

Italy

January 2019

In January 2019, **202 refugees and migrants arrived by sea**, compared to 4,189 in the same period last year, and 4,467 in the first month of 2017.

This year so far, **207 refugees and migrants were reported dead or missing** at sea in the Mediterranean, of whom 144 died in the Central Mediterranean.

During the month, the mayors of various Italian cities, strongly criticized the **residence registration** provisions of the Law on Migration and Security.

KEY INDICATORS

92%*

Percentage of 2019 sea arrivals informed by UNHCR staff upon disembarkation

4,968*

Referrals of **sea arrivals with specific needs** to appropriate services since January 2015

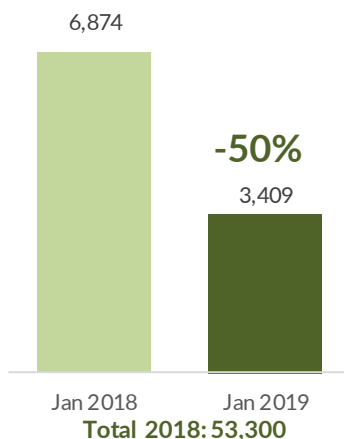
365*

Monitoring **visits to reception centres** since May 2017, jointly with Minister of Interior staff and independent auditors

POPULATION OF CONCERN

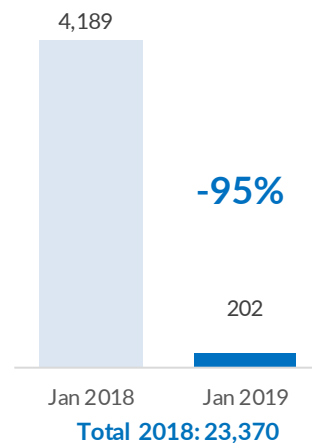
Asylum applications

First time applications, Jan 2018 - 2019



Sea Arrivals

Jan 2018 - 2019



UNHCR staff prepares to meet passengers disembarking the Sea Watch 3 vessel in the Sicilian port of Catania on 31 January 2019

Operational Context

- In January 2019, **202 refugees and migrants arrived by sea**, compared to 4,189 in the same period last year, and 4,467 in the first month of 2017. The stated closure of Italian ports led to delayed disembarkations with persons rescued by NGO vessels being **stranded at sea** for weeks. Notably, in late January, Italian authorities permitted the docking of the Sea Watch 3 vessel only after other European states agreed to relocate the 47 refugees and migrants rescued by the NGO. UNHCR, jointly with IOM and UNICEF, had **called** for the urgent disembarkation of refugees and migrants stranded on board the Sea Watch 3, reiterating both the fact that Libya is not safe, and the need for safe and predictable disembarkation mechanisms in the Mediterranean. On 25 January, the Catania Ministers Tribunal upheld investigations against the Italian Minister of the Interior for the alleged kidnapping of over 170 refugees and migrants who were prevented from disembarking an Italian Coast Guard vessel in Catania between 20 and 25 August 2018, calling on the Senate to vote on the authorization to launch criminal proceedings against the Minister.
- Since the beginning of the year, **207 refugees and migrants were reported dead or missing** at sea in the Mediterranean, of whom 144 either died or are missing in the Central Mediterranean. In mid-January, a shipwreck was reported by the Italian Navy : three survivors were transferred to Lampedusa, while 117 persons lost their lives at sea off the Libyan coast. UNHCR **stressed** the need for safe legal pathways to access asylum procedures in Europe, and also **called** on States to urgently re-establish effective rescue operations in the Mediterranean enhancing coordination and revoking measures preventing NGO vessels from operating at sea. As of 31 January, no NGO rescue vessels were operational in the Central Mediterranean.
- On 30 and 31 January, 95 refugees were transferred to Italy from Lebanon and Ethiopia in the context of the **Humanitarian Corridors programme**. The group comprised 72 Eritreans, 13 South-Sudanese, and 10 Syrians. Since the launch of the programme in 2016, 1,914 persons were transferred to Italy. Furthermore, on 31 January, 16 Syrian refugees were resettled from Lebanon to Italy in the context of the **Italian Resettlement programme**. Since the programme was launched in 2015, 2,034 refugees have been resettled to Italy.
- During the month, the mayors of various Italian cities, including Florence, Milan, Naples, and Palermo strongly criticized the provisions of Law 113/2018 relating to **residence registration**, raising that they may breach the Constitution and that render it impossible for asylum-seekers to access certain fundamental rights. The Italian Society for Migration Medicine (SIMM) also outlined concerns regarding the implications of the new provisions on asylum-seekers' access to healthcare, calling for support from the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI).

Main Activities

Access to procedures

- In January, UNHCR delivered numerous trainings in the context of its participation in the Refugee Status Determination procedures, including a session on interviewing techniques aimed at Ministry of the Interior caseworkers in Genova, and a session focusing on asylum procedures aimed at over 25 guardians of unaccompanied and separated children in the Marche Region. On 14 January, together with representatives of the judiciary and of the National Commission for the Right to Asylum, UNHCR co-delivered a training for some 40 judges working in the international protection sections of the Milan and Brescia Tribunals. Furthermore, UNHCR actively contributed to a two-day training for interpreters working in the Refugee Status Determination context, which was jointly organized by the Florence Territorial Commission, UNHCR, and interpreting organization ITC.

Protection of persons with specific needs

- On 17 January, the Novara Territorial Commission signed a formal protocol with local health authorities aiming at the referral of asylum-seekers with specific needs, including individuals in need of psychological support. The National Commission for the Right to Asylum subsequently encouraged all Territorial Commissions to promote a similar approach. In Novara and across Italy, UNHCR participates in the activities of the Territorial Commissions, including by promoting Refugee Status Determination procedures that are sensitive to the applicants' specific needs.

Protection outreach

- During the month, UNHCR conducted assessment missions to the northern borders of Italy. In Ventimiglia, near the Italy-France border, approximately 150 persons were accommodated at the Red Cross run transit centre at the beginning of January, most of whom were Pakistani single men who entered Italy via the Balkans route. Furthermore, in Como, near the Italy-Switzerland border, UNHCR met with many asylum-seekers and refugees, originating from Pakistan, Nigeria, and Somalia, collecting testimonies on their journeys to Europe. UNHCR also visited the area near the Italy-Slovenia border, where relatively low numbers of land arrivals were reported in January.

Reception

- In the second half of January, in view of the forthcoming closure of the first-line reception centre in Castelnuovo di Porto, persons accommodated at the facility have been gradually transferred to facilities elsewhere or made to leave the centre. The Prefecture's decision to close the facility is based on various concerns, including structural issues of the facility. UNHCR followed up closely on the situation, liaising with relevant authorities in particular with regard to individuals who were more significantly affected by the facility's closure, such as children and persons with specific needs who were accessing local schools and services.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- In January, UNHCR carried out a legal information session for asylum-seeking and refugee women accessing services at the Joel Nafuma Refugee Centre in Rome, explaining relevant procedures and addressing their concerns. UNHCR partner MEDU also carried out an information session on access to healthcare. UNHCR's partnership with MEDU aims at promoting access to health, protection counselling and referral of vulnerable persons of concern to UNHCR who live outside of the formal reception system in Rome. Through a mobile clinic operating three times a week in different informal settlements, MEDU provides dedicated services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as protection monitoring, training to caregivers and reception centre staff, as well as information sessions for asylum-seekers and refugees. MEDU is instrumental for protection monitoring and outreach activities, and builds on a network of trained professional medical practitioners and socio-legal experts who ensure referrals to services in the Rome area.

Communications

- On 28 January, UNHCR supported the launch of the [#mettiamocelointesta](#) campaign, also giving interviews to Canale 5 – TG5, Rainews and Unomattina, among others. On 30 January, UNHCR released its annual [Desperate Journeys](#) report, including an afterword by UNHCR supporter and writer Giuseppe Catozzella. On the occasion of the release of the report, the High Commissioner was also interviewed by Italian media outlets ANSA and Sky TG24.



Rescued refugees and migrants disembarking the Sea Watch 3 vessel are met by UNHCR staff in Catania.

Working with Partners

- Since 2017, UNHCR has engaged in partnerships with a number of NGOs in Italy, with a view to enhancing its protection delivery, focusing in particular on SGBV prevention and response, child protection and integration. In 2019, partners include [ARCI](#), [Cambalache](#), [Caritas \(Conorzio Communitas\)](#), [Carta di Roma](#), [Consiglio Italiano Rifugiati](#), [Di.RE](#), [Fondazione Adecco](#), [Intersos](#), [LILA Catania](#), [MEDU](#), and [University of Pollenzo](#). Further information is available on the [What we do in Italy](#) publication.



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