



**MMC East Africa
& Yemen**

QUARTER 1 2022



Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: East Africa & Yemen

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers the East Africa and Yemen region (EAY). The core countries of focus for this region are Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Somalia, DR Congo, South Sudan and Yemen. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any of the countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

The Mixed Migration Centre is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. For more information on the MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

MMC's understanding of mixed migration

"Mixed migration" refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel - often travelling irregularly, and wholly, or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

Front cover photo credit:

Michael Kirby Smith (2013)

Ethiopian migrants outside the Migrant Response Centre in Haradh,
Yemen, May 2013.

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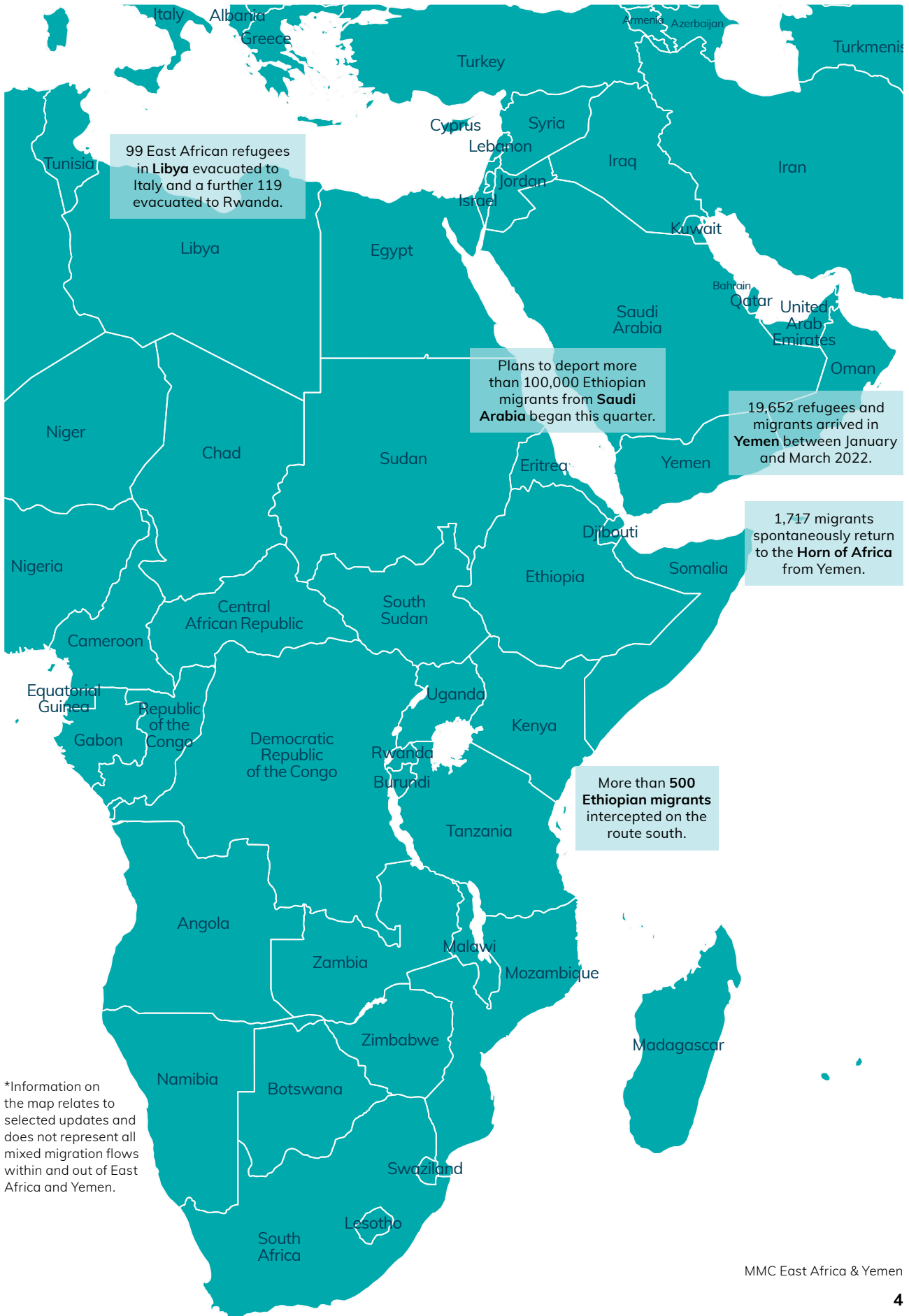
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Quarter 1 - 2022

Key Updates

- **Refugee camp caught in conflict; first food aid delivery in Tigray in 3 months:** in Afar, a refugee camp was caught up in the fighting; five people were killed and over 20,000 displaced. Over 500 metric tonnes of food supply were delivered in Tigray for the first time in 3 months following the declaration of a humanitarian truce by the federal government.
- **A new multimillion-pound deal between the UK and Rwanda:** will see asylum seekers arriving in the UK irregularly flown to Rwanda to apply for asylum and stay there in case claims are accepted. The plan has received widespread condemnation.
- **The Horn of Africa is facing one of the worst droughts in recent history:** The UN estimates that more than 13 million people are food insecure across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, and that conditions have displaced more than 800,000 people since January 2022 alone, with forecasts of an additional 1 million at risk of displacement. The food insecurity in the region is further compounded by skyrocketing food prices due to war in Ukraine, as many countries in the region heavily rely on wheat from Russia and Ukraine.
- **69% increase in East African migrant arrivals in Yemen:** a total of 19,652 East African migrants arrived in Yemen this quarter, against 11,612 in the final quarter of 2021.
- **Continued deportation of Eritrean refugees from Egypt:** In an apparent continuing trend, 31 Eritreans were deported from Egypt during March. Another group of 50 Eritreans are reported to be at risk of deportation and are detained in Aswan City where they are barred from accessing asylum processes.
- **Saudi Arabia set to deport more than 100,000 Ethiopian migrants:** More than 100,000 Ethiopians are expected to be repatriated from Saudi Arabia over the next 11 months. Reportedly, more than 5,000 Ethiopians had been deported as of April 8, with thousands more expected each week.
- **More than 200 East Africans evacuated from Libya:** In two separate operations, 99 East Africans and 119 East Africans were evacuated from Libya to Italy and Rwanda, respectively, this quarter. The evacuees were held in deplorable conditions in detention for long periods of time.

Regional Overview*



Mixed Migration Regional Updates

Mixed migration within East Africa

Refugee camp caught in conflict; first food aid delivery in Tigray in 3 months

Hostilities in Afar and Amhara regions continue to increase humanitarian needs with over [300,000](#) displaced in Afar alone. Further, Bahrale camp in Afar, home to mostly Eritrean refugees, was caught in the crossfire where survivors [reported](#) the deaths of 5 refugees, kidnapping of several women, and the displacement of over [20,000 people](#). United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet has raised concerns over [findings on abuses](#) in Ethiopia including sexual assaults and deaths in Tigray, Afar and Amhara.

Over 500 metric tonnes of [food supply](#) were delivered in Tigray for the first time in 3 months following the declaration of a [humanitarian truce](#) by the federal government. The conditions of the truce allow for the delivery of aid into the Tigray region, with the hopes of reducing displacement into neighbouring regions as well as pave way for conflict resolution. Tigray forces [announced](#) they would uphold the truce as long as aid is delivered “within reasonable time”. According to the United Nations, out of the 5.5 million people in Tigray, [90%](#) need aid. Further, [13% of children under the age of 5 years and half of all pregnant and breastfeeding women are malnourished](#).

Rwanda and UK enter agreement to outsource asylum processing

A new [multimillion-pound deal](#) will see asylum seekers arriving in the UK irregularly, flown more than 6,500 kilometres to Rwanda for processing, where they will be encouraged to settle. The UK joins a number of other countries who have attempted, to varying degrees and levels of “success”, to [process asylum claims offshore](#). The scheme has been touted by the UK government as a “[world-first migration and economic development partnership](#)”, however details about the plans workability are not yet clear, including unanswered questions about how the UK government will oversee the welfare of asylum seekers in Rwanda.

More than 160 UK-based charities and campaign groups described the scheme as “[shamefully cruel](#)” and demanded that the government abandon the plan, further [criticising Rwanda’s track record on human rights](#). The agreement also received harsh criticism from the [UK’s highest church cleric](#) and the [general public](#). This is [not the first time](#) that Rwanda has been implicated in controversial action regarding the receipt of asylum seekers from third countries, and research suggests that many who were relocated expressed an intention to move back towards Europe.

In a [joint rebuttal](#), UK Home Secretary Priti Patel and Rwandan Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Vincent Biruta said that critics had failed to offer solutions, and that the plan would “disrupt the business model of organized crime gangs and deter migrants from putting their lives at risk”. However, Patel’s own top civil servant warned that there was not “[sufficient evidence](#)” that such schemes do anything

to deter asylum seekers or migrants from making such journeys to the UK, nor that they would offer value for money in the £120m deal.

Drought puts the Horn of Africa on “the brink of catastrophe”

The Horn of Africa is facing one of the worst droughts in recent history. The UN estimates that more than [13 million people are food insecure](#) across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, and that conditions have displaced more than 800,000 people since January 2022 alone. The International Organization for Migration predicts that drought conditions could [imminently displace more than 1 million people](#) in Somalia, and has already noted an increase in drought-induced movements from Somalia into Ethiopia.

Food conditions in the region, which were already suffering from the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, are [being compounded by the Ukrainian conflict](#). The disruption has begun to affect global trade in grain, oil, transport and fertilizer, causing the prices of staple foods to skyrocket. East African countries import up to 90% of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine, pushing the goods out of the reach of many.

Moreover the Ukraine situation has, according to one commentator, come at the “[expense of other crises](#)”. Attention for the Horn of Africa drought, which has been critically underfunded since alarm bells were raised in 2021, has been suppressed further as donor governments [shift aid budgets away to fund the Ukraine response](#). According to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization, the region is on “[brink of catastrophe](#)” given the poor start of the rains and bleak forecast for the remainder of the season.

Establishment of the Regional Consultative Process (RCP) on migration

In February, the East African Community (EAC) Conference was hosted in Kigali, Rwanda to establish the [Regional Consultative Process \(RCP\) on Migration](#). Representatives from the Member States including government officials from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (with observer status) were in attendance. The RCP aims to create a platform for ‘[regional information-sharing and policy dialogue dedicated to discussing specific migration issues in a cooperative manner among EAC Partner states](#).’ A report endorsing the enrichment of the concept paper for the RCP’s establishment and other modalities was adopted, and inputs invited from partner states.

It is also hoped that the RCP will encourage a more [holistic approach](#) to migration issues beyond immigration and labour against the backdrop of the [increase in movements within the region, forced displacement, and COVID-19’s impact on movements, among other dynamics](#). The region [hosts](#) an estimated 5 million international migrants with about 2.8 million refugees and asylum seekers and nearly 2.4 million internally displaced persons therefore highlighting the need to [protect the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants](#). During the conference, the Deputy Secretary General reiterated the establishment of the RCP as an [opportunity](#) to mobilize stakeholders and resources towards key priorities in the RCP forums.

31 Eritreans deported from Egypt

In an apparent [continuing trend](#), [31 Eritreans were deported](#) from Egypt during March. Another group of 50 Eritreans are reported to be at risk of deportation and are detained in Aswan City where they are barred from accessing asylum processes. [Amnesty International](#) has called on the government to immediately cease the arbitrary detentions and deportations and allow the detainees access to asylum procedures.

Detainees have [reported](#) being held with minimal or no access to food, water or medical care or any legal representation. Detainees report being forced to sign voluntary return forms and being tortured if they do not comply. The deportations have continued despite Egypt being a [signatory](#) to the 1951 Refugee Conventions and president Abdel Fattah [implying](#) Egypt's openness to refugees and migrants, who are not barred from entering the country or forced to reside in camps.

The Eastern Route from East Africa to Yemen

Notable increase of refugee and migrant arrivals into Yemen

Despite the humanitarian situation in Yemen, a total of [19,652 East African migrants](#) arrived in Yemen this quarter ([5,940](#) in January, [8,358](#) in February and [5,354](#) in March). Favourable weather conditions are likely to have encouraged more movement in February. However, [multiple factors](#) including bad weather and high tides as well as increased security presence on the Djibouti and Yemen borders caused a 36% decrease in March on February movements. In comparison to the final quarter of 2021, which registered 11,612 East African arrivals, the 69% increase is possibly as a result of the [relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions](#).

Ethiopians represented the majority of arrivals into Yemen at [91%](#). Slightly more migrants departed from Djibouti at 51%, with 49% departing from Somalia. A further [breakdown](#) of figures shows the majority of the migrants were men at 72%, followed by women at 18% and children at 10%.

Spontaneous returns continue from Yemen

The situation in Yemen continues to force many to return to the Horn of Africa. In January, an [airstrike](#) is reported to have hit a prison facility where the majority of detainees are migrants. Further, migrants have cited [challenges](#) crossing the Saudi Arabia border and are forced to use [alternative routes](#). The number of migrants stranded in Yemen has increased from 35,000 reported in the last quarter to over [40,000](#). Reports indicate about [4,000 migrants](#) were moved from the northern to southern governorates in January under unclear circumstances.

During the quarter, 1,712 returnees arrived in the Horn of Africa from Yemen: 1,042 migrants returned to Djibouti ([452](#) in January and [590](#) in February) and 310 to Somalia ([131](#) in January and [179](#) in February). [586 migrants](#) remain in Djibouti and a further [6,761](#) were in Somalia at the end of February.

Deportations of 100,000 Ethiopian migrants from Saudi Arabia begin

After a lull, plans to resume to the deportation of Ethiopian migrants from Saudi Arabia have gathered steam. Following an [agreement](#) between both governments, more than [100,000 Ethiopians](#) are expected to be repatriated over the next 11 months. Reportedly, more than [5,000 Ethiopians had been deported](#) as of April 8, with thousands more expected in each of the coming weeks. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, the government will [prioritize](#) Ethiopian nationals without documentation. An estimated [750,000 Ethiopians](#) currently reside in Saudi Arabia of whom 450,000 are believed to have travelled there irregularly.

Concerns about the safety of returning migrants remain. In January, [Human Rights Watch](#) reported that Ethiopian authorities had arbitrarily detained, mistreated, and forcibly disappeared thousands of ethnic Tigrayans recently deported from Saudi Arabia.

The Northern route towards North Africa and Europe

East African arrivals to Europe along Mediterranean routes

Between January and April 3rd 2022, [17,910 refugees and migrants](#) arrived in Europe via land and sea Mediterranean routes. 6,728 arrived in Italy, 1,977 in Greece, 261 in Cyprus and 8,944 in Spain. This is a significant increase in comparison to the period between January and March 2021 that recorded about [16,281 arrivals](#). Further, [Frontex](#) reports about 13,160 illegal arrivals at the European Union (EU) borders in January, a 78% increase compared to January 2021. Similarly, arrivals using the Central Mediterranean route registered a [107% increase](#) to Italy than in January 2021. A 28% (1163) [increase](#) along the Eastern Mediterranean route was recorded compared to January (911) 2021. Notably, the number of arrivals ([3,035](#)) in Italy in January tripled compared to 1,039 who arrived in January 2021. As of March 2022, East Africans accounted for 9% of arrivals in Italy (345 Eritreans, 212 Sudanese, 52 Ethiopians and 39 Somalis).

East African refugees and migrants in Libya and Tunisia

In Libya, a cumulative total [7,245 East Africans](#) (4,534 Eritreans, 1,206 Somalis, 1,156 Ethiopians and 349 South Sudanese) were registered as refugees and asylum seekers as of 1 April 2022. As of February 2022, the number of registered East Africans in Tunisia stood at [970](#) (522 Sudanese, 309 Eritreans and 139 Somalis). Both figures indicate a slight increase in arrivals compared to last quarter (7,113 in Libya and 921 in Tunisia as of November 2021).

300 dead at sea and over 2,900 intercepted in the Mediterranean

East Africans commonly traverse the Mediterranean, although information about the nationalities of migrants intercepted, dead or missing is not always available.

With the increasing numbers of refugees and migrants into Europe, about [300 migrants](#) were reported dead between January 1 and March 28 along the Central Mediterranean route. This includes the [deaths of 11 migrants](#) following the capsizing of their boat off Tunisia in January. The boat was reported to have been carrying 32 migrants out of which 21 were rescued. Similarly, [25 people were reported to have died](#) after their boat capsized off Tunisia in March with another 35 feared to have drowned. Tunisian authorities have also reported [increased interceptions at sea](#) with up to 130¹ people detained.

In Libya, Sea-Eye 4, a private German vessel, rescued [74 people](#) off Libya, some of whom are of Sudanese and South Sudanese origin. In February, a boat carrying [50 people capsized](#) just after departing Sabratha port in Libya leaving 15 dead and 35 missing. About [19 people have been reported missing or dead](#) after their boat capsized off the coast of Libya in March. Another [129 were also rescued](#) by Sea-Watch 4. An estimated [2,930](#) are reported to have been intercepted and turned back to Libya.

99 East African refugees among those evacuated to Italy

Refugees and asylum seekers from [Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan](#) were among [99 evacuated from Libya to Rome](#) in February. In a collaboration between UNHCR and the Italian government, the evacuation flight was the first to take place a suspension of over 2 years. A majority of the evacuees are reported to have '[spent long periods of deprivation and needed urgent care.](#)' The group also comprised individuals who had been detained as well as others who resided in Libya's urban areas. UNHCR applauded Italy for its efforts [adding](#) "it is necessary to continue to strengthen safe channels like evacuation and resettlement ... for people forced to flee."

119 asylum seekers evacuated to Rwanda

[119 asylum seekers](#) of Somali, Sudanese, South Sudanese and Eritrean nationality were evacuated from Libya to Rwanda. The majority of the evacuees resided in urban areas while others had been arbitrarily detained. Comprising men, women and children, the group joined 206 other refugees and asylum seekers at the [Emergency Transit Mechanism](#) (ETM) in Gashora set up to 'provide a safe space and long-term solutions'. The evacuees will await voluntary return to their home countries, resettlement in a third country or integration in Rwanda.

Since the establishment of the ETM in September 2019, this is the [eighth flight to Rwanda and the first](#) in 2022. It is also the second flight into Rwanda following the [signing](#) of the addendum to the memorandum of understanding (MoU) of the ETM [extending operations at the transit facility](#). This brings the total number of asylum seekers [evacuated](#) to 943 with more than 620 resettled in third countries.

1 As of January 2022.

The Southern Route towards South Africa

Renewed protests against foreigners in South Africa

During the quarter, renewed protests calling for the removal of irregular migrants have taken place in various parts of South Africa including Soweto and Hillbrow, Johannesburg. Dubbed '[Operation Dudula](#)', a Zulu term meaning 'drive back', protesters associate the lack of employment with migrants who are perceived to have taken their jobs. Somali and Ethiopian migrant shop owners have [reported](#) authorities aggressively inspecting their shops as they asked for passports and permits. Notably, refugees have [expressed difficulty accessing the online system](#) for permit renewal, after refugee reception centers closed during the national COVID -19 shutdown in 2020.

[South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa indicated](#) that the government was monitoring the situation and will address concerns raised by the protesting groups. Prior to his statements in the same month, the government had embarked on implementing [stringent immigration laws](#) to ensure nationals were prioritised in certain jobs.

Thematic Focus:

Interception, detention, and deportation along the Southern Route

This quarter, more than 500 East African migrants were reportedly intercepted, detained and/or deported in and from various countries along the southern migration route between East Africa and South Africa.

In January, Kenyan authorities arrested [91 Ethiopian nationals](#) found detained in Kitengela by smugglers. Another group of [22 Ethiopians](#) were arrested after authorities found them in a house in a Nairobi neighbourhood. [66 others](#) found in Kasarani area were arrested and charged for being in the country illegally. None of the Ethiopians had any legal documentation to support their stay in the country and indicated they intended to go to South Africa with the help of smugglers. In February, a group of [108 Ethiopian nationals](#) suspected to be victims of human trafficking were rescued in Kiambu. The group, aged between 13 to 35, was found crowded in a room of a house and the suspected traffickers were arrested. In a separate incident, [51 Ethiopians](#) aged between 15 to 25 years were arrested in Syokimau, Machakos.

A group of [over 30 Ethiopians](#) held in a Nairobi police station were on hunger strike in March, citing the slow repatriation ordered by court. They were arrested by authorities in a house in Nairobi as they waited to be smuggled to South Africa. According to the Ethiopian Ambassador to Kenya, Meles Alem Tekea, [139 nationals](#) had been released from various police cells in Nairobi back to Ethiopia.

In Tanzania, authorities in Dodoma arrested [51 Ethiopians](#) hiding in a truck transporting tomatoes from the Kilimanjaro region to the south. The 51 are reported to have been heading to South Africa.

Malawian authorities arrested [93 Ethiopians](#) in Chiskombe area for illegal entry into the country in February. Another [9 Ethiopians](#) were arrested in Rumphu where they were found hiding in March. Aged between 14-25 years, none of them had legal documentation to justify their stay in Malawi.

In Zimbabwe, about [13 Ethiopians](#) heading to South Africa were involved in a car accident near the Zimbabwe-South Africa border. 3 of them died and 2 were seriously injured; the rest were detained.

The real magnitude of movement of East African migrants along the southern route is unknown, however the [last available estimate](#) puts this at between 14–16,000 people² a year. Given the scale of interception for example in Tanzania – put at [15,786 migrants](#)³ between 2020 and 2021 – the true number is likely to be far higher. [Alternatives to detention](#) are still weakly implemented; and [specific concerns](#) remain for children on the move and around overcrowding in the context of COVID-19.

² Estimates for Ethiopians and Somalis only.

³ From the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes and therefore a wider nationality base.

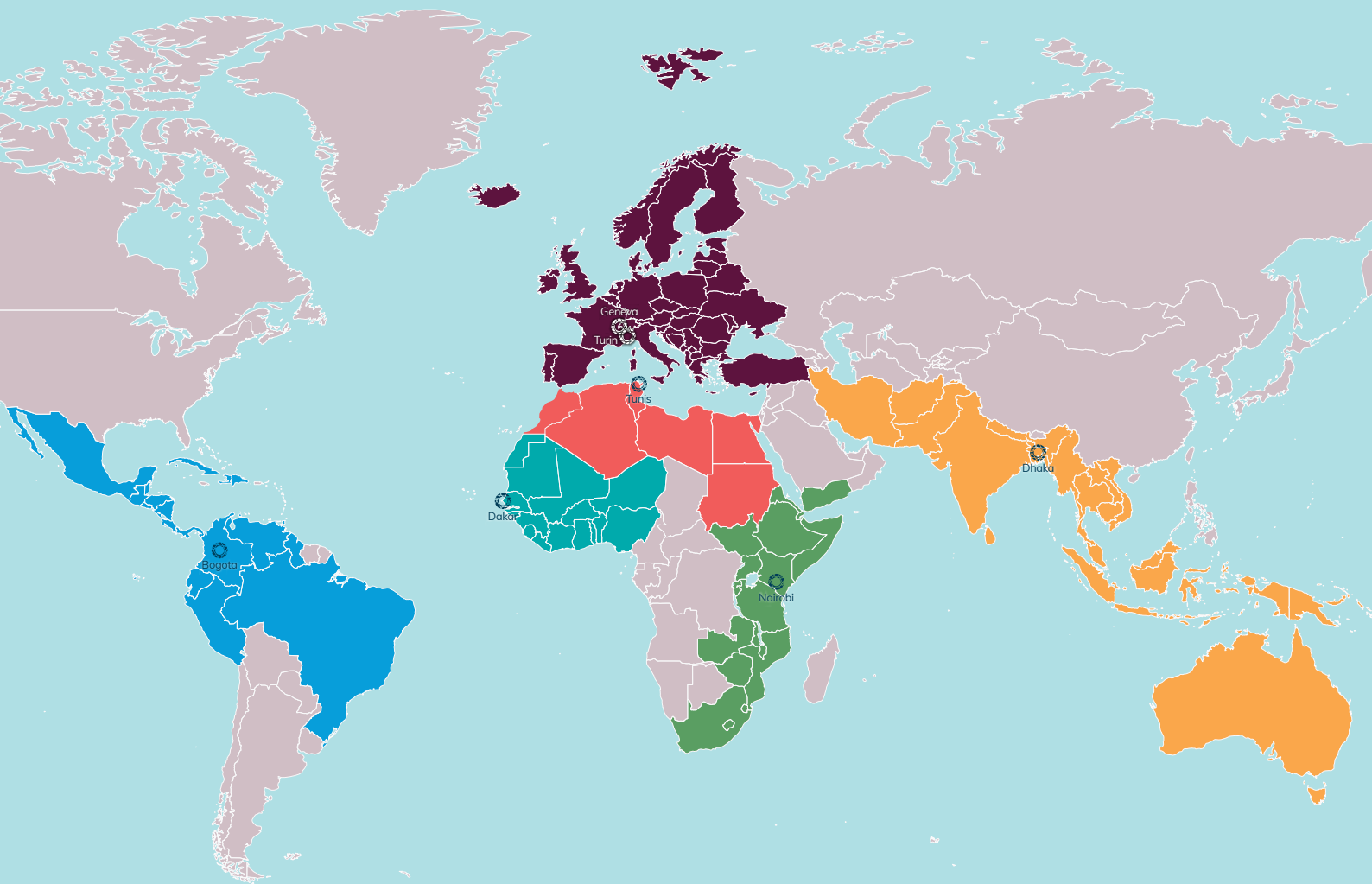
Highlighted New Research and Reports



[The Contribution of Migration to Regional Development](#)

OECD | March 2022

With many regions in OECD countries facing declining working age populations, the geographical dimension of migration has become crucial for regional development. Where migrants settle within countries and how much they contribute to the local economies are important questions for policy makers. This report aims to address these questions using two datasets that offer internationally comparable information on migration and migrants' labour market integration across cities, towns and rural areas in OECD countries. The report also analyses different dimensions of regional development and provides new evidence on how migrants contribute to regional income, innovation, international trade and labour markets.



The MMC is a global network consisting of six regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Geneva, Turin, Dakar, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Dhaka.

For more information visit:

mixedmigration.org and follow us at [@Mixed_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

