Routes Monitor
Methodological note
February 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

Routes Monitor is an analytical platform that consolidates **non-personal, aggregated** data on mixed movements across selected routes. It supports a **route-based understanding** of movement dynamics and strengthens trend analysis over time, moving beyond single-country views toward an analytical lens that supports protection-sensitive interpretation.

Routes Monitor is a business intelligence layer that consolidates and systematizes datasets that have been collected already for years and shared externally through monthly reporting and interactive public regional portals.

Beyond aggregating quantitative figures, Routes Monitor also connects users to UNHCR's route-specific protection analyses and thematic reports, when applicable, ensuring that the platform combines data trends with protection-relevant context.

2. Geographic Coverage

Coverage varies by route and indicators, depending on data availability, reporting practices, access constraints, and validation processes. The platform provides an indicative picture of trends across routes currently monitored and reflects only what can be reliably consolidated at this stage. Absence of data does not imply absence of movements.

3. Core Indicators and Definitions

Routes Monitor distinguishes between three core indicators:

3.1 Arrivals

Arrivals refer to persons recorded as entering a given country along a specific route (by sea and/or land, depending on the context). The term reflects the point at which individuals are officially registered or reported as having crossed into a territory along that route. It does not imply that the country of arrival constitutes a final destination, as individuals may subsequently move onward.

3.2 Disembarkations

Disembarkations are defined in UNHCR's glossary as: the operational process by which persons, including refugees and migrants, are transferred from a vessel to a place on land. This definition can include transfers following rescue operations or interceptions at sea and acknowledges that not all disembarkations occur in locations meeting the criteria of a place of safety. UNHCR recalls that only disembarkation in a place of safety is consistent with relevant international law standards. For the purposes of this dashboard, recording practices vary by context and may reflect differences in operational modalities and verification constraints.

3.3 Departures

Routes Monitor does not maintain a standalone global "departures dataset." Instead, for selected routes, **departure figures are reconstructed through triangulation**, using:

- **Arrivals** recorded in destination countries, and
- **Disembarkations** recorded in relevant transit / coastal countries,
- Combined with contextual UNHCR operational analysis to ensure coherent interpretation over time.

Important implication: Where disembarkations data are missing or not reported, reconstructed "departures" may reflect only the arrivals component for the relevant period and geography.

4. Data Sources and Methodology

4.1 Mediterranean Routes (Western, Central and Eastern) and West-Africa Atlantic Routes

A. Arrivals

Arrival figures for these routes are based primarily on official government reporting from countries of arrival in Europe. UNHCR country and regional offices have historically consolidated these datasets under the regional page Operational Data Portal (Europe Sea Arrival).

- **Greece:** Hellenic Police / Hellenic Coast Guard
- **Italy**: Ministry of Interior / Italian Police
- **Spain:** Ministry of Interior (including sea arrivals and arrivals to the Canary Islands)
- **Malta**: Migration Police
- **Cyprus**: Immigration Police / Asylum Service

Nationality breakdown: publicly available Frontex data on detected border crossings

Arrival data may be updated more frequently at the country level than on regional or route-level aggregates. Updates should not be considered final and may be subject to change, including retroactive revisions.

B. Disembarkations

Disembarkation figures for these routes are based primarily on official government reporting, most commonly published by national coast guard authorities, with varying levels of frequency depending on the country and operational context. UNHCR keeps track of these figures closely and complements them through its own field monitoring and the review of other publicly available sources, including verified media reporting and partner information. Countries with disembarkation data include: Türkiye, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania.

C. Departure Figures

For these routes, departures are analytically reconstructed through triangulation of:

- Recorded arrivals in European destination countries
- Recorded disembarkations in relevant coastal or transit countries
- Contextual operational analysis

In practice, this means that departure figures reflect the total outward movement observed along a route segment, as inferred from both arrival and disembarkation reporting. Where disembarkation data are unavailable for a given period, reconstructed departures may reflect arrivals only for that segment.

4.2 South and South-East Asia

These routes are based on UNHCR monitoring and operational reporting, as reflected in the UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP) Myanmar Situation Page.

4.3 Thematic Page: Dead or Missing at Sea

Figures on dead or missing persons at sea are compiled through triangulation of multiple sources, e.g., reports from survivors and affected families collected by UNHCR staff, government authorities, including coast guards and navy vessels, civil society and humanitarian organizations, verified media reporting. Consolidated reports include Mediterranean and Western Africa Atlantic Routes, as well as South and South-East Asia. An important structured data source informing this triangulation is IOM's Missing Migrants Project which is clearly referenced in the Dead or Missing Special Feature on Routes Monitor. Due to reporting constraints, access limitations, and verification challenges, figures represent conservative estimates and may understate (or in some cases overstate) the actual number of incidents.

4.4 Thematic Page: Nationality

Figures on nationality are consolidated at the route-level. These figures stem from Frontex datasets for arrivals and government official reporting, most commonly by national coast guard authorities, for disembarkations.

5. Data Limitations

Data on mixed movements is subject to:

- Reporting delays and periodic revisions
- Uneven coverage across all countries within a route
- Differences in how route segments are observed (e.g., land vs. maritime).

Users should interpret the data as indicative of trends and patterns rather than definitive counts.

6. Relationship with Other Tools and Datasets

The Routes Monitor operates within a broader ecosystem of displacement data actors. It builds on publicly available government statistics, UNHCR sources and complements national and regional monitoring systems by structuring these data through a route-level analytical perspective.

The dashboard does not incorporate data from IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). The Routes Monitor provides a global route-based analytical layer that enables comparative analysis on a series of standard indicators along the same route.

In addition to consolidating governmental and UNHCR operational datasets, Routes Monitor also links to complementary analytical resources, including route-specific protection monitoring reports and thematic UNHCR publications. These resources provide essential qualitative and contextual analysis and strengthen its protection-sensitive interpretation of movement dynamics.

By organizing nationally reported data into a consolidated route framework, the platform supports greater coherence in interpreting trends across entire journeys, while remaining complementary to other actors' monitoring tools and methodologies.

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