**Methodology:** Mixed maritime movements are by nature clandestine, making the data on such movements difficult to independently verify. The information in this report is compiled and triangulated from various sources including governments, partners, media reports and interviews with refugees. All data is provisional and subject to change.

**Flash Update**

**February 2022**

**Protection at Sea in South-East Asia – 2021 in Review**

On 30 December 2021, 105 Rohingya refugees were rescued and disembarked in Aceh, Indonesia. The refugees on board were overwhelmingly women and girls, which is consistent with overall trends. One 17-year old girl died during the three weeks the boat spent at sea in dangerous conditions. Survivors reported that smugglers physically abused them and then abandoned them adrift at sea. In addition, in June 2021, 81 Rohingya refugees disembarked in Aceh after a grueling four-month journey at sea.

Most people moving irregularly across the Andaman Sea are **Rohingya refugees**. Some are fleeing their home country of Myanmar, while others leave Bangladesh, where they are in exile. They seek protection, security, family reunification and livelihoods in other countries.

**Recent Developments in 2021**

On both occasions of disembarkation in Aceh, authorities and humanitarian actors immediately mobilized to address the medical and other needs of the rescued persons. Health screening for COVID-19, quarantine measures and vaccinations were implemented. In addition, UNHCR and protection partners deployed experts to identify survivors with specific needs and provide specialized services. Vulnerable people include potential victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

**Treatment of Persons Rescued at Sea**

The local community in Aceh has maintained solidarity and compassion towards those in need, with Acehnese fishermen continuing to rescue those in distress at sea. In 2021, Indonesia and Bangladesh disembarked the majority of vulnerable refugees in distress at sea (those that disembarked in Myanmar were intercepted by authorities as they attempted to leave.) This important humanitarian responsibility needs to be more evenly distributed among countries in the region to ensure protection responses are sustainable.

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**CONFIRMED SEA ARRIVALS BY MONTH (PERSONS) 2018-2021**

<table>
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<td>Dec.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**DISEMBARKMENT LOCATIONS (2021)**

- 63% Myanmar
- 25% Indonesia
- 7% Bangladesh
- 4% Malaysia

**Survivors’ Gender Age Breakdown (2021)**

- Men 21%
- Women 63%
- Children 16%

Methodology: Mixed maritime movements are by nature clandestine, making the data on such movements difficult to independently verify. The information in this report is compiled and triangulated from various sources including governments, partners, media reports and interviews with refugees. All data is provisional and subject to change.
**Key Developments: Maritime Movements of Rohingya Refugees in South-East Asia in 2021**

**Disembarkation as a life-saving act**
Timely disembarkation of vessels in distress prevents loss of life and ensures prompt assistance to address medical and other needs, sheltering rescued persons from unpredictable weather and sea conditions as well as preventing further harm by abusive smugglers.

**COVID-19**
Bangladesh and Indonesia have demonstrated that safe and orderly disembarkation can be implemented with health screening and quarantine arrangements for persons rescued at sea.

**Interception measures**
Rescued refugees have reported several instances of interception at sea by coastal states. Interception measures including pushback practices deny access to life-saving assistance for refugees in distress at sea and can directly or indirectly result in refoulement or death.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
1) Conduct immediate search and rescue of Rohingya stranded at sea.
2) Ensure timely disembarkation in a place of safety.
3) Support regional solidarity with countries of disembarkation in their response to the needs of rescued persons and search for solutions.
4) Address the root causes of displacement in the country of origin.

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**27 April: Bangladesh authorities rescued 30 persons adrift for two days after they were attacked by pirates.**

**14 August: Following a boat capsizing with 41 persons on board, 18 bodies were recovered. Bangladesh authorities rescued the survivors.**

**Various dates: 470 people were intercepted by Myanmar authorities attempting to leave by sea in several incidents. Some were imprisoned and/or sentenced to hard labour.**

**4 June: A boat carrying 81 people was rescued by Indonesian authorities and brought to shore after four months at sea. Nine persons reportedly died on the journey.**

**30 December: A boat in distress carrying 105 persons was rescued by Acehnese fishermen and allowed to disembark by Indonesian authorities. One person died at sea during the journey.**

*The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.*