

**MMC Eastern and Southern
Africa | Egypt and Yemen**

QUARTER 4 2024



Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Eastern and Southern Africa | Egypt and Yemen

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the Eastern and Southern Africa region plus Egypt and Yemen (ESA). The core areas of focus include the Eastern route, from East and the Horn of Africa towards the Arabian Peninsula; the Southern route from East Africa and the Great Lakes towards South Africa; the Central Mediterranean Route (also called the Northern Route) from East and the Horn of Africa towards North Africa; as well as intra-regional mixed migration dynamics. 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 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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Michael Kirby Smith (2013)

Ethiopian migrants outside the Migrant Response Centre in Haradh, Yemen, May 2013.

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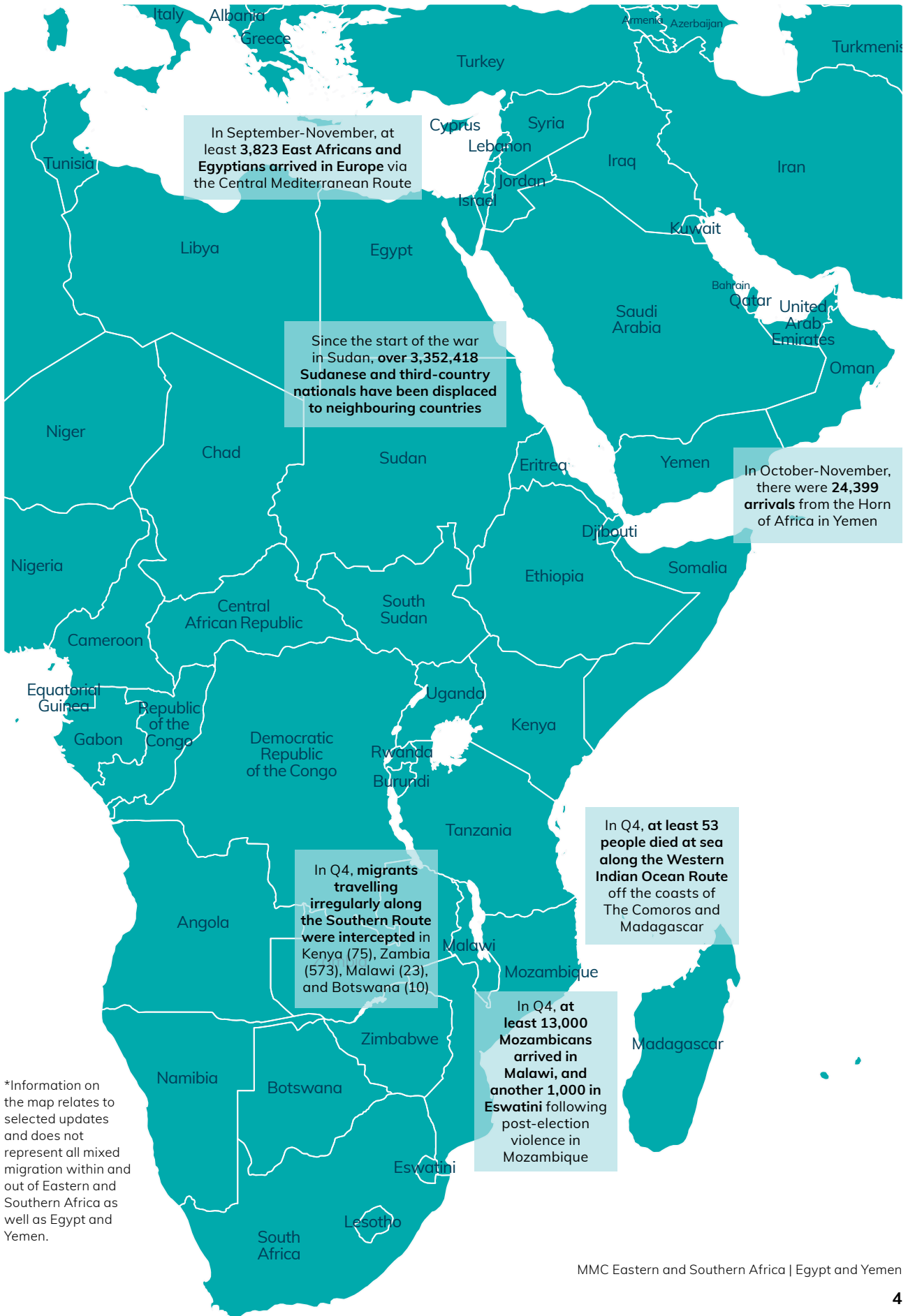
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Quarter 4 - 2024

Key Updates

- The war in Sudan continues to fuel internal and cross-border displacement:** compared [to the previous quarter](#), [cross border movements](#) have increased by 113% in Libya (210,000), 19% in South Sudan (954,616), 12% in Ethiopia (68,008), 11% in Chad (723,951), 8% in Uganda (61,693), and 3% in the Central African Republic (CAR) (36,183). For Egypt (1,200,000), no new figure was published during Q4.
- Increased coverage leads to new data on arrivals in Yemen:** In October-November [24,399](#) migrants entered Yemen, marking a 466% increase from the same period in 2023. According to IOM, the increase can be largely attributed to expanded DTM coverage into the Ta'iz governate. In early October, at least [48 migrants](#) drowned after a double shipwreck off the coast of Djibouti.
- New asylum law in Egypt:** Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi [signed](#) a new asylum bill into law in December, amidst concerns from civil society groups over the impact the law will have on refugee protection, including restricting access to asylum, and giving way to arbitrary detention and unlawful deportations.
- Migrants intercepted along the Southern Route:** In Q4, several groups of Ethiopians, Eritreans, Burundians, and Congolese, among other nationalities, were apprehended while en route to South Africa in [Kenya](#), [Malawi](#), [Zambia](#), and [Botswana](#). Zambian authorities reported apprehending at least 573 individuals from October-December.
- Violence in Mozambique fuels cross-border displacement:** Following escalating post-election violence in late October, at least [13,000](#) Mozambicans fled to Malawi, while another [1,000](#) claimed asylum in Eswatini.
- Two shipwrecks along the Western Indian Ocean Route to Mayotte:** In Q4, a shipwreck off the Comorian coast and a double shipwreck involving boats carrying Somalis off Madagascar led to a combined death toll of at least 53, and 47 ([Madagascar](#)) and five ([The Comoros](#)) survivors rescued.

Regional Overview*



*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration within and out of Eastern and Southern Africa as well as Egypt and Yemen.

Mixed Migration Regional Updates

Mixed Migration within East Africa and the Great Lakes

War in Sudan continues to drive internal and cross border displacement

As of 31 December, 8,823,862 people in Sudan have been internally displaced since the start of the war in April 2023, representing a 9% increase compared to Q3 (8,126,265). In total, Sudan is home to 11,559,970 internally displaced persons (IDPs), including an estimated 2.8 million who were displaced prior to the war. During Q4, an escalation of conflict across Al Jazira State led to the internal displacement of approximately 393,337 individuals, the majority of whom were experiencing secondary displacement.

Some 3,352,418 have fled Sudan to neighbouring countries, marking a stark 41% increase compared to the end of the previous quarter (2,382,043). Similar to Q3, the number of migrants crossing borders increased at a higher rate than the number of people displaced internally. For those who have crossed borders, according to UNHCR, a majority have fled to Egypt (1,200,000),¹ South Sudan (954,616), Chad (723,951), Libya (210,000),² Ethiopia (68,008), Uganda (61,693), and CAR (36,183).

Crackdown on Eritreans in Ethiopia

In Q4, the BBC reported on the escalation of the arrest, detention, and extortion of Eritreans in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital. While such events are not unprecedented, the scale of the crackdown was deemed significant, with 'hundreds' detained in October-November. From the personal accounts of Eritreans interviewed by the BBC, the arrests were termed as 'indiscriminate and deliberate' towards all Eritreans in the country, regardless of status and documentation, with many fearing eventual deportation. In a statement issued in December, the Ethiopian Immigration and Citizenship Service (ICS) denied the allegations stemming from the article, calling them 'unsubstantiated'.

The Eastern Route from East Africa to Yemen

Increased coverage leading to large increase in arrivals in Yemen

In Yemen, IOM DTM recorded 24,399 new arrivals in October and November,³ representing a 466% increase compared to the same period last year (4,313). According to IOM, the increase can be largely attributed to expanded DTM coverage on the western coast of Yemen in Dhubab, Ta'iz governate, rather than conclusive evidence of an increase. The majority of new arrivals (79%) had left Djibouti prior to arriving in Ta'iz, while 21% had departed from Somalia and arrived in Shabwah governorate. Most arrivals (24,046)

1 Figures provided by the Egyptian government to UNHCR have not been updated since Q3.

2 Data on arrivals in Libya were recorded up until 8 December.

3 Figures for December were not available at the time of publishing.

were Ethiopians, including among departures from Somalia, followed by 353 Somalis. No arrivals were recorded by IOM in Lahj governorate, following a continued trend from previous quarters, and likely the result of a concentrated military campaign stopping smugglers and boats from arriving in Lahj since 2023. The new data suggest that smugglers may have devised a new route from Djibouti to Ta'iz, circumventing Lahj, moving this section of the Eastern Route slightly further northwest.

Continued increase in arrivals in Djibouti

In October, IOM DTM [recorded](#) 44,273 entries into Djibouti.⁴ This marks a 95% increase [compared](#) to the same month last year (22,709), and presents a continuing trend from [last quarter](#). With a total of 22,617 Ethiopians arriving in October, most originated from conflict-affected Tigray (39%) and Amhara (36%), followed by Oromia (18%), and Afar (4%). Some 1,567 migrant returns from Yemen were recorded in Obock and Tadjourah, representing a 166% increase compared to [the same period](#) last year. This increase can be attributed to a strengthening of controls by Yemeni authorities, as most of the returns were forced. In [early October](#), a double shipwreck incident took place off the coast of Obock, where at least 48 people drowned and 111 went missing. The boats were on a return journey from Yemen, when they were intercepted by Djiboutian and Yemeni coast guards. Reports [cite](#) this led to the smugglers forcing migrants off the vessels, into the open sea. A total of [197](#) survivors were relocated to Markazi refugee camp in Obock.

Continued mass arrests in Saudi Arabia

Similar to [Q3](#) and earlier quarters, the mass roundups of migrants in Saudi Arabia continued in Q4. Between October and December, Saudi authorities arrested at least [145,884 migrants](#) for allegedly breaching residency, labour, and border security regulations. As per official statements from the Ministry of Interior, [84,985 individuals](#) were arrested for violations of residency laws, while [37,627](#) were held over irregular border crossing attempts, and a further [23,272](#) for informal labour-related issues. Among the [10,247](#) migrants arrested for trying to enter the country irregularly, a majority were Ethiopians and Yemenis.⁵

Kenyan women trapped in Saudi Arabia

In December, *The Guardian* reported on the case of [five Kenyan women](#) trapped in Saudi Arabia. Their children had been born outside of marriage, and were subsequently denied birth certificates, a requirement to receive an exit visa needed to leave the country. Moreover, the women had fled abusive employers who had confiscated their identity documents. Saudi Arabia has strict laws regarding extramarital sex that women are disproportionately held accountable for, as resulting pregnancies are considered evidence. The women had stated that their children were the result of relationships with other migrant workers, some of whom abandoned them for fear of being arrested. Their intention to return to Kenya was driven by the stateless status of their children, impeding them from accessing basic services such as healthcare and education. The women [stated](#) that the Kenyan embassy had refused to provide them with support to obtain the required exit visas, with one claiming she was called a 'prostitute' when seeking consular

⁴ Figures for the rest of Q4 were not available at the time of publishing.

⁵ The presented figures are calculations by MMC based on the various datasets referred to in the sources..

assistance. The Kenyan Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Mr. Mohamed Ruwange, refuted these claims, and emphasised that the Kenyan government was working to resolve the issue. Experts [estimate](#) there are thousands of stateless migrant children born outside marriage in Gulf countries.

Routes towards the Mediterranean

East African and Egyptian arrivals along the Mediterranean routes

Between October and December, [60,620 refugees and migrants](#) arrived in Europe through land and sea routes. [This is largely consistent](#) with the previous quarter, and a [12% decrease](#) when looking at the same period last year. Egyptians represented the 4th most common nationality to arrive in [Italy](#) in January-November 2024, maintaining [the same position as last quarter](#). However, the absolute number of Egyptian arrivals (981) in October-November is 51% lower than [in the same period in 2023](#), demonstrating a continued decrease in Egyptian arrivals in 2024.⁶ Other nationalities to arrive in Italy since the beginning of the year up until 30 November include Eritreans (2,122; 7th), followed by Sudanese (2,119; 8th), Ethiopians (1,289; 12th), Somalis (645; 20th), and South Sudanese (195; 27th).

This quarter, UNHCR retroactively published data on nationalities arriving in [Greece](#) from January up to September 2024. The most represented nationalities include Egyptians (4,396; 3rd), Eritreans (1,508; 4th), Yemenis (1,065; 6th), Sudanese (949; 7th), Somalis (909; 8th), Ethiopians (66; 16th), and Congolese (DRC) (53; 17th).⁷ In [Cyprus](#), the most common East African nationalities to arrive from January-December 2024 include Somalis (337; 4th), Sudanese (160; 6th), and Congolese (DRC) (149; 7th).

Egyptians bound for Italy shipwrecked

In [October](#), 12 Egyptian men lost their lives and one survived after their boat capsized [60 kilometres](#) off the coast of Tobruk, eastern Libya. All men came from al-Sharkia and al-Gharbia governorates, and were en route to Italy. Egypt's high inflation and unemployment rates have continued to [drive](#) some Egyptians, albeit at a declining rate, to engage in dangerous sea journeys across the Mediterranean.

Egypt enacts new asylum law

In December, Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi signed Egypt's new asylum bill into law. One month prior, in November, the government had [approved](#) the draft law in a process dubbed as 'rushed' by Human Rights Watch, while citing a lack of meaningful consultation with civil society groups and UNHCR to ensure alignment with international standards. Amnesty International furthermore [stated](#) that the law would have a 'chilling impact' on refugee rights, noting that it would allow for the [arbitrary detention of asylum seekers and refugees](#), restrictions to the right to seek asylum, and unlawful deportations without procedural safeguards. It would furthermore restrict refugees' and asylum seekers' freedom of movement in the country, and fail to grant them full access to education, housing, and social security. The law's ratification is

⁶ Nationality figures for December were not available at the time of publishing.

⁷ Nationality figures were only updated till September at the time of publishing.

likely to increase the vulnerability of asylum seekers and refugees in Egypt, and may ultimately drive them to engage in onward movements, out of fear of forced returns, Amnesty International further argued.

The Southern Route towards South Africa and mixed migration within Southern Africa

Migrants intercepted and detained along the Southern Route

In October, Kenyan police apprehended [56 Ethiopians](#) in Githunguri, Machakos County, after a house raid. After their arrest, the court in Machakos ordered the individuals to be held until the government processed their [repatriation](#). In the same month, [ten Ethiopians](#) en route to South Africa were intercepted in Tonota, Botswana, and were fined 1,500 pula (107 USD), or one-year imprisonment in default of payment, for entering the country without required documentation. Also in October, Botswana rejected [240 asylum claims](#), not specifying the nationalities of the asylum seekers, and declaring them 'irregular', while proceeding with their deportation.

In November, a police officer was arrested in Samburu, Kenya, for transporting [nine Ethiopian migrants](#). The group was apprehended and detained after the driver failed to stop for inspection. Another group of [ten Eritreans bound for South Africa](#) was apprehended in Laikipia. Towards the end of the month, [23 Ethiopians](#), including 16 adults and seven minors, were convicted in Mzuzu, Malawi, for irregular entry into the country.

Most interceptions and arrests during Q4 took place in Zambia. On 2 November, a large-scale national police operation in various towns led to the arrest of [186 migrants](#), including 62 Tanzanians, 58 Burundians, 22 Congolese (DRC), two Ugandans, and one Rwandan. An additional 41 allegedly claimed to be, in fact, Zambian nationals. In the same month, [42 Ethiopian men](#) aged 14-35 were apprehended in Mpika. In various towns from 6-10 December at least [83 individuals](#) were apprehended, including 37 Burundians, 14 Malawians, 11 Congolese (DRC), and eight Zimbabweans, amongst others. Finally, on 27 December, [261 individuals](#) were stopped in Lusaka. The group included 156 Burundians, 57 Congolese, 24 Tanzanians, 14 Rwandese, two Egyptians, and two Nigerians, amongst others.

Post-election violence in Mozambique fuels cross-border displacement

Towards the end of Q4, post-election violence in Mozambique triggered by the [disputed October presidential election](#) saw over [13,000 Mozambicans](#) flee to Malawi, with a majority being women and children. Furthermore, as of 31 December, UNHCR reported [1,000 Mozambicans](#) had entered Eswatini and sought asylum there. In a [statement](#) UNHCR highlighted the vulnerabilities of those in camps in Malawi and Eswatini, with the two countries not being equipped to handle the numbers of arrivals.

The Western Indian Ocean Route towards Mayotte and mixed migration in the Western Indian Ocean

Shipwrecks off The Comoros and Madagascar

Following previous shipwreck incidents in [Q3](#), a boat carrying 30 migrants of varying nationalities capsized off the Comorian coast between Anjouan and Mayotte on [1 November](#), further adding to the death toll of migrants on the move to Mayotte. According to IOM, 25 people died after the boat was deliberately capsized by their 'traffickers'. The five survivors, who were rescued by fishermen, noted that among the group were seven women and four minors.

Towards the end of October, Comorian and Tanzanian authorities [signed](#) a cooperation project, to be overseen by IOM, aimed at improving the two countries' capacity to deal with irregular border crossings along the route to Mayotte. In the same month, [six men](#), including a former agent for the nautical brigade of the Mayotte border police, were handed sentences ranging from one to five years in prison by the judicial court in Mamoudzou, Mayotte's capital. The six had been apprehended for partaking in a smuggling network operating between Anjouan and Mayotte.

[In November](#), 28 Somalis died and another 47 were rescued after two boats capsized off the coast of Madagascar. Madagascar's Port Maritime and River Authority stated that the two boats had departed from Somalia heading for Mayotte. Port authorities discovered the first boat drifting near the island of Nosy Iranja, while the second was found at the island of Nosy Be. One of the survivors [stated](#) that they had left in one boat from Mogadishu, after which they were split into two boats once in open waters. The boats eventually experienced engine failure, and the groups remained adrift for 13 days with no food or water. Survivors were forced to catch and eat raw fish and a bird, and drink sea water. In December, the Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs chartered a plane to return the 47 survivors to Somalia. The Director of the Africa Department at the ministry [stated](#) that eight people had been apprehended in suspected connection to the smuggling ring that organised the perilous and long sea journey from Somalia to Mayotte.

Cyclone Chido devastates Mayotte and heightens tensions

On 14 December, [cyclone Chido](#) hit Mayotte, leaving behind a trail of widespread devastation. Following the impact, initial estimates placed the [death toll](#) on the island close to a thousand, although these numbers [were later brought down](#) to 'dozens'. Informal settlements were reported to have been particularly hit, with the migrant population living in these settlements bearing the brunt of the devastation. Furthermore, news media reported there was a sense of reluctance among the migrant community to seek out emergency shelter while fearing rumoured deportation, further contributing to their vulnerability. In the wake of the devastation, it was also [noted](#) that existing tensions between locals and the migrant population were once again on the rise, following years of [hostility](#), with locals concerned that scarce resources available after the disaster were being primarily given to migrants.

In October, the French Minister of Interior Bruno Retailleau had announced in a [statement](#) that Mayotte would organise deportation flights to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to return Congolese staying

without the required documentation on the island. He also noted that bilateral security agreements with Rwanda and Burundi were in the works, with the purpose of curbing arrivals from the Great Lakes region to Mayotte.

Tamil asylum seekers in Diego Garcia to be transferred to Romania

In [October](#), UNHCR approved a request by the British authorities to transfer 36 Tamil Sri Lankan asylum seekers from the remote Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, a part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), to UNHCR's Emergency Transit Centre in Romania, for a period of six months. During those six months, as was clarified, the British authorities would develop [durable solutions](#) for the group, consisting of voluntary repatriation to Sri Lanka, or voluntary onward resettlement to a country other than Romania. Those failing to accept either option would eventually be brought to the UK, with British authorities noting that the transitional period of six months was put in place to demonstrate that 'coming to BIOT does not provide a direct route to the UK'. Lawyers representing some of the asylum seekers contested the ruling, advocating for the group to be brought directly to the UK. Since [2021](#), an estimated [61 Tamils](#) have claimed asylum in Diego Garcia. In December, after the announcement of the transfer, an acting judge of the BIOT Supreme Court [ruled](#) that the Tamils had been unlawfully detained in a makeshift camp on the island for years.

Earlier in October, the UK had set to agree on [ceding the Chagos Islands](#), of which Diego Garcia is part, to Mauritius. The lawyers representing the group noted at the time they were seeking to have the Tamils removed from the island before the UK would officially cede sovereignty to Mauritius. Under the deal, Diego Garcia would [continue to operate as a UK-US military base](#), but Mauritius would take responsibility for any future migrant arrivals. Finally, in early January, the British position [reportedly](#) changed, allowing for the incoming US Trump administration to review the deal before making a final decision on ceding the islands to Mauritius. The reports did not mention if the delays would have an impact on rulings with regards to the asylum seekers on Diego Garcia.

East Africans farther afield

Kenya and Ethiopia evacuate nationals from Lebanon

Following reports from [Q3](#), the Kenyan government [announced](#) additional special measures in October to support the evacuation of nationals stranded in Lebanon, including setting aside 100 million Kenyan shillings and setting up a special committee.⁸ Kenyans wishing to be evacuated were informed to register with the Kenyan Embassy to Kuwait, noting that Kenya does not have a diplomatic representation in Lebanon. The government, while admitting it had encountered difficulties getting to know about the whereabouts of its citizens abroad, estimated that there were about 26,550 Kenyans living in Lebanon, of which a total of [7,119 individuals](#) had registered for evacuation in early November. At the end of December, the Kenyan government [stated](#) it had evacuated over 800 individuals. It was not made clear if the remaining thousands of those who registered would be repatriated in 2025. In a message [published](#) on X in early 2025, a

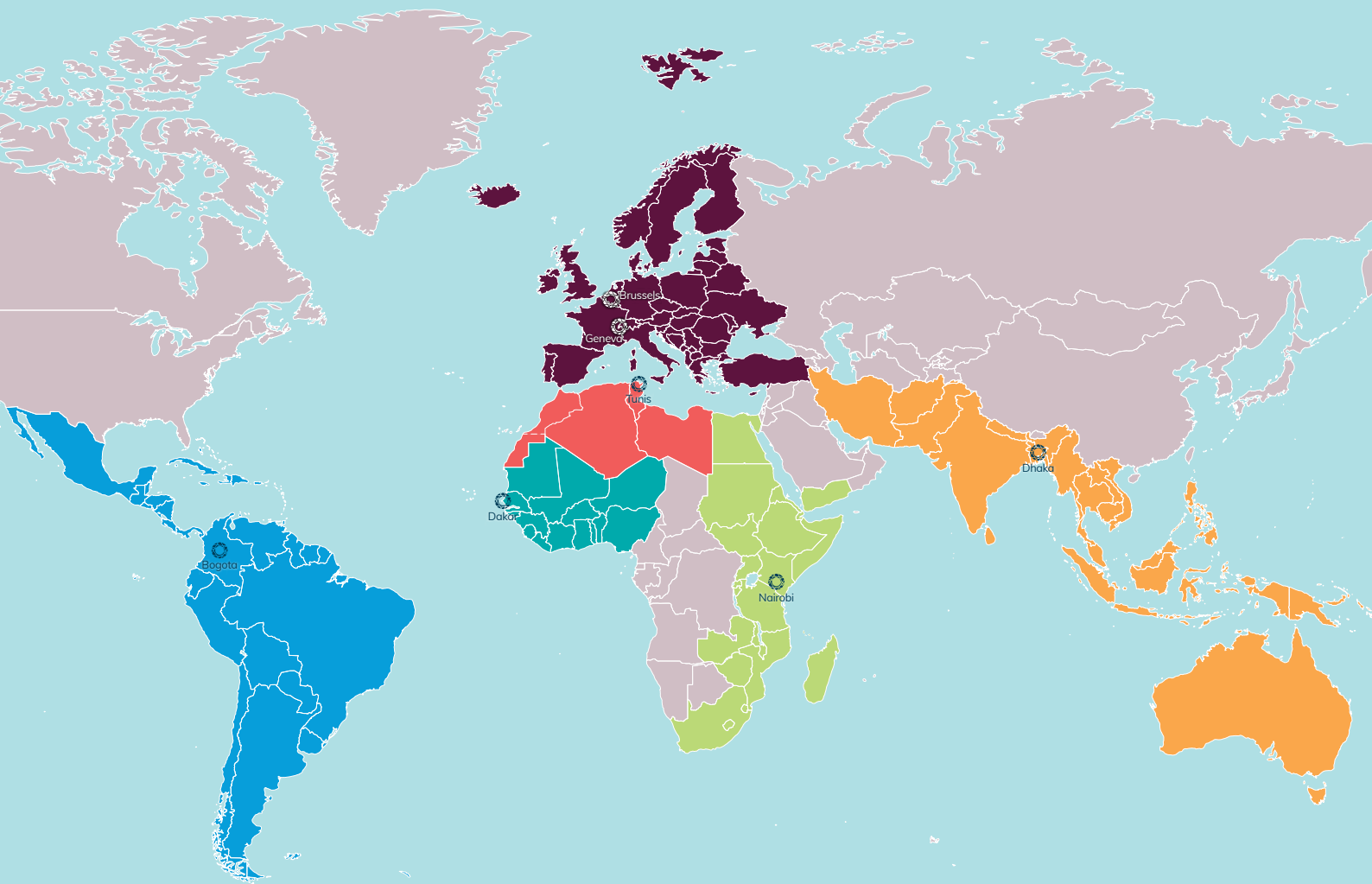
⁸ Approximately 766,204 USD.

Kenyan stranded in Lebanon noted he had not received any communications regarding his registration for evacuation from the State Department of Diaspora Affairs since three months.

The Ethiopian government also put in place measures to organise evacuations, after appeals from Ethiopians in Lebanon interviewed by the [Voice of Africa](#), who furthermore detailed that two Ethiopian women had died following Israeli airstrikes. At least 150,000 Ethiopians were reported to live in Lebanon, while more than 5,000 registered for evacuation by the [end of October](#). While at least [61 individuals](#) were repatriated, Ethiopian authorities [noted](#) it was difficult to carry out further repatriations with many nationals being bound by movement restrictions, as they did not possess the right travel documentation to leave Lebanon.

Increasing presence of Comorians on the Atlantic Route

In early October, [French media](#) reported on the increasing presence of Comorians on boats along the Atlantic Route towards the Canary Islands. The report follows a shipwreck incident at the end of September, after which two Comorians were unaccounted for. Since 2020, a total of 70 Comorians are reported to have died or gone missing on this route, of which 24 since July 2024. While seeking to explain the trend, [Comorian news media](#) have noted that a considerable number of Comorians are students at Moroccan universities. A lack of future perspectives could have driven them to engage in these onwards journeys after migrating as students. According to [UNHCR](#), between January-October 2024, 230 Comorians arrived in Spain, constituting the most common East African nationality to arrive, and the 9th most common nationality overall. All 230 had moved along the Atlantic Route prior to arriving on the Canary Islands.



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.

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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