

**PLACE**

Skopje

**DATE**

30 July 2020

## Press release

# Thousands of refugees and migrants suffer extreme human rights abuses on their desperate journeys

A new report released yesterday by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) at the Danish Refugee Council shows that thousands of refugees and migrants are dying, while many are suffering extreme human rights abuses on irregular journeys between West and East Africa and Africa's Mediterranean Coast. The report titled *'On this journey, no one cares if you live or die'. Abuse, protection, and justice along routes between East and West Africa and Africa's Mediterranean coast*, details how most people taking these routes suffer or witness unspeakable brutality and inhumanity at the hands of smugglers, traffickers, militias and in some cases even State officials.

"For too long, the harrowing abuses experienced by refugees and migrants along these overland routes have remained largely invisible," said Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees. "This report documents killings and widespread violence of the most brutal nature, perpetrated against desperate people fleeing war, violence and persecution. Strong leadership and concerted action are needed by States in the region, with support from the international community, to end these cruelties, protect the victims and prosecute the criminals responsible."

The UNHCR Representation in Skopje is also concerned with the high number of deaths of people on the move on the territory of North Macedonia: in 2019, 9 individuals lost their lives, while this year, up to now, 7 more lives were lost on these harsh journeys. On 30 July, the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, UNHCR calls for increased protection for the people on the move in search of safety.

### Details from the Report:

Collecting accurate data on deaths in the context of irregular mixed population flows controlled by human smugglers and traffickers is extremely difficult as many take place in the shadows and away from the view of authorities and their formal systems for managing data and statistics. However, the report's findings, primarily based on MMC's 4Mi data collection programme, and data from additional sources, suggest that a minimum of 1,750 people died on these journeys in 2018 and 2019. This represents a rate of least 72 deaths per month, making it one of the most deadly routes for refugees and migrants in the world. These deaths are in addition to the thousands who have died or gone missing in recent years attempting desperate journeys across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe after reaching north African shores.

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The press release from Geneva can be found [here](#).

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**For more information, please contact:**

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