to Türkiye is enabling actions that potentially [violate international principles of non-refoulement](#), raising ethical and legal questions about the role of external funding in such practices.

Meanwhile, at the Iran-Afghanistan border, reports have surfaced of [Iranian border guards allegedly shooting at 300 Afghans](#) attempting to cross into Iran, resulted in up to 260 people dead or wounded in October. While [Iranian authorities deny these claims](#), the accounts highlight the escalating violence along migration routes and the extreme risks faced by Afghans seeking safety in neighbouring countries. This violence coincides with Iran's [intensified deportation campaigns](#), which have forcibly returned thousands of Afghans to a country still grappling with profound insecurity and economic instability.

In Tajikistan, the Afghan Migration Committee, an intermediary body between the Afghan refugees and local authorities, has called on the government to [halt deportations of Afghan refugees](#). Despite these appeals, reports indicate [continued detentions and forced returns](#), raising serious concerns about the treatment of asylum seekers and adherence to international refugee protections.

In a somewhat contrasting development, Pakistan [released 15 Afghan nationals from detention](#) on October 2, following advocacy by migration and human rights organisations. This move came almost a year after Pakistan commenced implementation of its deportation plan in [November 2023](#) resulting in [315,100 Afghans returning](#) to Afghanistan, both voluntarily and forcibly, from Pakistan during 2024. While this recent decision offers a glimmer of hope, it does not alter Pakistan's continued enforcement of its deportation plan. In addition, a recent [announcement on November 27](#) by the Pakistan's Interior Minister stated that, starting in 2025, [all Afghan nationals in Islamabad will be required to have a No Objection Certificate \(NOC\)](#) to remain in the city. This adds to the growing pressure faced by Afghan nationals in Pakistan.

## Continued disparities in global responses to protection of Afghans

This quarter, several developments paint a complex picture of global responses to Afghan displacement. While some countries uphold commitments through resettlement and legal protections, others are scaling back support, leaving gaps in protection for those most at risk.

As of October 2025, the new government in the United Kingdom has [reversed 25% of the rejected asylum claims](#) from Afghans who had worked with British military or government. Notwithstanding the positive development, in December, the government also announced that it would soon close the [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme \(ACRS\) and Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy \(ARAP\)](#) without specifying a timeline. As of September 2024, the resettlement schemes [resettled 12,426 and 17,956 Afghans](#), respectively. The government has defended this decision as part of an effort to streamline the resettlement process, but critics argue that it [leaves many vulnerable individuals without accessible pathways to safety](#).

In November, [nearly 200 Afghans have arrived in Germany from Pakistan](#). Despite these efforts, delays and bureaucratic hurdles have caused significant anxiety for refugees as they endured long and uncertain waits.

In addition, the Court of Justice of the European Union has also weighed in on the protection of Afghan refugees, delivering a landmark ruling in October 2024 that reinforces the EU's obligations under international law. The Court ruled that when assessing an Afghan woman's asylum claim, [Member States may consider her nationality and gender alone](#), without needing to prove a specific risk of persecution, due to the general dangers women face under the Taliban regime.

## Humanitarian crisis deepens for Rohingya amid escalating conflict in Rakhine

The ongoing crises in Myanmar continue to exacerbate humanitarian challenges, particularly for the Rohingya population. In Rakhine State, escalating tensions and the impact of a [near-famine situation](#) highlight the precarious conditions for those reliant on dwindling aid supplies. The plight of the Rohingya community remains particularly dire. Amnesty International warns of [the gravest threats since the mass exodus of 2017](#), with travel restrictions, limited protection, widespread food insecurity, and inadequate living conditions continuing to erode their resilience. The state's humanitarian needs are compounded by escalating conflicts in the state, which have severely hampered the delivery of life-saving assistance.

## Violence and fire worsen conditions for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, Rohingya continues to face pressing security challenges. In October, a gunfight between two armed groups resulted in the [death of a Rohingya youth and left five others wounded](#), heightening the calls for stronger safety measures within the camps. Widespread insecurity, fuelled by gang violence and criminal activity, has left Rohingya fearful and vulnerable. On December 24, a fire – an [ongoing issue in the camps](#) - destroyed [over 1,000 shelters](#), leaving over 4,000 individuals homeless, and resulting in two deaths, exacerbating an already dire situation.

## Maritime and land movements of Rohingya refugees surge this quarter with fatalities and pushbacks

For Rohingya attempting to escape the harsh realities, neighbouring countries offer little reprieve. In Bangladesh, an investigation by Fortify Rights estimated that [over 400 Rohingya refugees](#) were pushed back by the Border Guard Bangladesh between August and October 2024. While the government continues to [deny registration for new arrivals](#), UNHCR was able to distribute assistance to [64,000 new arrivals](#) during its headcount exercise in October. In [India](#), Rohingya face arbitrary and indefinite detention, with [676 Rohingya refugees detained](#) as of September 2024. In Thailand, [26 Rohingya were discovered abandoned](#) in Chumphon province in October, with three reported dead, and 10 in critical conditions. A month later, in November, [70 individuals](#), including 30 children, believed to be Rohingya, were arrested in Phang Nga province. In December, another group of [84 Rohingya were arrested](#) in Kanchanaburi province, while attempting to reach Malaysia.

Many Rohingya also undertake perilous sea journeys in search of safety, with [9,195 individuals embarking on the journey in 2024](#), more than double the 4,338 in 2023. This quarter, six boats arrived in Indonesia, bringing the total to 10 in 2024, including [four boats that had arrived earlier in the year between February and May](#). In October, three boats carrying [151](#), [146](#), and [90](#) Rohingya refugees in Aceh Selatan, North Sumatra, and Aceh Timur, respectively, were found, with [78% of the individuals being women and children](#). These maritime journeys, marked by severe hardship, resulted in multiple fatalities, including nine reported deaths, six of whom were children. In November, three more boats carrying [196](#), [147](#), and [116](#) Rohingya refugees disembarked in Aceh.

While the local communities have previously played an instrumental role in rescuing and supporting Rohingya arrivals, the growing number of arrivals over time has strained limited resources, [fuelling tensions within these communities](#). For instance, the fishing community in Aceh initially [refused to allow the first boat](#) in October to disembark. Furthermore, another boat carrying 250 Rohingya was pushed back twice [on November 16 and 17 while attempting to disembark](#), and its location remains unknown following the pushbacks.

[Two policy changes by the IOM](#) in November further complicated the situation for the Rohingya refugees in Indonesia. The changes include the termination of shelter assistance for individuals who arrived after January 1, 2019, and a reduction in the monthly cash assistance from IDR [1,250,000](#) (~USD 76) to IDR 1,050,000 (USD ~64) per adult. These reductions in support leave the refugees facing increased hardship with limited resources.

Across the Indian Ocean, a stranded boat carrying [102 Rohingya - 55 of whom were women and children](#) - was rescued off the Sri Lankan coast on December 19, indicating the broader, regional nature of Rohingya displacement. However, the Sri Lankan government's [plan to deport the new arrivals](#) was met with [strong opposition](#) from the local community and rights groups, who voiced concerns about the safety and treatment of the refugees.

## Increasing travel restrictions add to perils faced by Myanmar nationals

Conflict across Myanmar has escalated and exposed civilians to greater risks, with resistance forces making advances in multiple areas including such as [Chin State, Mandalay region, Rakhine state, and Shan state](#). This has triggered fresh rounds of displacement. By the end of 2024, [3.5 million people were displaced internally and 1.36 million](#) sought refuge abroad. Meanwhile, the de facto authorities' increasingly [harsh measures to prevent migration](#) has made escape more perilous, as new [travel restrictions and heightened surveillance](#) stifle remaining avenues for fleeing. For refugees in Thailand-Myanmar camps, concerns are rising over [disruption to the resettlement plan to the United States](#), which [resumed in June](#) this year, due to potential tightening of migration policies under the new administration.

## South Korea leads the way in supporting Myanmar nationals with passport renewals and visa extensions

On a more positive note, [nearly 1,000 Myanmar nationals in South Korea](#) have renewed their passports through the National Unity Government (NUG) office between August and November 2024. This initiative, which also permits visa extensions on humanitarian grounds, positions South Korea as the first country to provide such support—an approach that could serve as a model for other host countries. This is particularly significant following the recent [suspension of passport renewals for Myanmar students](#) in Thailand and growing restrictions on passport renewals faced by Myanmar nationals in countries like [Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand](#) since 2023.

## Thailand's forced deportation of Cambodian activists sparks outrage

In November, Thailand faced criticism for forcibly [deporting six Cambodian political activists](#), five of whom held UN refugee status, despite clear risks to their safety in Cambodia due to their membership in the now-dissolved opposition party in Cambodia. This follows similar incidents in [previous quarters](#), where Cambodian and Vietnamese activists were arrested in Thailand. [Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW) condemned the move, citing violations of international law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement, which protects individuals from being returned to places where they face persecution. In October, a report by the [International Federation for Human Rights \(FIDH\) and the Union for Civil Liberty \(UCL\)](#), revealed that Thai authorities, in the past decades, had violated the principle of non-refoulement as they deported Hmong, Uyghurs, Rohingya, and Cambodian refugees back to their countries of origin where they faced persecution.



## Uyghur refugees' struggle against deportations and detentions in Southeast Asia

An [investigative report](#) by The New York Times in November reveals the dangerous journeys Uyghur, fleeing persecution in China's Xinjiang region, take to reach Türkiye. The routes include passing through [Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Malaysia](#) and their fates have varied. In 2014, approximately 350 Uyghurs were detained in Thailand, with [172 women and children sent to Türkiye and at least 109 deported](#) to China. In 2017, 11 escaped detentions in Thailand, only to be arrested again in Malaysia. They were later [released and made their way to Türkiye](#). While Malaysia defied [pressure from China](#) in 2017, the country has been inconsistent in its approach, having previously deported [11 Uyghurs in 2011 and six in 2012](#), including those who had registered with UNHCR. In Cambodia, 20 Uyghurs who had been granted asylum were deported to China in 2009, where they faced imprisonment, forced labour, and torture, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement. The report has drawn renewed attention to Uyghur rights, with calls for the UN to secure the safety of [48 who remain detained in Thailand](#).

## Crackdown on undocumented migrants in Malaysia and Thailand

Thai authorities launched a 120-day nationwide crackdown on undocumented migrant workers, beginning on [June 5](#), resulting in 256,213 arrests as of the last quarter, including [193,430 Myanmar nationals](#). The scale of arrest within such a short period of time is deemed [unprecedented](#) over the last two decades. While the exact number of deportations remains unknown, Myanmar de facto authorities reported that around [1,000 Myanmar nationals were repatriated in August](#).

Similarly in Malaysia, authorities had ramped up enforcement measures as the [deadline for Malaysia's amnesty program for undocumented migrants approaches on December 31](#). In [Selangor](#), over 600 individuals from Algeria, the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were arrested in a large-scale operation. An [operation in Seremban](#) in early October led to 602 arrests, with the majority being Bangladesh nationals. Across Malaysia, [nearly 1,000 Myanmar nationals](#) were detained in December alone. The crackdown has raised concerns about the treatment and safety of those arrested, many of whom face deportation to politically unstable countries including Myanmar, where deported individuals may be exposed to severe risks, particularly those [fleeing conscription and conflicts](#). The immigration raids are expected to ramp up in the coming months as the amnesty program expires.

Concurrently, Malaysian authorities have intensified efforts to curb irregular migration, [dismantling 47 syndicates](#) engaged in the irregular entry of foreign workers. Additionally, [five immigration officers](#) have been arrested for their involvement in migrant smuggling activities. These heightened enforcement efforts are occurring alongside a proposal [to build a wall along the Malaysia-Thai border in Kelantan](#). Informal border-crossings are common among local communities in the border town, with [nearly 500 students](#) commuting from Sungai Golok, Thailand to Kelantan, Malaysia daily, highlighting the complexities of migration in the area, which are shaped by a mix of historical and socio-cultural factors.

## Malaysia's extradition stance on individuals linked to human trafficking contrasts with Cambodian migrant deportation

In November, Bangladesh sought Malaysia's assistance [to extradite two individuals allegedly implicated in money laundering and human trafficking schemes](#) targeting Bangladeshi nationals. However, Malaysia stipulated that [it would only approve the extradition](#) if charges against them were formally filed in Bangladesh.

This stance contrasts with Malaysia's [recent deportation of a Cambodian migrant](#) in October after she made critical comments about the Cambodian government. This inconsistency raises questions about the country's approach to matters on human rights.

## Stricter measures and increased scrutiny for refugees in Manipur and Jammu and Kashmir

Refugees from Myanmar are grappling with increasingly stringent measures in India as host states tighten their policies. In Manipur, the [ongoing inter-ethnic conflict](#) has affected thousands of Myanmar nationals, forcing them into precarious living conditions. Compounding their plight, state authorities issued a one-month notice for refugees [to return to Myanmar by December 10](#), despite the ongoing conflicts in Myanmar. However, families with schoolchildren were given an extended [deadline of March 2025](#), after exams are completed. This policy is expected to affect around [5,000 refugees in Manipur state](#). Meanwhile, in Jammu and Kashmir, authorities have taken action against [five landlords for renting homes to Rohingya refugees](#), and have [cut water and power supplies to 409 Rohingya households](#), reflecting heightened scrutiny and restrictive policies targeting refugee populations in India.

## Stranded Sri Lankan asylum seekers in Diego Garcia arrived in the UK

On December 2, [47 Sri Lankan asylum seekers](#), who had been stranded for over three years on the British Indian Ocean Territory Island of Diego Garcia, were moved to the UK. Another group of [eight individuals](#), previously transferred to Rwanda for medical treatment, arrived a day later. These individuals had been living in squalid conditions on Diego Garcia, in a makeshift camp since arriving to the British territory irregularly by boat and filing asylum claims in October 2021. Their relocation follows complex legal battles and humanitarian concerns, with some asylum seekers with reports of hunger strikes, self-harm, and allegations of abuse, as reported [earlier this year](#). While their arrival in the UK, described as a "one-off" due to the exceptional nature of the case, offers relief, their long-term future remains uncertain, as they have been granted a [six-month temporary stay](#), with no permission to work and no guarantee to permanent settlement.

## Australia strengthens border enforcement in Northern Territory, targeting boat arrivals

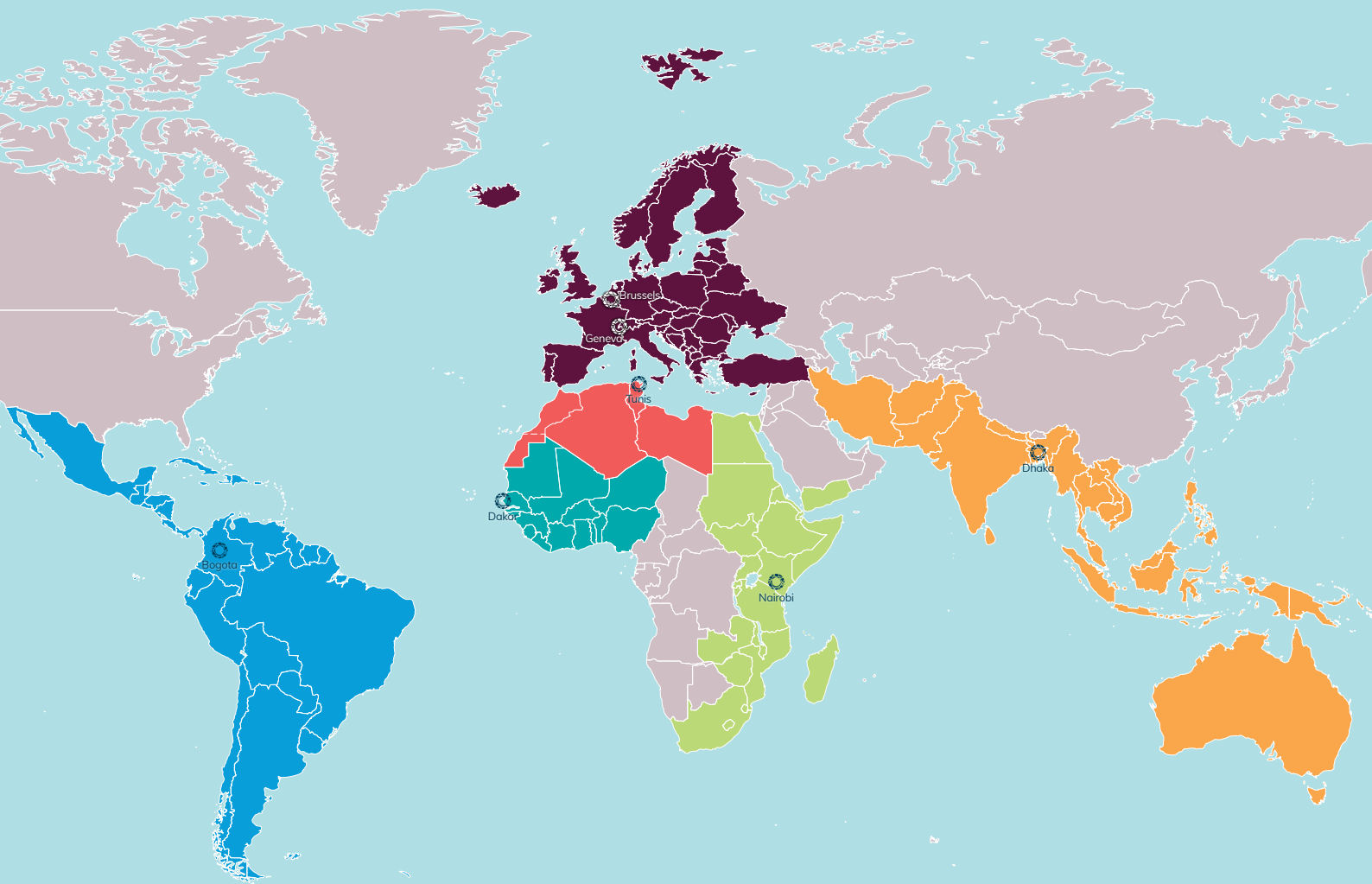
In December, Australia launched Operation Lunar as part of its [intensified border enforcement efforts in the Northern Territory](#), with operations targeting foreign fishing vessels and human smuggling. This comes after the recent spike in illegal fishing activities in the region as well as the recent rescue of [four individuals believed to be Chinese nationals](#) on Croker Island on November 11, who were [deported the next day](#). Two weeks later, [another eight individuals were found in Arnhem Land](#) on November 26.

## Expanding offshore detention policies and anti-migration stance under new laws in Australia

Asylum seekers on Australian offshore detention continue to face significant challenges. On Nauru, individuals who have been moved from detention to community settings [struggle to afford housing, healthcare, food and water, and other basic necessities](#), due to the inadequate weekly allowance of AUD 115. In Papua New Guinea, as government-provided accommodation ends on January 18, asylum seekers will be expected to cover all living expenses with [a weekly allowance of AUD 350](#).

Australia has come under scrutiny for a new [AUD 2.3 billion, five-year contract with Secure Journeys](#) – a company with a controversial record in the US – to manage its onshore detention facilities, raising continued questions about accountability and transparency of the country's migration policies. In addition, [three migration laws were passed in November](#) authorising the government [to pay third countries to accept non-citizens who cannot be deported to their countries of origin](#), including refugees, thereby expanding its offshoring policies. The laws also grant the immigration minister increased power [to reverse immigration decisions](#), including those pertaining to refugee status. Stricter detention measures have also been introduced under the laws, including allowing immigration enforcement authorities to search detainees and confiscate their phones.

On a more positive note, Australia has granted [its first humanitarian visas to Palestinian](#) families affected by ongoing conflicts in October, marking a significant step toward addressing their urgent needs. However, the temporary humanitarian visas, which allow a three-year stay in Australia, [do not grant access to tertiary education](#). Additionally, applicants can only apply for the visa [if invited by the Immigration Minister](#), placing further limitations on the process.



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MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based mixed migration responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

MMC is part of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

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