

MMC Asia and the Pacific

QUARTER 3 2025

A photograph of a young boy in a dark blue tunic and brown headscarf standing on the back of a rusty metal truck. He is looking towards a dusty, urban environment with a concrete wall and buildings in the background. The scene is hazy and dusty, suggesting a border or conflict zone.

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 knowledge centre engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programming on mixed migration. MMC has regional hubs in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, with a global team headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and based in several countries worldwide.

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. People engaged in mixed migration are motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, have a range of legal statuses and 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 refugees and 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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Many Afghan families travel to Pakistan through the "Zero Point" of Spin Boldak. Spin Boldak District, Afghanistan, 2023.

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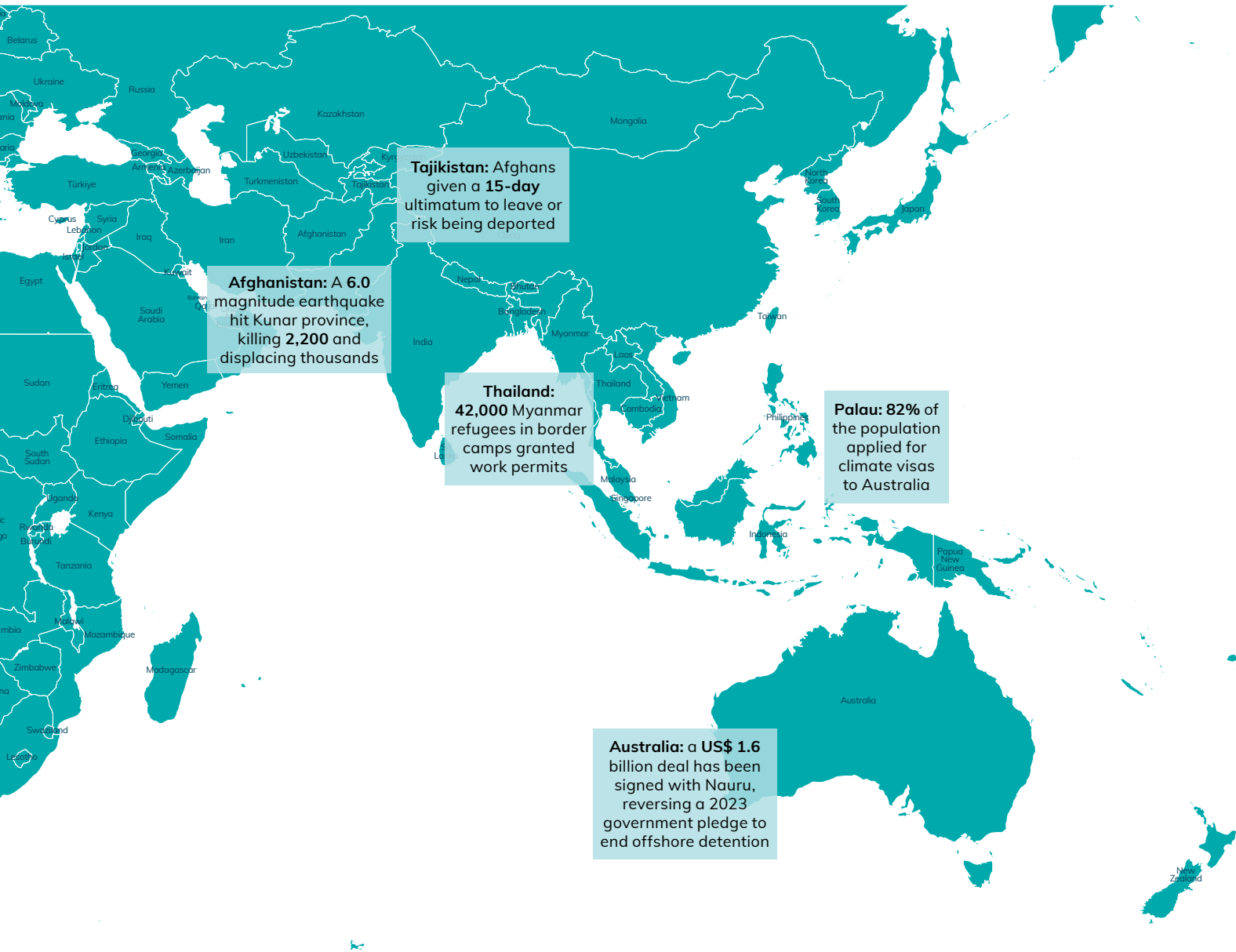
Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Asia and the Pacific

Quarter 3 - 2025

Key Updates

- **Afghan returns heighten amid earthquake and deportations:** Nearly 1.4 million Afghans returned from [Iran](#) and [Pakistan](#) this quarter, driven by deportation campaigns and regional instability. Iran announced plans to [deport two million Afghans](#) by March 2026, while Pakistan started [deporting proof of registration \(PoR\) card holders](#). A [6.0 magnitude earthquake](#) in Kunar province further exacerbated the crisis, killing over 2,200 people and displacing thousands more. Meanwhile, Tajikistan issued [a 15-day ultimatum](#) for Afghans to leave or be deported.
- **Cambodia-Thailand Border Conflict:** A [five-day conflict](#) between Cambodia and Thailand displaced over 300,000 people and triggered the exodus of 100,000 Cambodian migrant workers from Thailand. The resulting [labour shortages](#) prompted Thailand to recruit workers from Sri Lanka and extend work permits for Cambodian migrant workers.
- **Thailand grants work permits to Myanmar refugees:** In a significant policy shift, Thailand granted one-year [work permits to 42,000 Myanmar refugees](#) in border camps, responding to steep cuts in US and donor aid and labour shortages within the country.
- **Australia resumes offshore resettlements through agreement with Nauru:** Australia reversed its 2023 pledge to end offshore detention, [signing a US\\$ 1.6 billion agreement](#) with Nauru to relocate 354 individuals formerly held in offshore detention. Meanwhile, 8,750 Tuvaluans, representing 80% of the country's population, [applied for Australia's climate mobility pathway](#), though only 280 will be selected annually.
- **Tropical cyclones displace millions:** A series of tropical cyclones struck [Southeast](#) and [East Asia](#) during July to September, displacing millions across the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, and China. The cumulative impact of repeated climate events continues to strain disaster response systems and raises concerns about long-term resilience and mobility in vulnerable regions.

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

Afghan deportations and returns

Afghans forced to return from Iran and Pakistan

Afghan returns from Iran and Pakistan continued to increase in this quarter, with UNHCR recording [978,600 returns from Iran](#) between 3 July and 24 September, and [380,700 returns from Pakistan](#) between 10 July and 25 September.

Returns from Iran peaked in early July, with 43,000 recorded on 1 July alone. The surge followed regional instability linked to the June [conflict with Israel](#) and the Iranian government's late May announcement [that all undocumented Afghans must leave](#) the country by 6 July. Although daily return figures have declined over the remainder of the quarter, more than 2.1 million Afghans have returned from Iran in 2025 to date. Further to driving these movements, Iran's Interior Minister, Eskandar Momeni [announced on 17 August](#) the government's intention to deport two million Afghans by March 2026.

On 31 July, [Pakistan authorities announced](#) that Afghans holding Proof of Registration (PoR) cards would be subject to deportation under the 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan'. It is estimated that [over 1.3 million Afghans hold proof of registration cards](#), with many having lived in Pakistan for decades. This follows the return of 1.3 million Afghans without documentation or holding Afghan Citizen Cards. Since the [announcement came into force](#), UNHCR reported [171,000 Afghan returns](#) from Pakistan between 1 September and 4 October.

On 25 September, the Pakistan government [announced plans to close](#) 16 Afghan refugee camps in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Punjab, [affecting over 90,000 Afghan refugees](#). Many of these camps, established [during the 1980s Soviet invasion](#), have evolved into long-term settlements hosting multiple generations.

Earthquake compounds the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan

On August 31, a 6.0 magnitude earthquake struck eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province near the border with Pakistan, [killing an estimated 2,200 people](#) and injuring 3,640. The earthquake compounded [existing humanitarian challenges](#) across Kunar, Nangarhar, Laghman, and Nuristan, home to an estimated 3.76 million people, including 301,278 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 112,980 IDP returnees, and 376,598 returnees from Pakistan and Iran.

The earthquake adds further pressure to Afghanistan's fragile humanitarian landscape, where thousands of returnees continue to arrive amid ongoing economic decline, natural disasters, and restricted international engagement.

Legal victories reopen Germany's doors for Afghan refugees amid deportations

On July 18, [Germany deported 81 Afghans](#), marking Germany's second deportation of Afghans since the Taliban's takeover in 2021. According to the German Interior Ministry, [all 81 deportees reportedly had criminal convictions](#) and were legally required to leave the country. UN agencies [criticised the decision](#), citing the continued issuance of a non-return advisory due to persistent concerns over human rights violations and the lack of safe conditions for returns to Afghanistan. After taking office in May 2025, Chancellor Friedrich Merz's [government froze Germany's refugee resettlement program](#), leaving many vulnerable people who had already been approved for resettlement in limbo. Among them were [2,000 Afghans who supported German forces or faced persecution](#), who were left stranded in Pakistan. On 18 August, the German Foreign Ministry confirmed that [211 of these individuals had been deported](#) from Pakistan back to Afghanistan.

In response, more than [80 lawsuits have been filed in German courts](#) by affected Afghans challenging the resettlement freeze. At least two dozen cases have been successfully argued, with the courts ruling that the government must honour its commitment to grant them visas. Following the German courts' unfreezing of the resettlement program, [two groups of 47 and 28 Afghans](#), respectively, arrived in Germany from Pakistan in September.

Tajikistan gives Afghans a 15-Day ultimatum to leave

In early July, Tajikistan issued a [15-day ultimatum for Afghan refugees and asylum seekers](#) to leave or be forcibly returned. [10,000 to 13,000 Afghans are estimated](#) to live in Tajikistan, with many awaiting decisions regarding resettlement to third countries. Reports indicate that deportations have taken place in Dushanbe, Rudaki, and Vahdat, and have included individuals with [valid residency documents and permits](#).

Tajikistan has hosted Afghan refugees since its civil war in the 1990s, with [varying degrees of openness](#). Whilst initially receptive to Afghan refugees following the Taliban's takeover in 2021, there have been cases of deportations [since 2024](#). Although Tajikistan has previously expressed opposition to the de facto authorities, Russia's recent recognition of the de facto authorities has put pressure on Tajikistan to adopt a more restrained stance.

Tajikistan's actions have drawn concern from human rights organisations and UNHCR, who have [highlighted the risks of return](#), particularly for vulnerable groups such as former Afghan government officials, security personnel and journalists, many of whom are seeking refuge in Tajikistan and may face heightened risks of reprisals from the de facto authorities.

UK resettles 4,500 Afghans following major data breach

On 15 July, the UK government announced the [resettlement of approximately 900 Afghans and 3,600 family members](#) under the Afghanistan Response Route (ARR), established in April 2024 to expedite relocation for individuals at heightened risk. The initiative followed a [major data breach in February 2022](#), which exposed the personal details of nearly 19,000 Afghans linked to British forces. The leaked data, later circulated on Facebook in 2023, raised serious protection concerns for those affected.

In response, the UK government [obtained a super-injunction](#) from the High Court on 1 September 2023, prohibiting disclosure of the breach and the existence of the injunction itself. This measure, [described as unprecedented](#), aimed to protect the identities of Afghans at risk of retaliation by the de facto authorities. The injunction remained in place for nearly two years and was [lifted on 15 July 2025](#), following sustained legal and public pressure.

While de facto authorities in Afghanistan publicly announced an amnesty for individuals who worked with foreign forces and claimed they would not target those exposed in the breach, [credible reports](#) indicated that more than 200 Afghan soldiers and police officers listed in the leaked data have been killed since February 2022.

Humanitarian Pressures Persist for Rohingya Refugees

Historic dialogue in Cox's Bazar highlights urgent Rohingya needs

On 24-25 August 2025, the Government of Bangladesh convened [a stakeholder forum in Cox's Bazar](#) marking the first time in several years that Rohingya refugees from both camps and the diaspora formally participated in such a dialogue. The forum brought together UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, donor governments, humanitarian actors, civil society, and political representatives. [Rohingya participants](#) outlined priorities for a rights-based and dignified future, including justice, accountability and redress for past human rights violations.

The forum took place amid [deteriorating conditions in the camps](#), including rising insecurity, threats from armed groups, and looming cuts to food assistance.

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus [stressed the need to support Rohingya refugees](#) until they can safely return and urged the international community to develop a roadmap for their voluntary return to Myanmar. He proposed a [seven-point plan](#) focused on protection, sustained assistance, diplomatic engagement, and accountability, while calling for sustained global attention to the crisis.

Mixed Migration Dynamics across Southeast Asia

Cambodia-Thailand border clashes trigger mass displacement and migrant exodus

Between 24–28 July, a five-day armed conflict [erupted along the Cambodia–Thailand border](#), resulting in the death of at least 48 people and the displacement of over 300,000 individuals across six provinces: Buriram, Surin, Si Sa Ket, and Ubon Ratchathani in Thailand, and Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear in Cambodia. The violence stemmed from a [longstanding territorial dispute](#) that escalated following heightened military and diplomatic tensions since May.

A ceasefire was brokered on 29 July through [joint mediation](#) led by the Malaysian Prime Minister (in his role as ASEAN Chair), alongside the US and China. While the ceasefire remains in effect, it was agreed under significant international pressure and is widely viewed as fragile. [Aid organisations](#), including UNICEF and World Vision, have mobilised emergency assistance, providing food, shelter, and psychosocial support to affected populations.

Despite the cessation of hostilities, mutual distrust and nationalist rhetoric in both countries continue to undermine prospects for durable peace. In Thailand, the conflict has triggered a surge in xenophobic sentiment, [particularly targeting Cambodian migrant workers and students](#). According to the Cambodian government, [400,000 Cambodian migrant workers](#) left Thailand during the fighting.

The mass departure has led to acute labour shortages across key sectors of the Thai economy. In response, Thai authorities have introduced a series of [labour replacement measures](#), including the approval of entry for an initial 10,000 Sri Lankan workers on 19 August (with plans to expand to 30,000), and efforts to recruit workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Nepal to reduce its reliance on migrant workers from neighbouring countries. Additionally, documented Cambodian workers stranded in Thailand with expired permits have been [granted a six-month extension](#) to continue working on humanitarian grounds.

Thailand approves landmark work permits for Myanmar refugees amid aid cuts

In a rare positive development this quarter, Thailand's Cabinet approved a policy shift on 26 August allowing approximately 42,000 working-age Myanmar refugees living in nine border camps to [apply for legal work permits valid for up to one year](#). These camps are located in Mae Hong Son, Tak, Kanchanaburi, and Ratchaburi provinces. This marks a significant departure from previous restrictions that barred refugees from employment, free movement, and access to public services, leaving most dependent on humanitarian aid.

The decision [addresses worsening humanitarian conditions](#) in refugee camps caused by steep reductions in aid, with monthly food rations cut drastically, and aims to alleviate urgent labour shortages in Thailand triggered by the departure of Cambodian migrant workers after recent border conflicts.

UNHCR [welcomed the move as a “turning point”](#) highlighting the potential economic benefits and improved self-reliance for refugees.

While details around the policy’s implementation remain pending, the policy shift [has been welcomed by rights groups](#) as a progressive step toward refugee inclusion in the region, where integration efforts often face political resistance.

Renewed fighting in Chin state cause refugees to flee to Mizoram

On July 2, around [4,000 refugees](#) fled from Myanmar to Mizoram in India, due to renewed fighting between the Chin National Defence Force (CNDF) and the Chinland Defence Force-Hualngoram (CDF-H). According to Indian Authorities and Mizoram’s Interior Minister, new arrivals were [concentrated in border villages](#) such as Zokawthar and Saikumphai in Champhai district.

Following a ceasefire agreement between the two factions in mid-July, [returns to Chin State resumed](#), with Indian police escorting approximately 2,319 individuals back to Khawmawi and Rihkhawdar. While the situation has stabilised, [local authorities remain on alert](#) for potential renewed displacement.

Indonesia establishes a temporary medical facility to treat wounded Palestinians

In August 2025, the Indonesian government [announced plans](#) to establish a medical facility on Galang Island, off the coast of Sumatra, to treat approximately 2,000 wounded Palestinians from Gaza. The facility would [use existing infrastructure](#) on the currently uninhabited island and is solely intended for temporary medical assistance. Indonesian officials have stated that patients are [expected to return](#) to Gaza following recovery, with no plans for permanent resettlement. Indonesia has provided humanitarian aid to Gaza since [the escalation of conflict in October 2023](#).

Malaysia repatriates Indonesian migrant workers under bilateral initiative Program M

On 21 July, [232 Indonesian migrant workers detained in Malaysia](#) were repatriated to Batam via ferry from Johor’s Pasir Gudang International Ferry Terminal. The group included 83 individuals previously held at the Kemayan Immigration Detention Depot in Pahang and 149 from the Putrajaya Immigration Office.

The repatriation was conducted under Malaysia’s Program M, a [two-year bilateral initiative](#) between the Malaysian Immigration Department and Indonesian diplomatic missions aimed at facilitating the [return of 7,200 undocumented Indonesian nationals](#). As of this quarter, [approximately 1,000 individuals have been repatriated](#) through the programme.

Malaysia launches a national refugee registry in parallel to UNHCR's system

In July, Malaysia announced it would be launching a [Refugee and Asylum Seeker Database \(DPP\)](#), a national registration system aimed at improving the government's access to accurate data on refugees and asylum seekers.

The DPP will be developed using [existing infrastructure from the Immigration Department's network](#) and seeks to streamline coordination between government agencies. The system relies on biometric registration and has already piloted the enrolment of [nearly 37,000 refugees](#), primarily those held in immigration detention centers.

According to the government, the initiative is part of a [broader strategy](#) to enhance refugee management by balancing national security priorities with refugees' improved access to essential services. However, refugee advocacy groups and NGOs have [raised concerns](#) about the absence of a legal framework underpinning this system and Malaysia's institutional capacity to manage refugee data responsibly and ethically.

Mixed Migration in Australia and Pacific Islands

82% of Tuvalu's population apply for Australia's climate migration visa

Following the opening of applications in June (as noted in the previous [QMMU](#)), approximately [8,750 Tuvaluans](#), representing 82% of the country's population, had applied for or been included in applications for Australia's special mobility pathway under the Falepili Union treaty, as of 18 July. The treaty, which [came into force on 28 August 2024](#) establishes a climate migration visa allowing Tuvaluan nationals to live, work, and study in Australia with access to public services.

Despite the high demand, [only 280 Tuvaluans will be selected](#) annually through a lottery system, leaving the vast majority of applicants without a migration pathway under the treaty.

Palau rejects US request to host asylum seekers

On July 18, Palau's National Congress and the Council of Chiefs [formally opposed a US proposal](#) to relocate asylum seekers to Palau, advising President Surangel Whipps Jr. against proceeding. In their rejection, Palauan leaders said they [could not accept this specific proposal](#) "because of the practical issues that the introduction of refugees would raise in our society". Palau is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention.

The proposal was raised during [ongoing diplomatic and aid discussions](#) between the US and Palau, including Compact of Free Association (COFA) partnership discussions, through which Palau receives US aid in exchange for strategic military and diplomatic access.

Australia reinstates offshore resettlement deal with Nauru amid legal and human rights concerns

On August 29, the Australian government signed an US\$ 1.6 billion agreement with Nauru to resume [offshore resettlement arrangements](#), reversing a [2023 commitment](#) to end offshore detention. The agreement provides for the relocation of up to 354 individuals who were previously detained over a 30-year period.

The targeted cohort includes around 280 individuals released following the High Court's 2023 ruling in [*NZYQ v Minister for Immigration*](#), which found indefinite immigration detention unconstitutional when deportation is not feasible. These individuals [cannot return to their home countries](#) because they face persecution or their home countries refuse to accept them.

Nauru, with a population of approximately 12,500 and a landmass of 21 square kilometres, previously hosted Australia's offshore detention facilities from 2001 until June 2023. The resumption of offshore arrangements has drawn [criticism from human rights organisations](#), with concerns raised over procedural fairness, access to legal recourse, and the welfare of detained individuals.

Contemporaneously with the Nauru deal, on 5 September, the Australian government passed the [Home Affairs Legislation Amendment \(2025 Measures No. 1\) Bill 2025](#) that, according to [their own description](#), "removes procedural fairness for people being deported to a third country, limiting their ability to further appeal through the courts".

The legislation [removes the application](#) of natural justice for individuals subject to third country deportation arrangements, including decisions involving personal and criminal history data sharing with foreign governments. It also retroactively validates visa decisions that may have been legally flawed, including those impacted by *NZYQ v Minister for Immigration*.

Human rights groups have [raised concerns](#) that the legislation limits access to judicial review, undermines transparency, and expands executive powers without oversight. Critics argue that these changes could [affect thousands of individuals](#), including those with no criminal history, by curtailing their ability to challenge deportation decisions or seek protection under international law.

Disaster-induced Displacement

Tropical cyclones displace millions across Southeast and East Asia

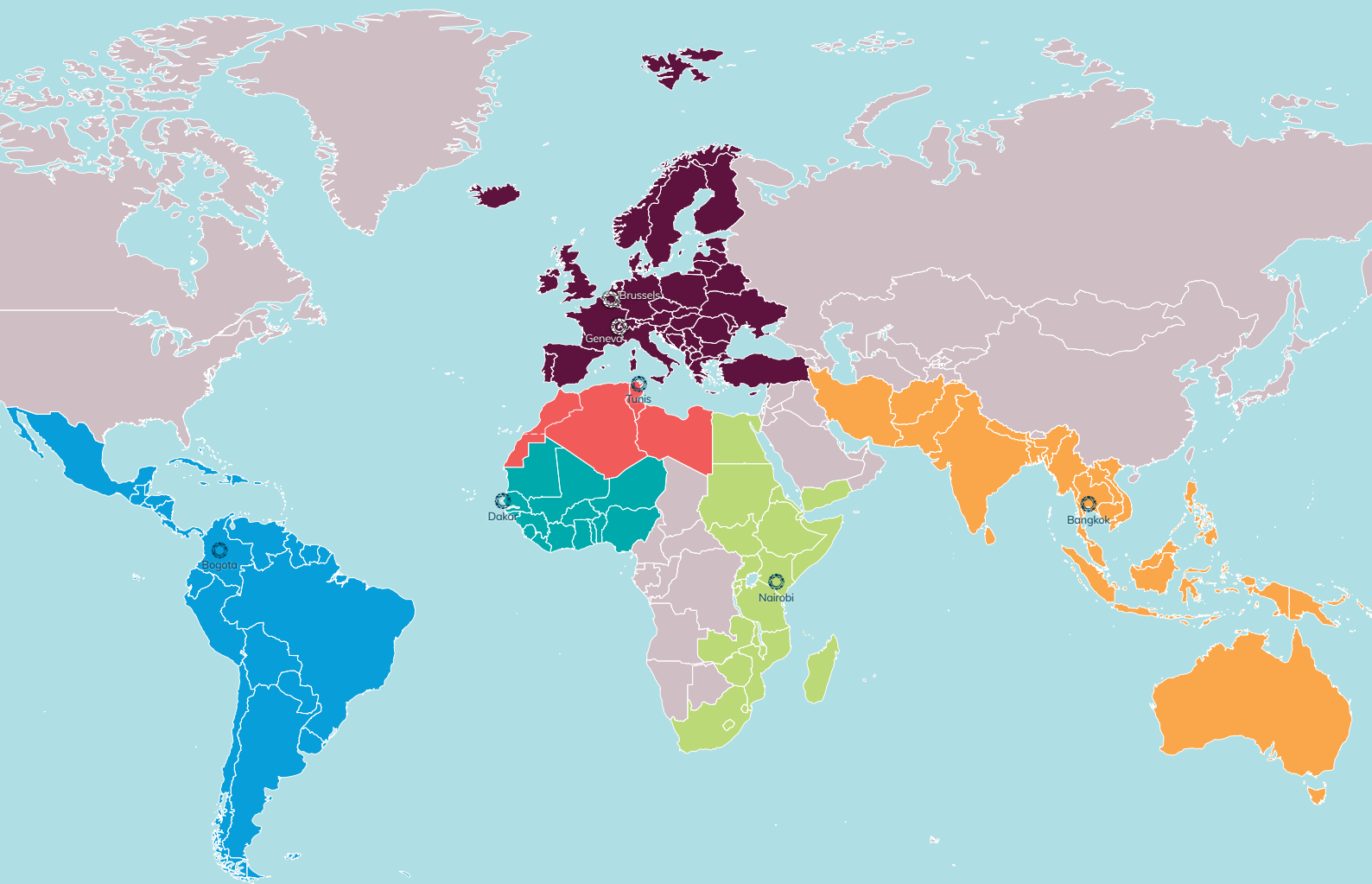
This quarter, a series of tropical cyclones caused widespread displacement across Southeast and East Asia affecting millions in the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, and China. The Philippines experienced the most severe impacts, with multiple storms prompting evacuations and temporary relocations.

Between 20-21 September, Super Typhoon Ragasa struck Luzon Island, displacing over [17,500 individuals](#) due to flooding and landslides, and prompting the evacuation of an additional [25,000 residents](#). The storm also triggered mass evacuations in China's Guangdong Province, where

nearly [2 million](#) people were evacuated, and in Taiwan, where [7,000](#) were evacuated.

Subsequent storms further intensified displacement. Tropical Cyclone Bualoi, which happened on 25–26 September, led to the evacuation of [433,000 people](#) in the Philippines and approximately [250,000 people](#) in Vietnam. In late August, Tropical Cyclone Kajiki prompted the relocation of 300,000 individuals in Vietnam, while Tropical Cyclone Wipha in late July displaced around [43,000 people](#) in the Philippines.

While most evacuations were temporary and managed through national disaster response systems, the cumulative impact of repeated climate events continues to strain local capacities and raises concerns about long-term mobility, protection, and resilience, particularly for vulnerable populations in low-lying and coastal areas



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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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