

SEA MOVEMENTS 2022

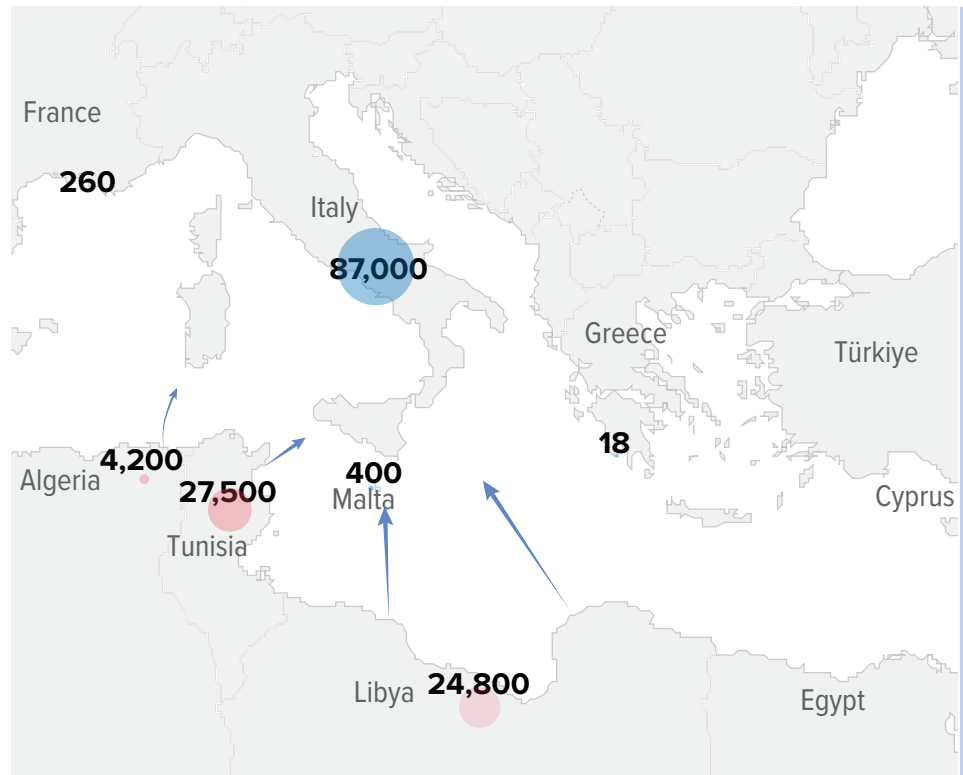
144,200

144,200 reported attempts by migrants and refugees to cross the Central Mediterranean Sea from Algeria, Libya and Tunisia in 2022 – a 33% increase on 2021.

LEGEND

- Arrivals in Italy and Malta
- Disembarkations in North Africa

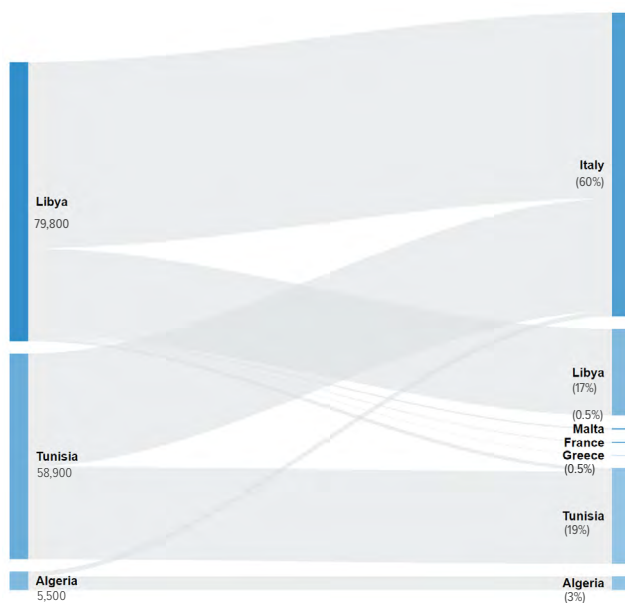
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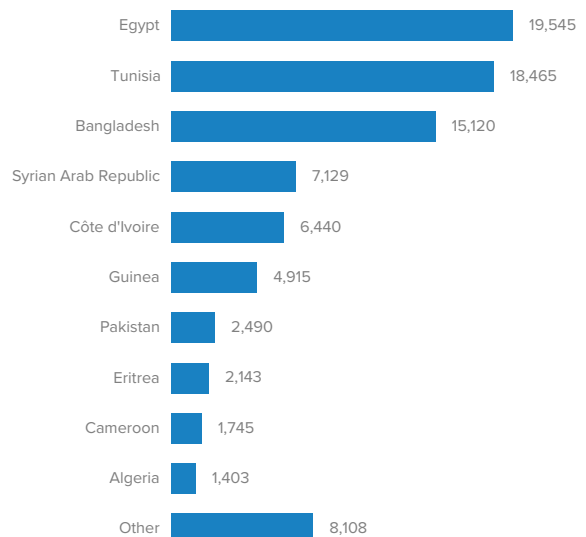
GENERAL OVERVIEW

In 2022, an estimated 144,200¹ attempts were reported by migrants and refugees to cross the Central Mediterranean Sea² from Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia to Europe³. This was a 33% increase compared to known departures in 2021 and marks the highest number of departures since 2017. Of those who departed in 2022, 61% (87,700) were disembarked in Europe, while 39% of those who departed (56,500) were rescued or intercepted and disembarked in North Africa (19% in Tunisia, 17% in Libya and 3% in Algeria).

SEA MOVEMENT VIA THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA IN 2022

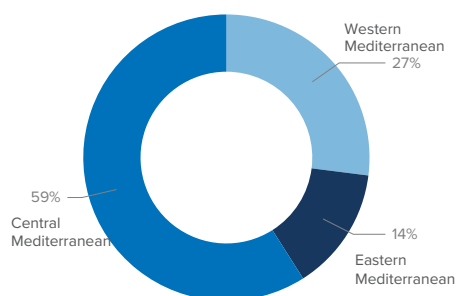


MOST COMMON COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF PEOPLE ARRIVING IN ITALY AND MALTA AFTER DEPARTING FROM ALGERIA⁴, LIBYA, AND TUNISIA IN 2022

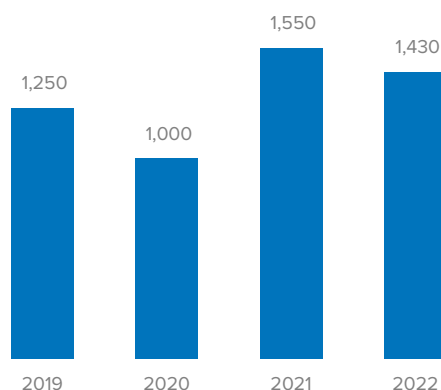


In 2022, more than 2,400⁵ migrants and refugees are known to have lost their lives or gone missing at sea while attempting to cross to Europe along the three Mediterranean routes (Eastern, Central and Western Mediterranean), an increase of 17% compared to some 2,050 deaths recorded in 2021. Most of those deaths in 2022 (59%) took place on the Central Mediterranean Route.

DEAD AND MISSING AT SEA IN 2022 ALONG THE MEDITERRANEAN ROUTES



DEAD AND MISSING AT SEA BY YEAR ALONG THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE



The movement of migrants and refugees by boat across the Mediterranean Sea continues to be of critical concern to UNHCR and IOM due to the high risks those attempting the journey face. Those risks are aggravated because of limited State search and rescue (SAR) responses in some regions; the transfer of persons disembarked in Libya to arbitrary and prolonged detention in official and unofficial places of detention; the limited protection available in some countries in North Africa for migrants and refugees, particularly those with vulnerabilities, such as victims of trafficking, children and women or others with specific needs; and the very limited safe and regular pathways available for migrants and refugees, including those seeking to join family members in Europe.

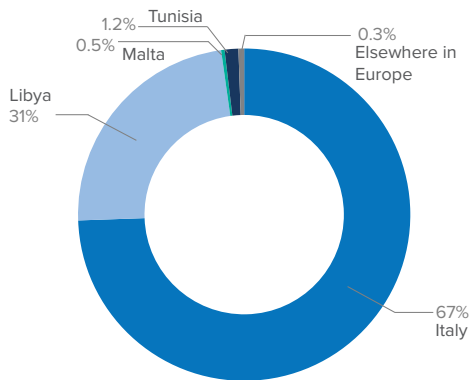
SEA MOVEMENTS FROM LIBYA

In 2022, some 79,800 migrants and refugees are known to have attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea from Libya to Europe, an increase of 23% compared to 2021 but still far below the numbers crossing annually between 2014 and 2017. Among those who attempted the journey, 67% were disembarked in Italy, 1.2% in Tunisia, 0.5% in Malta, some 278 persons (0.3%) elsewhere in Europe⁶, while 31% were disembarked back in Libya. New trends in 2022 included a substantial increase in departures from Eastern Libya, predominantly using large fishing boats carrying 300 or more persons. According to the available data, the primary nationalities attempting to cross from Libya were Egyptians (36%), Bangladeshis (28%), and Syrians (13%).

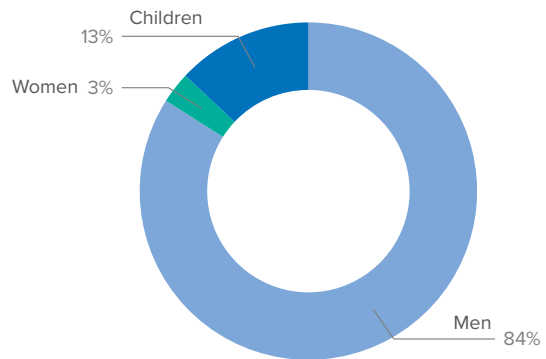
As of June 2022, UNHCR was no longer authorized to deploy staff to disembarkation points controlled by the Libyan Coast Guard in Tripoli to monitor the disembarkation of people rescued or intercepted at sea and returned to Libya. More broadly in Western Libya, IOM retained direct access to all disembarkation points while UNHCR continued to have direct access to the disembarkation point in Zawiyah and through its implementing partner in Tripoli. However, an estimated 45% of the disembarkations were not attended by any humanitarian actor because they were carried out by entities such as the Stabilization and Support Apparatus (SSA) in Western Libya that fall outside the authorities officially mandated to conduct interceptions or SAR operations and subsequent disembarkations in Libya.

In addition, in several instances, humanitarian actors were notified of disembarkations by the Libyan authorities only after they had been commenced or at times concluded. As a result, humanitarian actors were not able to provide assistance for those being disembarked or identify individuals with international protection needs or other specific needs.

DISEMBARKATIONS FOLLOWING DEPARTURE FROM LIBYA 2022



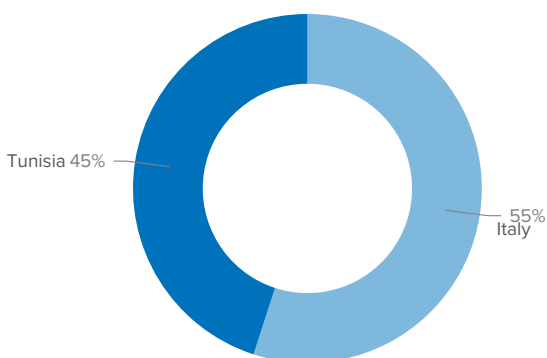
DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF DISEMBARKATIONS FOLLOWING DEPARTURE FROM LIBYA



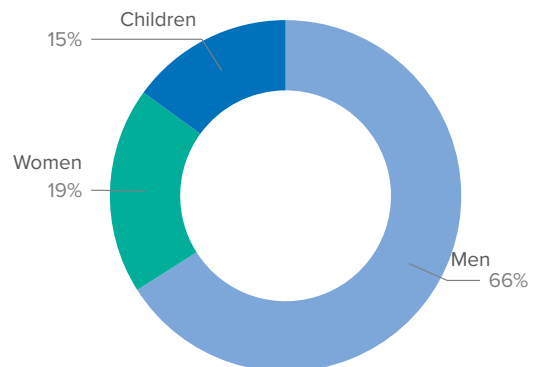
SEA MOVEMENTS FROM TUNISIA

In 2022, some 58,900 migrants and refugees are known to have attempted to cross the sea from Tunisia to Europe, a 45% increase compared to 2021. Among those who attempted the journey, 26,500 (45%) persons were rescued or intercepted and disembarked in Tunisia⁷, while 32,371 (55%) persons arrived in Italy. Non-Tunisian nationals⁸ constituted 71% of all persons disembarked in Tunisia 2022 as opposed to 61% in 2021. The majority of arrivals in Italy from Tunisia were Tunisians, followed by Ivorians, Guineans, and Cameroonians.⁹

DISEMBARKATIONS FOLLOWING DEPARTURE FROM TUNISIA 2022



DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY FROM TUNISIA



KEY CONCERNS

UNHCR and IOM remain extremely concerned by the continued high numbers of deaths in the Central Mediterranean Sea.

UNHCR and IOM note that SAR and disembarkations continue to be often an ad hoc and unpredictable process and there needs to be more consistent responses by all coastal States to ensure that migrants and refugees are promptly rescued and disembarked in a place of safety, and receive timely assistance, counselling and orientation to appropriate services.

UNHCR and IOM are concerned about the disembarkation in Libya of persons intercepted or rescued and returned to Libya, which is not a place of safety for the purpose of disembarkation¹⁰. In 2022, persons who are disembarked in Libya continued to be transferred to official and unofficial places of detention without recourse to judicial review, and held in conditions that do not meet international standards on detention, with humanitarian actors not always having consistent access to those detained.¹¹

UNHCR and IOM remain concerned about the absence of a clear formal process of release of migrants and refugees from official Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) detention centres. Since May 2022, UNHCR has not been able to facilitate the release of asylum-seekers and refugees from official DCIM detention centres despite actively advocating for their release; the only successful releases have been of individuals for whom humanitarian evacuation or resettlement out of Libya was confirmed. IOM, through support from the embassies of migrant countries, frequently managed to secure release of individuals in vulnerable situations, such as children and medical cases. The majority of those released were those voluntarily returning to their country of origin with IOM's assistance.

UNHCR remains concerned about the limited protection space for people with international protection needs in Libya. UNHCR is permitted to register only nationals from nine countries.¹² In addition, there remain too few resettlement places available for refugees in Libya, as well as those evacuated to the Emergency Transit Mechanisms in Niger and Rwanda.

Similarly, in addition to the lack of safe and regular pathways for the vast majority of migrants and refugees, there remain concerns around protection risks involved in increasing irregular sea crossings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IOM and UNHCR recommend that:

PLACE OF SAFETY

- States prioritize the increase of SAR capacity and ensure disembarkation in a place of safety. This includes ensuring that the rescued persons are not returned to situations that may result in further harm and human rights violations, including collective expulsion, refoulement, or arbitrary detention, among others.¹³
- Persons rescued or intercepted at sea should not be returned to Libya, as it is not a place of safety.¹⁴
- The use of arbitrary detention in Libya must end, and custodial measures for migrants and refugees should be applied only in exceptional circumstances, where it is necessary, proportionate, and lawful.
- Upon disembarkation, in line with Libyan national law, alternatives to detention should be made available as well as appropriate care arrangements for children, families and other vulnerable individuals ensured.
- IOM, UNHCR, and other humanitarian organizations must be granted systematic access to formal sites of disembarkation by the mandated authorities in Libya to respond to the immediate needs of the persons disembarked, to identify persons with international protection needs as well as vulnerable migrants.

ROLE OF NGOs

- States refrain from any measures that may hinder the rescue work of SAR NGO vessels, which provide much needed rescue capacity.

SAFE AND LEGAL ALTERNATIVES

- States expand regular pathways for migrants and refugees as one of the alternatives to perilous irregular journeys by sea.
- Resettlement quotas for refugees in Libya and those evacuated to the Emergency Transit Mechanisms should be increased. Resettlement quotas for refugees in the rest of North African countries should also be increased.
- States maintain expedited processing in order to maximize evacuation opportunities for the Emergency Transit Mechanisms.

RESPONSIBILITY SHARING

- States develop and implement broader regional responsibility sharing mechanisms to ensure swift and predictable disembarkation and subsequent processing of persons rescued or intercepted at sea.¹⁵
- States improve coordination between State entities and with private vessels to ensure greater predictability in SAR operations including by adopting a broad interpretation of the notion of distress at sea, in line with the definition provided in the SAR Convention.¹⁶

PROTECTION-SENSITIVE BORDER MANAGEMENT

- States conduct swift identification and referral of persons with international protection needs, specific vulnerabilities or at heightened risk following rescue and interception operations and upon disembarkation, in particular women, children, and older persons, and adopt disembarkation procedures that ensure prevention of further harm and family separation. UNHCR and IOM stand ready to support with specific capacity development on protection-sensitive border management needs to States.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA ON MIGRANT AND REFUGEE MOVEMENTS

- States work to improve the quality and availability of data and analysis on migrant and refugee movements. IOM and UNHCR stand ready to provide support including by developing joint methodologies and dedicating more of their own resources to better understand the situation of migrants and refugees undertaking dangerous journeys.

Endnotes

1. These figures represent the total number of migrants and refugees who arrived in Italy and Malta through the Central Mediterranean Sea after departing from Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia in 2022. The numbers may include migrants and refugees who made more than one attempt to cross the sea from these countries. These figures also include those who were intercepted or rescued by the authorities of Algeria, Libya and Tunisia and disembarked in these countries in 2022.

Data on disembarkation in the three North African countries is sourced from a variety of channels, including official reports shared by national authorities, and media monitoring, and data gathered at the disembarkation points where UNHCR and IOM partners were present.

Data on arrivals in Italy and Malta is received from the Ministry of Interior of both countries.

2. Central Mediterranean Route refers to sea departures from Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia, and to sea arrivals to Italy and Malta through the Mediterranean Sea.

3. Sources: UNHCR, IOM, UNDSS, Italian Mol, Official website of the Tunisian Ministry of Interior and the social media pages of the Tunisian Ministry of Interior and Tunisian National Guard, media and social media monitoring.

4. Arrivals from Algeria were also recorded in Spain, but these fall outside the scope of this factsheet.

5. See IOM [Missing Migrants Project](#) and UNHCR [Dead and Missing at Sea](#) dashboard to explore data. The numbers of dead and missing in this factsheet relate to the incidents that took place on the three Mediterranean routes for which IOM and UNHCR has received a sufficient level of detail. Because data on deaths during sea crossings are highly incomplete, these figures are rounded to reflect the fact that the true number of lives lost in the Mediterranean is not known.

6. Among those who departed from Libya in 2022, some 234 persons disembarked in France, and 18 in Greece. The 234 persons were rescued by the SAR vessel Ocean Viking, chartered by the SAR NGO SOS Méditerranée, in the Mediterranean Sea were disembarked in Toulon, France on 11 November 2022. This disembarkation took place following a 10 day standoff off the Italian coast, during which SOS Méditerranée did not receive authorization for disembarkation in Italy. The 18 persons in Greece were rescued by the Hellenic Coast Guard on 15 May 2022, and were brought to the port of Kalamata.

7. Source: Official website of the Tunisian Ministry of Interior and the social media pages of the Tunisian Ministry of Interior and Tunisian National Guard.

8. A precise breakdown of nationalities for non-Tunisians disembarked in Tunisia is not available.

9. Sources: UNHCR, Tunisian authorities official social media pages, and media sources.

10. See: UNHCR, Position on the Designations of Libya as a Safe Third Country and as a Place of Safety for the Purpose of Disembarkation Following Rescue at Sea, September 2020, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5f1edee24.html>; and Joint IOM and UNHCR Press Release, IOM and UNHCR condemn the return of migrants and refugees to Libya, 16 June 2021, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/iom-and-unhcr-condemn-return-migrants-and-refugees-libya>

11. See OHCHR Press Release, 27 March 2023, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/libya-urgent-action-needed-remedy-deteriorating-human-rights-situation-un>

12. These are Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen.

13. International Maritime Organization's MSC.167(78) – Guidelines on the Treatment of Persons Rescued at Sea Microsoft Word – 26-Add.2.doc (imo.org).

14. See: UN Security Council, United Nations Support Mission in Libya Report of the Secretary-General (5 April 2023) S/2023/248, para. 96; and UN Security Council, United Nations Support Mission in Libya Report of the Secretary-General (19 January 2021) S/2021/62, para. 107.

15. See for instance UNHCR and IOM, Proposal for a regional cooperative arrangement ensuring predictable disembarkation and subsequent processing of persons rescued-at-sea, 27 June 2018, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/partners/eu/5b35e60f4/proposal-regional-cooperative-arrangement-ensuring-predictable-disembarkation.html>. See also <https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2021/08/Final-Recommendations-Mixed-Movements-in-Central-Mediterranean.pdf>

16. The SAR Convention defines the “distress phases” as “a situation wherein there is reasonable certainty that a person, a vessel or other craft is threatened by grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance.”