

UN report reveals migrant death toll nearly 3,800 for Middle East, North Africa



Rescuers recover a body after a migrant boat broke apart in rough seas near Cutro, southern Italy [File: Giuseppe Pipita/AP Photo]

United Nations, June 14 (RHC)-- Last year was one of the deadliest for migrants using travel routes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, with nearly 3,800 deaths reported. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded 3,789 deaths in 2022 along sea and land routes in the MENA region, including crossings in the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea.

“This alarming death toll on migration routes within and from the MENA region demands immediate attention and concerted efforts to enhance the safety and protection of migrants,” Othman Belbeisi, IOM regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, said in a statement.

“IOM urges increased international and regional cooperation as well as resources to address this humanitarian crisis and prevent further loss of lives.”

The report said the death toll – 11 percent higher than recorded in 2021 and the highest since the 4,255 documented six years ago – was likely much greater because of scant official data and limited access to migration routes for civil society and international organisations.

“Our data shows that 92 percent of people dying on this route remain unidentified,” Koko Warner, director of the Global Data Institute, said in a statement on Tuesday. “The tragic loss of life on dangerous migration routes highlights the importance of data and analysis in driving action.”

On sea routes from the region to Europe, IOM recorded an increase in deadly incidents that involved boats travelling to Greece and Italy from Lebanon. IOM said the highest number of deaths on land routes in the region last year was recorded in war-torn Yemen, where the agency said violence against migrants increased.

At least 795 people, mostly Ethiopians, died on a route between Yemen and Saudi Arabia, the IOM said. Most of the deaths occurred in Yemen’s northern province of Saada. Libya recorded 117 deaths and there were 54 fatalities in neighbouring Algeria.

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