

# ITALY – SEA ARRIVALS

## UNHCR UPDATE #1

September 2015

### KEY FIGURES

**132,000**

Persons arriving by sea  
(Jan-Sept 2015)

**16,000**

Persons arriving by sea in Sept  
2015

**43,400**

Sea arrivals originate from  
Eritrea, the Syrian Arab  
Republic and Iraq

**10,000**

Unaccompanied children  
arrived by sea (Jan-Sept  
2015)

**38,700**

Asylum applications up to  
July 2015 (including from  
sea and other arrivals)

**89%**

Of sea arrivals to Italy  
departed from Libya

**59%**

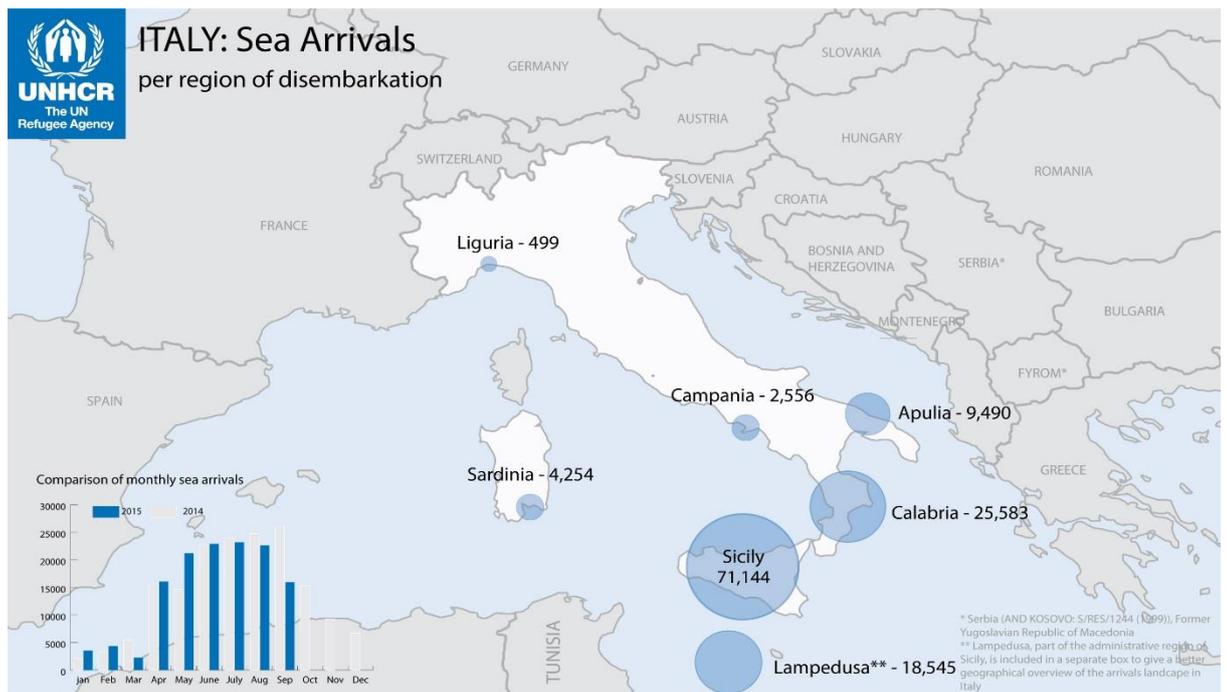
Average EU asylum,  
subsidiary and  
humanitarian protection  
rate of top nationalities  
arriving by sea in Italy (as of  
July 2015)

**10**

UNHCR staff positioned at  
key arrival points

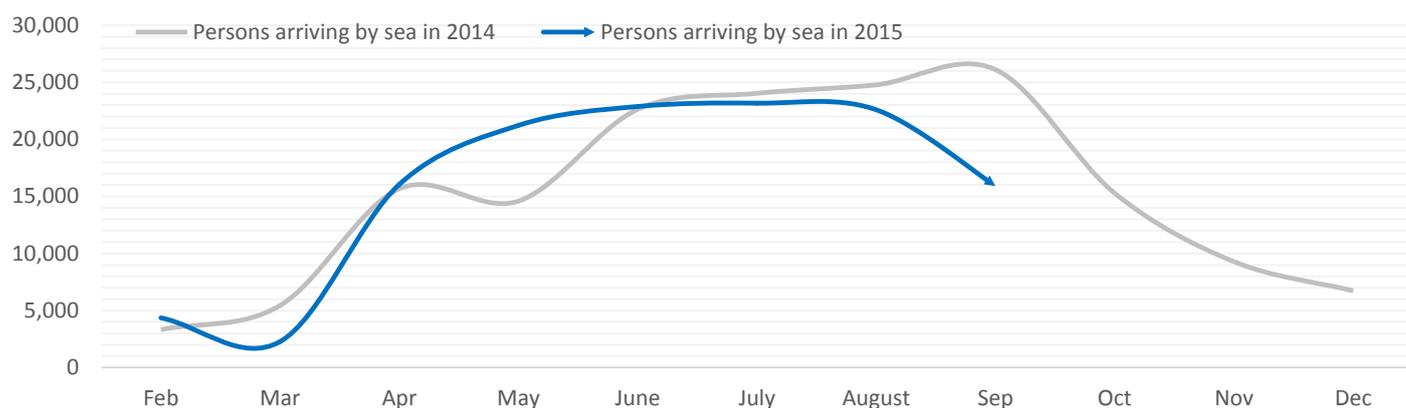
### HIGHLIGHTS

- Sea arrival trends during 2015 have been largely similar as in the same period last year – with the exception of September, in which an unusual drop of 40% compared to September 2014 was observed.
- EU Council Decisions entered into force which established provisional measures to assist Italy and Greece. The first hotspot approach is being piloted in Lampedusa, with Villa Sikania (Sicily) serving as second line reception facility. UNHCR works closely with the authorities and European Asylum Support Office (EASO), supporting information provision to persons arriving by sea on hotspot and relocation procedures.
- On 30 September, the legislative decree, transposing the recast of EU Procedure and Reception Directives, entered into force.



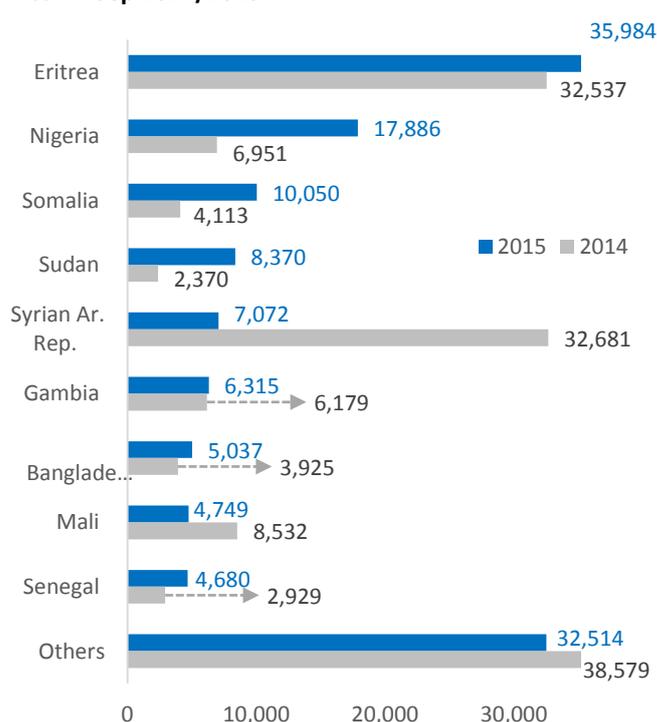
## SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

**Figure 1. Trends of monthly sea arrivals | Jan 2014 – Sep 2015**



Since last year, spontaneous sea arrivals occur extremely rarely on the shores of Italy. Instead, through coordinated Search and Rescue (SAR) operations most refugees and migrants are intercepted at sea and brought on shore by either rescue or commercial vessels. Main disembarkation points include Augusta (15%), Lampedusa (14%), Reggio Calabria (10%), Pozzallo (10%) and Palermo (8%). Rescue operations are coordinated by the Italian Coast Guard which informs vessels and air assets operating under Triton or by NGOs (MSF and MOAS) to intervene. Furthermore, vessels operating under EUNAVFOR MED and Mare Sicuro play a crucial role in reducing deaths occurring during the dangerous sea journey. Still, up to September 2015, almost **3,000 persons have lost their lives or gone missing** in the Mediterranean Sea whilst trying to reach European shores, compared to 3,500 during the whole of 2014. The monthly **sea arrival trends in Italy in 2015 are largely similar** as last year – with the **exception of September, which has seen an unusual 40% drop in arrivals compared to September 2014**. UNHCR has ten staff positioned at key arrival points to support authorities with the provision of information on international protection and to identify persons with special needs and refer them to required services. This is conducted in partnership with IOM. UNHCR also monitors reception conditions in first and second line facilities.

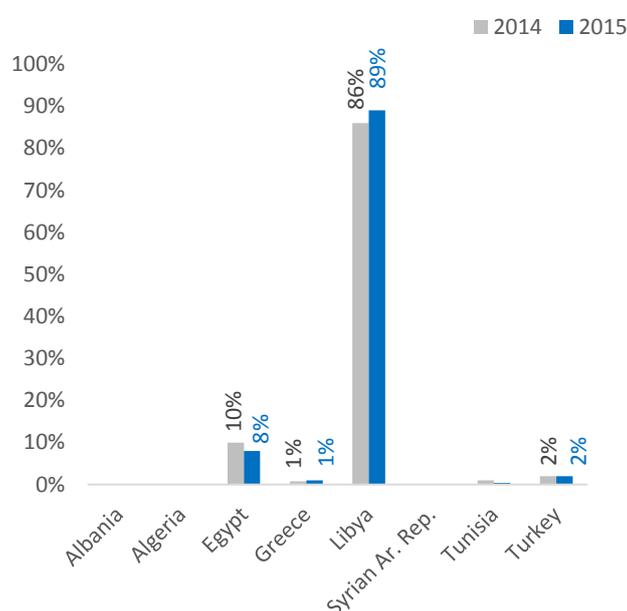
**Figure 2. Top 10 nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan – Sep 2014/2015**



During 2015 **persons originating from over 65 different countries arrived in Italy**. Taking into account the country of origin of persons arriving by sea up to July 2015, 59% would be entitled to refugee status, subsidiary protection and humanitarian protection if using the average EU recognition rates. Noticeable is the **reduction of Syrian arrivals by almost 80%**, compared to the same period in 2014. The introduction of visa requirements for Syrians by some North African countries in early 2015, as well as the deteriorating security in Libya, might have contributed to use the Eastern Mediterranean Route to reach Europe – which is considered to be comparatively less dangerous. The already decreasing number of Syrian arrivals, has further dropped significantly in September, when only 360 arrived in comparison to over 1,200 arrivals in July and August. Another nationality with a major drop in September are Bangladeshi with only 22 arrivals, compared to 1,100-2,300 in July and August.

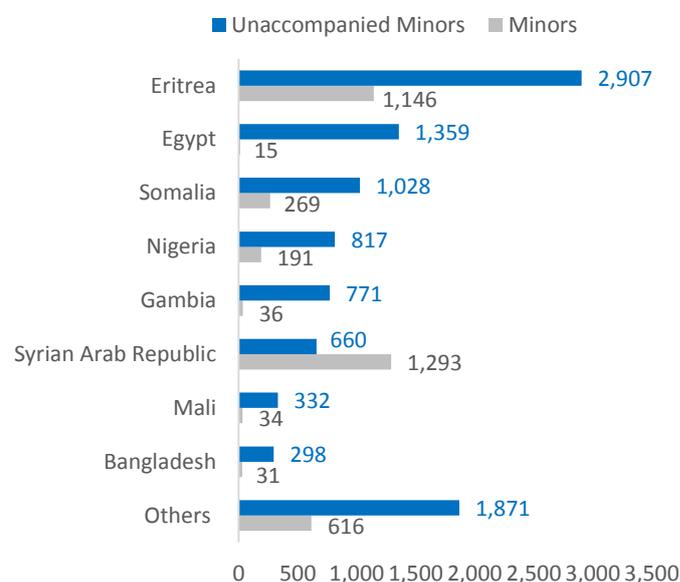
## SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

**Figure 3. Main countries of departure of sea arrivals to Italy | Jan – Sep 2015**



The large majority of sea arrivals continue to leave from Libya with main departure points from the Tripoli area, including Zuwara, Garabulli, and Subratha. **Abuse and ill treatment during transit in Libya** have been reported, committed by smugglers, security forces and armed groups. Whereas some persons transit through Libya, some have resided for considerable time in the country. It appears that the security situation in Libya has motivated some longtime resident migrants not to repatriate but to undertake the journey to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. In view of the changing dynamics along the Western Balkan route, UNHCR is monitoring possible trends of sea arrivals to Italy from Albania and Greece. Although some persons arrive via this route, the arrival numbers remain low and are similar to 2014.

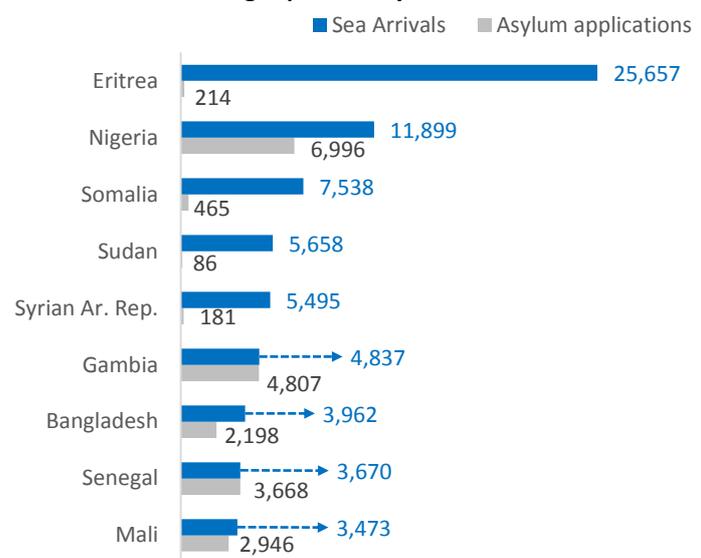
**Figure 4. Arrivals to Italy – Minors and unaccompanied minors | Jan – Sep 2015**



In 2015, sea arrivals of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) decreased slightly compared to 2014. In September 81 UASC arrived, a substantial drop compared to previous months and September 2014. Approximately **90% of UASC are male and/or 15 years or older**. In Italy, UASC regardless of legal status or nationality are entitled to legal protection, whereby they cannot be expelled nor be detained for reasons of their irregular entry. Despite the high degree of protection offered in Italian legislation, reportedly large groups of **Eritrean, Syrian and Somali UASC continue to consider Italy as a transit country** with the intention to travel onwards to other European countries. This is reportedly related to expectations of better integration opportunities, family obligations and links. In view of possible return requirements to Italy under the EU Dublin procedures, many avoid being identified properly. At the same time, a continuing increase in applications for international protection by West-African and Bangladeshi UASC has been observed. Five UNHCR child protection experts work with authorities to promote good practices on Best Interest Assessment and Determination and support information provision for UASC at arrival points and in reception structures.

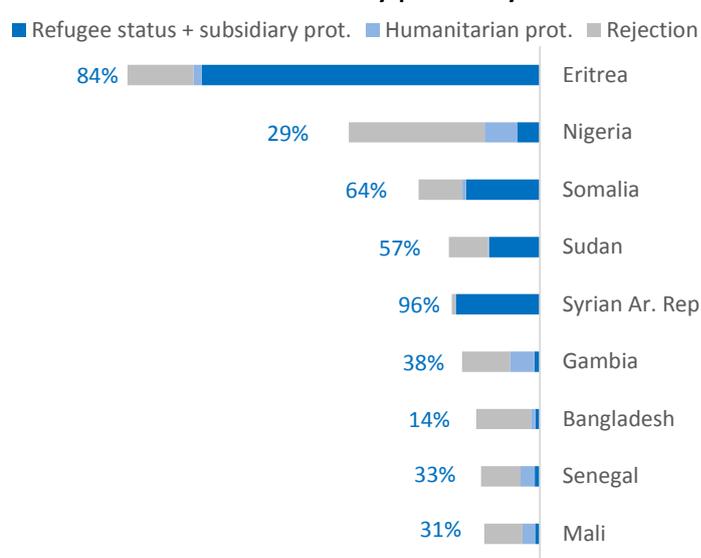
## ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN ITALY

**Figure 5. Asylum applications in comparison to sea arrivals - Main countries of origin | Jan – July 2015\***



\*Asylum application figures also include asylum seekers who do not arrive by sea. Furthermore, applications are usually recorded at different periods after arrival, varying from a few weeks to over a month. Therefore, the chart merely provides an indicative comparison.

**Figure 6. Average first instance recognition rate in EU - Main countries of sea arrivals to Italy | Jan – July 2015\***



\*Percentages reflect the total number of persons granted refugee status, subsidiary protection and humanitarian protection in the EU.

**From January to July 2015, Italy received 38,733 asylum applications.** The main countries of origin of asylum seekers in Italy are Nigeria (18%), Gambia (12%), Senegal (9%), Pakistan (9%), Mali (8%) and Ukraine (7%) – thus differing largely from the main countries of origin of sea arrivals (see figure 5). Certain nationalities for which high numbers of sea arrivals are observed, rarely apply for international protection in Italy. Particularly **Eritreans, Somalis, Sudanese and Syrians usually travel to other European countries to lodge their applications**, where they may have relatives/community members and expectations of better integration prospects. Despite the trend of onwards travel of certain nationalities, asylum applications in Italy have increased by almost 150% between 2013 and 2014, and further saw an increase of around 30% during the first seven months of 2015. On average of the sea arrivals in Italy, **59% would be entitled to refugee status, subsidiary and humanitarian protection in the EU**, highlighting the mixed migratory nature of sea arrivals into Italy (see figure 6). From January - June 2015, 24,386 asylum applications were examined. 6% were granted refugee status, including 51% of Syrian applicants, 48% of Congolese (DRC) and 42% of Eritreans. 18% received subsidiary protection, including 83% of Afghan applicants, 80% of Libyan and Somalis. UNHCR participates in first instance refugee status determination procedures, which are conducted by the decentralised Territorial Eligibility Commissions. Direct participation of more than 40 staff allows UNHCR to continue to monitor the asylum-procedure and to contribute to ensuring reasonable protection levels and pursue efforts to improve procedural standards.

## HOTSPOTS AND RELOCATION



On 22 September, EU ministers agreed on the relocation of 15,600 persons in clear need of international protection from Italy, in addition to 24,000 relocation places committed earlier in July. In advance of the possible establishment of a future permanent relocation scheme in the EU, relocation of additional persons is expected under the current EU relocation package up to September 2017. The relocation scheme applies to nationalities of applicants with an EU-wide average recognition rate of 75% or higher, like Syrians and Eritreans. The **39,600 persons in clear need of international protection will be transferred from Italy** to other EU member states on the basis of agreed quotas, where their asylum claims will be processed. It is expected that the **majority of the candidates for relocation from Italy are Eritreans, with almost 35,400 sea arrivals in 2015**. In 2015 only around 7,100 Syrians have arrived via sea to Italy. Implementation of the relocation scheme will be supported through the “hotspot approach”. Italian authorities will channel arrivals through selected disembarkation ports where health screening, identification, registration and fingerprinting will be carried out. Four ports have been identified - Pozzallo, Porto Empedocle, Trapani and Lampedusa - with a total first reception capacity of around 1,500 persons. Two more reception facilities will be operational in Augusta and Taranto by the end of 2015. In the identified hotspots, Frontex, EASO and Europol and Eurojust are providing operational support. UNHCR supports information provision and individual counselling on the hotspots procedure and relocation in first and second line facilities, in close cooperation with EASO. The hotspot approach is currently being piloted in Lampedusa, with Villa Sikania (Sicily) serving as second line reception facility.

### ANNEX: MAP UNHCR RESPONSE TO SEA ARRIVALS

#### Contacts:

Rose de Jong, Regional Reporting Officer, [dejong@unhcr.org](mailto:dejong@unhcr.org), Tel: +39 06 80212322, Cell +39 33 89488 412  
Iosto Ibba, Public Information Unit, [ibba@unhcr.org](mailto:ibba@unhcr.org), Tel: +30 0680212326, Cell +39 33 16355 517

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Sources: UNHCR, Ministry of Interior, Eurostat - unless indicated otherwise, figures included reflect the period up to 30 September

