



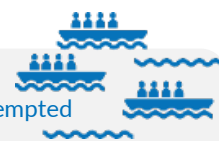
DESPERATE JOURNEYS: ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN SEARCH OF PROTECTION

Over 1 million Rohingya refugees, a stateless Muslim minority from Myanmar, have fled conflict and persecution in Myanmar in successive waves of displacement. The largest exodus took place in August 2017, when more than 742,000 people fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. The region now hosts 1.1 million Rohingya refugees with limited opportunities to develop basic self-reliance or to find effective protection. With dwindling humanitarian assistance, many risk their lives, undertaking desperate journeys¹ in search of safety and solutions. For additional information and statistics, please visit the [Myanmar Situation Data Portal](#).

KEY FIGURES | 01 January 2022 – 30 September 2024



13,600 Rohingya refugees attempted the land journey



13,300 Rohingya refugees attempted the sea/river journey on 165 boats



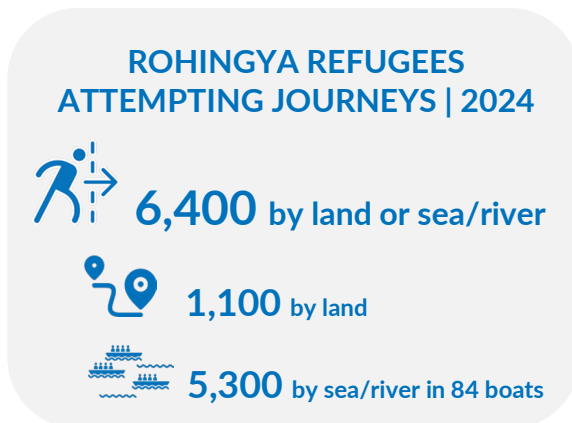
26,900 Rohingya refugees attempted the journey by land or sea/river

¹ For the purposes of this document, the simplified term “movement” refers to Rohingya fleeing by land and/or sea/river directly from Myanmar and/or travelling in an onward movement from a country where they sought refuge and international protection. ‘Attempted’ movements include intercepted/stopped movements as well as those reaching their intended destinations. The information in this report is compiled and triangulated from various sources, including governments, partners, UNHCR operations, media reports and interviews with refugees themselves. All data is provisional and subject to change.

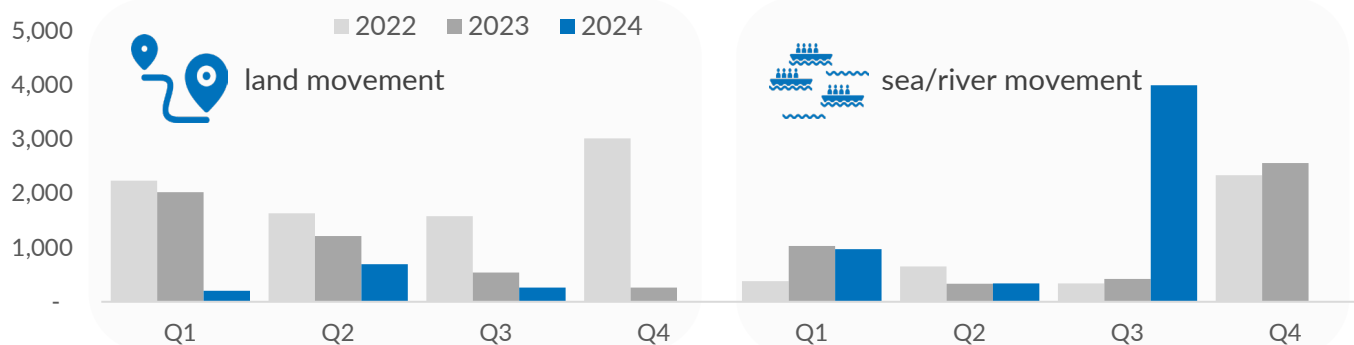
Photo: A boat carrying Rohingya refugees off the coast of South Aceh, Indonesia. After a perilous journey that claimed lives, 152 Rohingya refugees were evacuated on 24 October 2024 thanks to Indonesian authorities and the local community. ©UNHCR / Amanda Jufrian

DEVELOPMENTS IN 2024

- As of September 2024, **6,400 Rohingya refugees attempted land and sea/river movements**, out of which 5,300 embarked on perilous sea/river journeys and 190 were reported deceased or missing from maritime movements.
- In addition to sea/river movements, **around 1,100 Rohingya refugees are known to have undertaken land movements in the first nine months of 2024**, with the vast majority reporting detention by authorities or other protection risks along land routes.² Given the lack of access and information on the often-clandestine land movements, the actual figures are likely to be higher.
- With 4,300 Rohingya refugees departing on perilous maritime movements and 416 reported deceased or missing, 2023 saw the highest number of attempted sea/river journeys and was the deadliest year on record since the 2015 Andaman Sea Crisis. This worrisome trend of steadily increasing numbers has continued in 2024.
- Despite the sailing season having just commenced, **the first nine months of 2024 have already seen more people attempting sea/river journeys than in the whole of 2023**. Specifically, a comparison between January and September 2023 and the same period in 2024 shows a **197% increase in the number of people attempting boat movements**.
- At least 11 known tragic boat accidents have occurred, resulting in 190 people reported as dead or missing** between January and September 2024. Inconsistent with the principle of non-refoulment and the law of the sea, survivors have reported practices of push backs and delayed disembarkations that resulted in deaths. In addition, widespread physical abuse, including gender-based violence, was reported by survivors.
- Due to the ongoing conflict and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Rakhine State in Myanmar, an increasing number (91% of all the boat movements thus far in 2024) of Rohingya refugees are fleeing by boat across the Naf River in search of protection in Bangladesh. Information obtained by UNHCR, partners and media coverage indicate that a significant number of those reaching Bangladesh were reportedly denied access to safety and territory.
- Nearly 2,800 Rohingya refugees are currently detained in countries along the route outside of Myanmar** on immigration charges, often indefinitely and without due process of the law. Of those detained, 87 people have serious medical conditions and 206 are children, of whom 40 are unaccompanied or separated children. A significant number of these Rohingya refugees have been detained for prolonged periods that span several years. Within Myanmar, over **452 Rohingya** were newly detained between January and September 2024, resulting in at least **3,398 Rohingya in detention** as of September 2024. Due to restricted access for UNHCR and partners to detention centres, the actual figure may be higher.

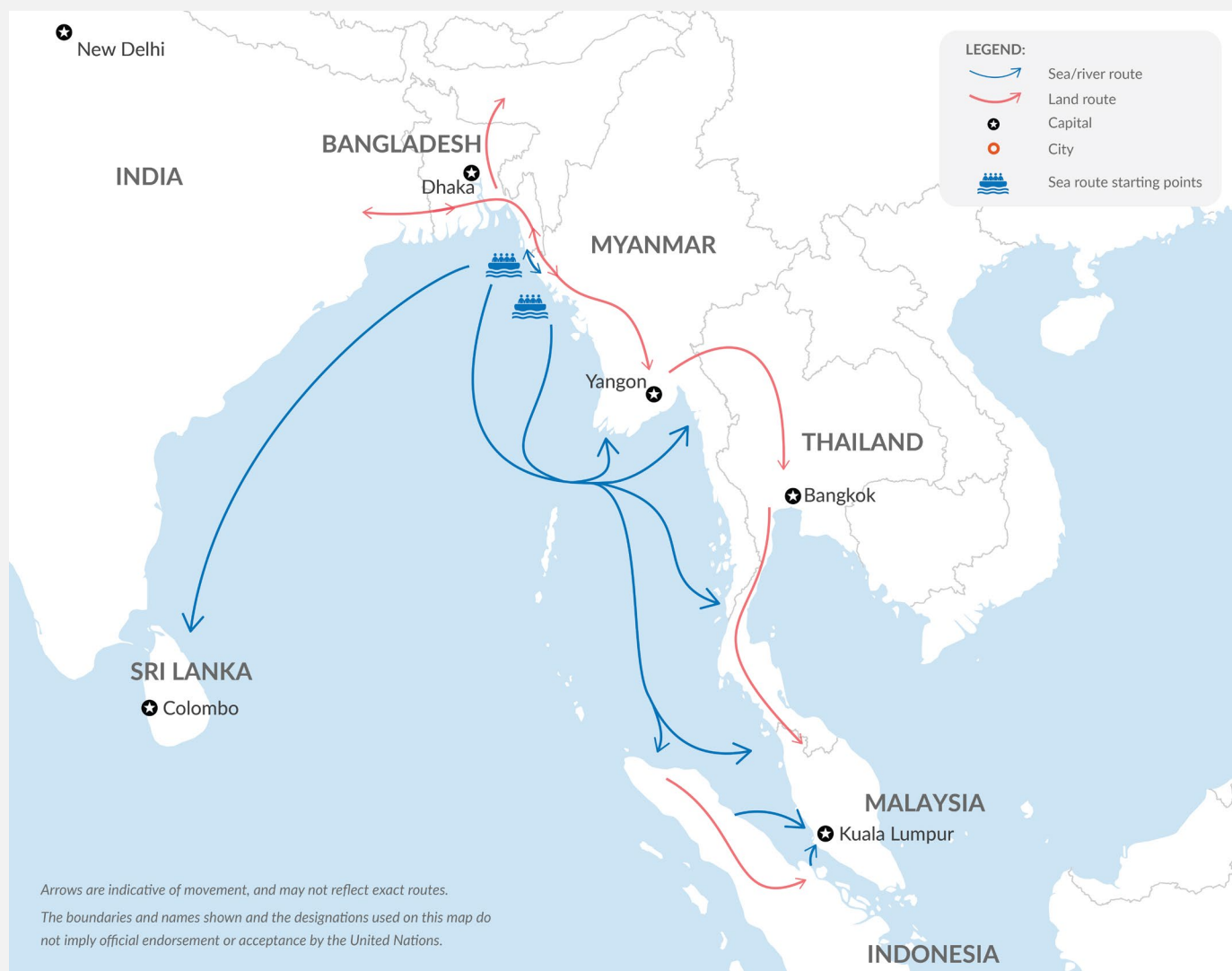


Quarterly trends on land and sea/river movements



² Source: UNHCR

Land and sea/river journey routes taken from 2022 to 2024



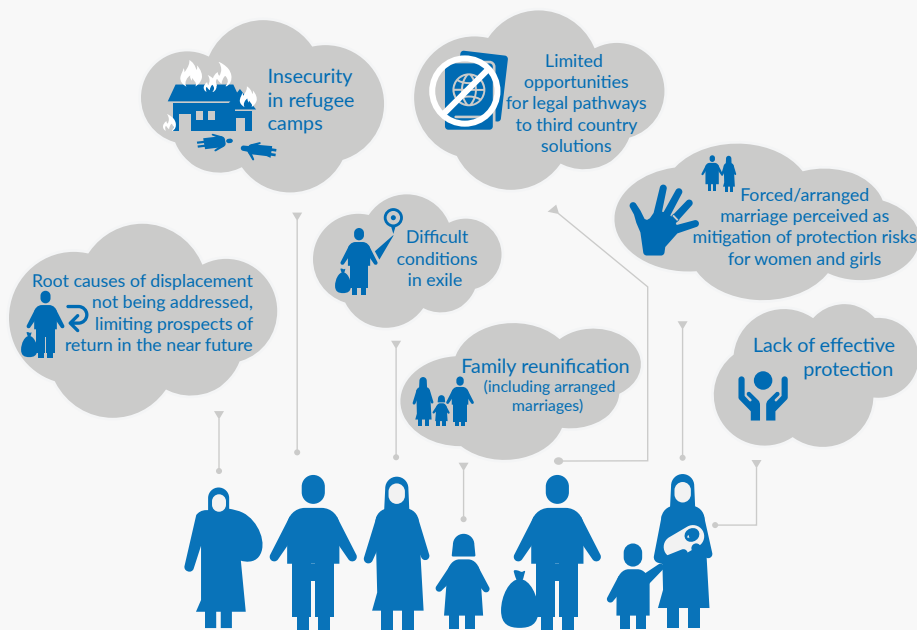
Land and sea/river movements are often combined in multiple sub-routes, covering various countries, to reach the intended destination. While efforts are made to capture all land and sea/river movements, it is recognized that many journeys are not known due to their clandestine nature.

REASONS FOR EMBARKING ON DANGEROUS JOURNEYS

Rohingya refugees are the world's largest stateless population, with their lack of citizenship posing a significant barrier to accessing basic rights and protection. Most Rohingya refugees have indicated they wish to return home to Myanmar once conditions for a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return are met, including addressing the root causes of their displacement. While awaiting return, Rohingya refugees hope to contribute to their host communities. However, limited access to resilience activities such as education, skills development and livelihoods often leave them vulnerable to despair and exploitation, driving some to embark on dangerous journeys. The deteriorating situation in Myanmar, particularly the intensified conflict in Rakhine State, along with insecurity and hardships in exile, remain key factors forcing Rohingya refugees to seek effective protection and a dignified life in other countries within the region.

UNHCR assessments and consultations with Rohingya refugees indicate a high awareness of the risks related to movements by land and sea with the intention of reaching other countries in the region. Regarding sea movements, a substantial number (91% thus far in 2024) of boat movements were unsuccessful, with disembarkations occurring in Myanmar or Bangladesh, leaving refugees in an even more vulnerable situation. Despite the risks, many take the desperate decision to leave in search of protection.

Other factors compelling Rohingya stateless refugees to travel by land and sea

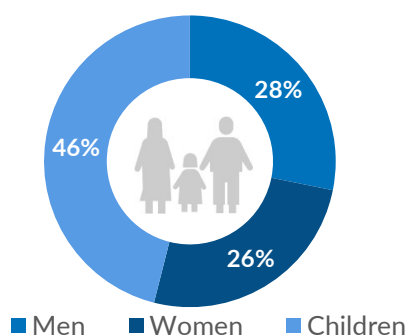


PROFILES – AGE AND GENDER DYNAMICS

Prior to 2015, most people undertaking maritime movements were men. However, the gender balance shifted in recent years, with the number of Rohingya refugee women and children on sea/river routes steadily increasing since mid-2015. This trend peaked in 2020–2021 when two-thirds of those embarking on sea/river journeys were women and children. Although this trend shifted slightly in 2022 when 53% of those embarking on sea/river journeys were women and children, the proportion increased again in 2023 and 2024. **In 2024, 70% of those attempting sea/river journeys were women (39%) and children (31%).** While this represents a 2% decrease from the first half of the year, it should be noted that data on age and gender composition is often limited for boats being intercepted on the Naf River and disembarked in either Myanmar or Bangladesh.

Analysis of gender dynamics in **land movements from 1 January 2022 to 30 September 2024 reveals that 76% were women and children** (18% and 58% respectively) while 24% were adult males. In 2024, the majority (63%) of people moving by land through September were women and children. This is a decrease of 16% compared to the same period in 2023.

Gender & age breakdown for land and sea/river movements | January 2022 - September 2024



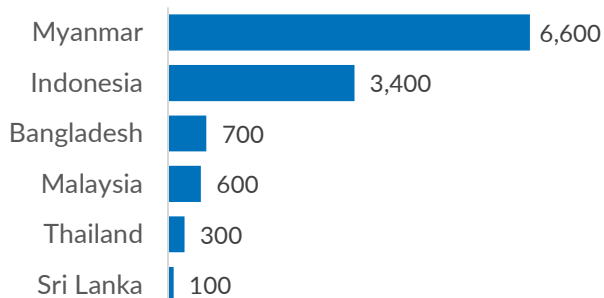
Among Rohingya stateless refugees attempting land and sea/river movements, specific profiles face protection risks and challenges:



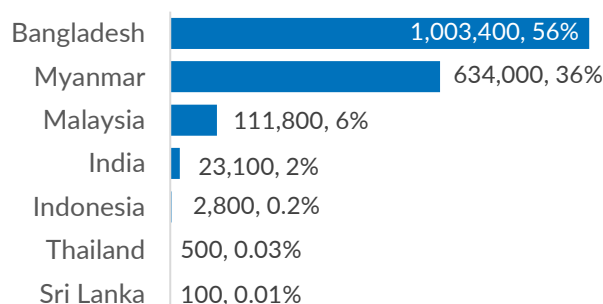
RESPONSIBILITY-SHARING

Responsibility sharing could be more evenly distributed in a collective effort to save lives along the sea/river and land routes. This could be achieved through a regional response that encompasses search and rescue, safe disembarkations, protection-sensitive and victim-centered approaches and strengthened efforts to combat trafficking, along with local and third-country solutions. In 2024, a significant number of boat movements occurred across the Naf River, with Bangladesh receiving the majority of people fleeing Myanmar.

Known Rohingya arriving by sea - Disembarkations per country⁴ | January 2022 - September 2024



Rohingya stateless refugees registered with UNHCR & Forcibly Displaced and Stateless People in Myanmar | September 2024



ACCESS TO ASYLUM

UNHCR continues to advocate for access to asylum for refugees and strengthened protection-sensitive entry systems along sea/river and land routes.⁴ Refugees, including those moving onwards, should in principle be allowed to access territory and must be protected against refoulement (i.e. return to a place where their life or freedom would be at risk) in line with the 1951 Refugee Convention, international human rights law, and customary international law. The principle of non-refoulement applies to people in need of international protection, regardless of whether a country is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention.



⁵ Including IDPs and in-situ stateless.

⁴ [Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Myanmar](#)

Photo caption: Shodul Amin (30) poses while holding his child at a temporary shelter in Kulam village, Pidie district, Aceh, Indonesia. This temporary shelter is located right on the beach and far from local residential areas, with very limited facilities. 3 May 2024. ©UNHCR/ Jemma Galvin

KEY PROTECTION ISSUES

Rohingya refugees face significant protection risks before, during and after arriving at their destination. Incidents of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech targeting Rohingya refugees continue to be identified in countries along the route. The impact of this on access to the territory and to asylum, physical protection, self-reliance, and social cohesion, is felt by Rohingya communities in the region.

 <p>Gender-based Violence (harassment, rape, exploitation, violence and enslavement)</p>  <p>Detention without due process</p>  <p>Deprivation of food/water</p>  <p>Theft, fraud, and extortion</p>		<p>Forced marriages </p> <p>Bonded labour </p> <p>Trafficking </p> <p>Medical issues </p>
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ARREST & DETENTION	TRAFFICKING & SMUGGLING	WOMEN & GIRLS ON THE MOVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 2,800 Rohingya refugees are currently known to be held in detention outside Myanmar. Rohingya refugees are frequently held in prolonged or indefinite detention, with limited access to due process. In Myanmar, laws preventing freedom of movement are strictly enforced, leading to 452 Rohingya who attempted journeys in 2024 being detained. In Myanmar, UNHCR supported 386 detainees (including 106 children) with food, medicines, legal aid and non-food items from January to September 2024. While in detention, Rohingya refugee women and girls as well as men and boys face gender-based violence risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interagency Anti-Trafficking Working Group (ATWG) in Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh) identified, referred, and assisted 231 victims of trafficking from January to September 2024. The ATWG figures should not be interpreted as showing the extent or prevalence of human trafficking in the camps. Human trafficking networks frequently operate across borders and are connected to broader transnational criminal syndicates. Threats to physical integrity include abuse, torture and death and are often perpetrated by traffickers or smugglers. Rohingya refugees are often denied the use of telephones or other means of communication by smugglers and traffickers and may get separated from their family along the journey. Initially, and unaware of the risks, people may willingly undertake a journey that later becomes a trafficking situation. Trafficking for the purpose of child marriage and forced labour of Rohingya refugees continues to be of particular concern with reports emerging from several countries in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender-based violence (harassment, rape, exploitation, violence, and enslavement) are common risks faced by women and girls. Rohingya refugee women and girls are particularly at risk of being kidnapped and sold into marriage or sexual or domestic servitude.
DURING TRAVEL	THEFT, FRAUD & EXTORTION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unseaworthy vessels can lead to shipwreck and death or severe distress situations at sea from a lack of essential supplies such as food and water. Cases of malnutrition have been identified as well as skin diseases and communicable diseases caught during the journey. For both sea/river and land travel, refugees face sickness and medical emergencies and are unable to access medical assistance without risking detention. Travelling in dire conditions can lead to refugees being separated from their family members, thus increasing the risk of re-trafficking. As evidenced in survivors' statements, practices of push backs and delayed disembarkations have led to deaths at sea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smugglers often take money without providing the promised service or demand a higher fee than initially agreed, threatening to stop the journey or harm refugees or their family members unless they pay more money. Smugglers and traffickers are also known to take the belongings of Rohingya refugees, including phones or personal documents. Smugglers and traffickers are known to make false promises, such as of marriage or employment. 	

UNHCR is grateful for the following donors, who have contributed to our Myanmar situation response as well as those that contribute to UNHCR programmes with globally unearmarked funds and broadly earmarked funds for the Asia and the Pacific region: [Australia](#) | [Belgium](#) | [Canada](#) | [Denmark](#) | [European Union](#) | [France](#) | [Germany](#) | [Ireland](#) | [Japan](#) | [Jersey](#) | [Kuwait](#) | [Luxembourg](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [New Zealand](#) | [Norway](#) | [People's Republic of China](#) | [Philippines](#) | [Republic of Korea](#) | [Saudi Arabia](#) | [Slovenia](#) | [Sweden](#) | [Switzerland](#) | [United Kingdom](#) | [United States of America](#) | [Private donors Australia](#) | [Private donors Canada](#) | [Private donors France](#) | [Private donors Germany](#) | [Private donors MENA](#) | [Private donors Netherlands](#) | [Private donors others](#) | [CERF](#) | [UN Development Programme](#) | [UN Joint Programme](#) | [UN Pooled Funds](#) | [UN Population Fund](#) | [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#) | [Qatar Charity](#) | [The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives](#) | [Fast retailing Co., Ltd. \(UNIQLO\)](#) | [UPS Corporate](#)