

Tracking Mobility Impact - Points of Entry Analysis

Quarterly Report on Points of Entry in MENA Region (July 2020 - September 2020)

The current outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted global and regional mobility in the form of various travel disruptions and mobility restrictions adopted since the declaration of global pandemics by WHO on March 11th, 2020.

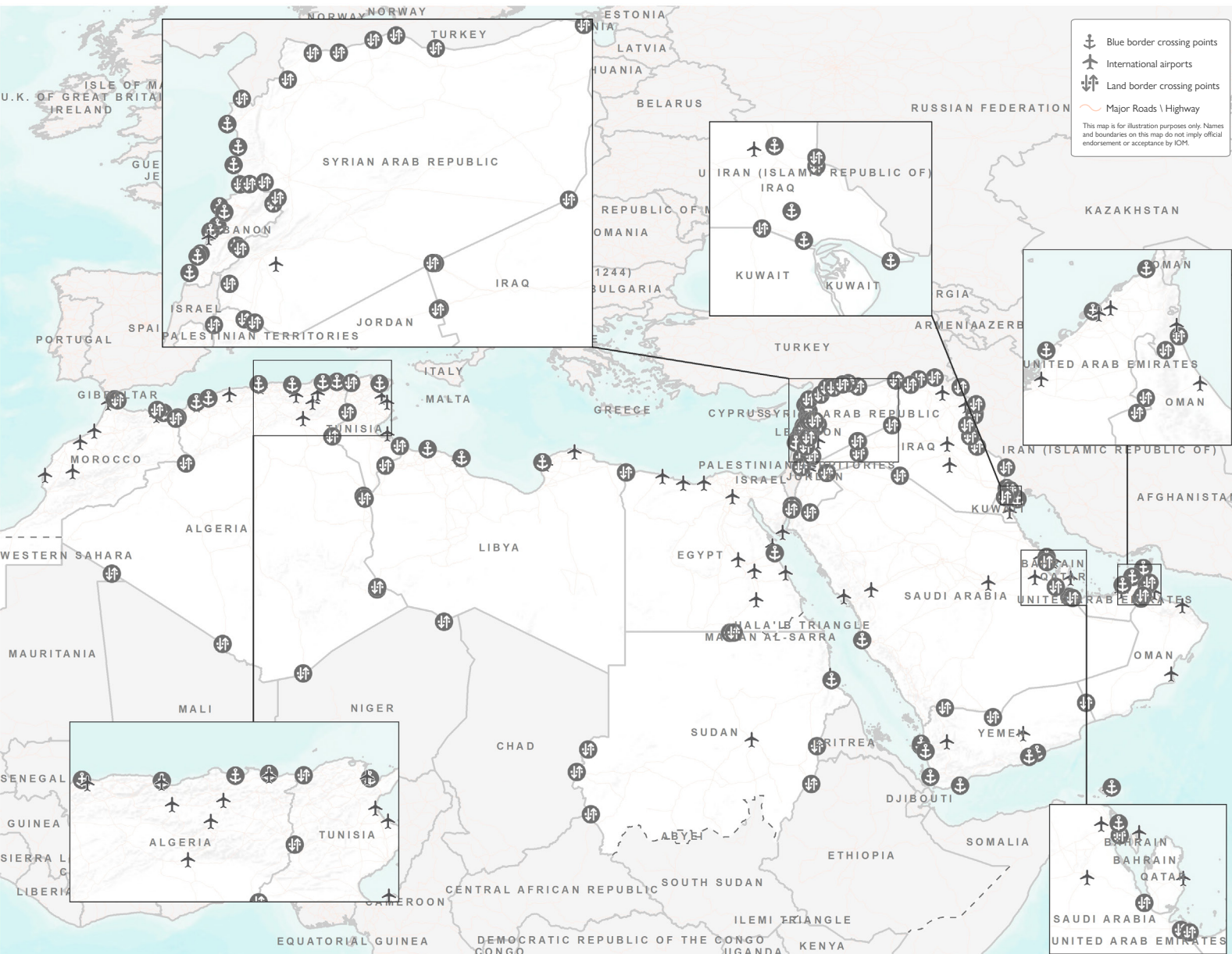
To track and better understand how COVID-19 affects global mobility, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has developed a global mobility database to monitor the status at Points of Entry (PoE) of mobility and visa restrictions, together with preparedness and response measures in place to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response in line with International Health Regulations (IHR).

Points monitored include ports of entry as airports, land border crossing points (road or rail), blue border crossing (sea, river or lake), and other locations that are not analysed in this document as internal transit points and areas of interest. This report describes the findings from data collected between 2 July and 24 September 2020 (13 weeks), on 206 official ports of entry across the region, including 98 land border crossings points, 66 airports and 42 blue border crossing points¹. This work is based on the information collected by IOM Country offices in the Middle East and North Africa- see Methodology Section at the end of the report.

Such information is meant to serve IOM member states, IOM and its UN partner agencies in responding adequately, and in a targeted manner, to the current and evolving crisis period. Moreover, this information might be relevant for the eventual transition to a regular operational mode, once the acute phase of the COVID-19 crisis is over.

The structure of the report is as follows: page two presents the main data on the COVID-19 cases and other medical dimensions of the pandemics in the region, page three shows the main findings relative to the country level restrictions, pages four, five and six reports the main trends for the three Ports of Entry- international airports, land border crossing points and blue border crossing points- in the region. page seven presents the migration flows trends recorded in selected border points in the region while page eight presents an In Focus on Affected Population - Stranded Migrants and page nine reports briefly the Methodology used to collect the data presented in this Quarterly Report.

Overview of monitored International Airports, Land border crossing points and Blue border crossing points in MENA



¹- This analysis focuses on the official Points of Entry (PoE) in the countries; nevertheless, we acknowledge the presence of at least 27 unofficial Points of Entry in the region, consisting of 22 land border crossing points and 5 blue border crossings points.

COVID-19 situation in MENA region

As of 30th September 2020, a total of 1,579,969 cases of COVID-19 and 28,895 deaths associated with COVID-19 have been reported in the MENA region. This represents an increase of 159.8 per cent for cases and 196.7 per cent for deaths over the 30th June 2020. A total of 1,348,734 cases have recovered since the onset of the outbreak, with a total of 947,103 cases recovering since 30th June 2020, representing a recovery rate of 85.4 per cent. The case fatality ratio has increased from 1.6 per cent in June to 1.8 per cent in September. COVID-19 transmission dynamics have also changed over the last three months with majority of countries now experiencing community transmission. The COVID-19 transmission classification is as: community transmission: Algeria, UAE, Syria, Qatar, Sudan, Oman, Lebanon, Libya, Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq; cluster of cases: Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, and Tunisia and sporadic: Saudi Arabia².

In terms of distribution of cases of COVID-19, the top five countries include Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Morocco, and Egypt. On the other hand, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Algeria have reported the highest crude case fatality ratios in the region. In absolute numbers, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Algeria have reported the highest number of cumulative deaths.

The MENA region, accounts for 4.7 per cent of global burden of COVID-19 and 2.7 per cent of global mortalities associated with COVID-19.

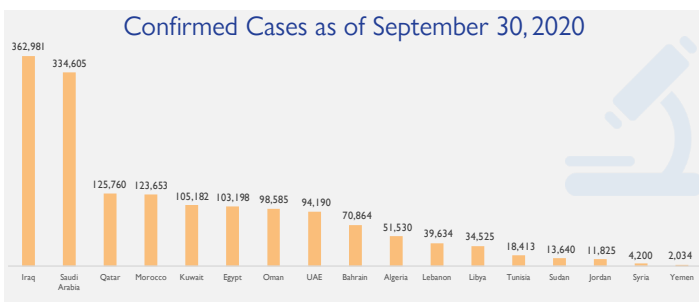


Figure 1: Distribution of COVID-19 Confirmed cases in MENA Region as of 30th September 2020

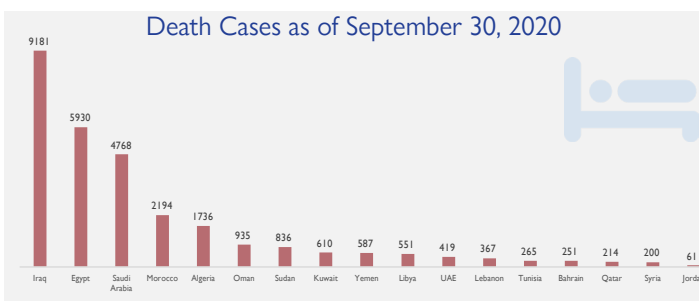


Figure 2: Distribution of COVID-19 Confirmed cases in MENA Region as of 30th September 2020

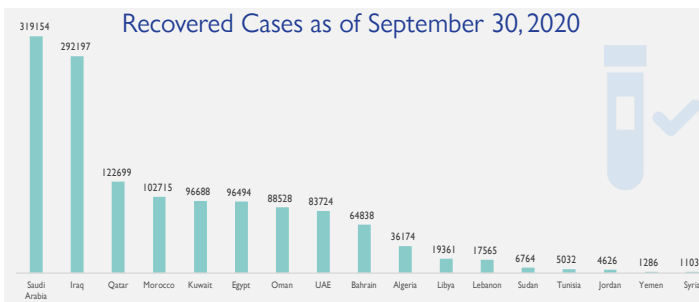


Figure 3: Distribution of COVID-19 Confirmed cases in MENA Region as of 30th September 2020


BOX 1

Public Health Measures in Iraq Land Border Points


Information on preparedness and response measures adopted at POE to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses are being collected through the global mapping exercise. Public health measures implemented for preparedness and response are classified according to the following six categories in line with the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 and IOM Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan:

- (1) Health Staffing/Medical Personnel
- (2) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
- (3) Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)
- (4) Infection prevention and control (IPC)
- (5) Surveillance
- (6) Referral

DTM Iraq collects data at three land border crossing points: Ibrahim Al-Khalil, bordering Turkey, Fishkhabour, bordering the Syrian Arab Republic, and Bashmagh, bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran. Data presented here were collected from 18 August to 15 September 2020 through face-to-face interviews with key informants (government and health employees) as well as direct observation.




Health Staffing/Medical Personnel




Infection prevention and control (IPC)

Bashmagh has 11 health staff while Ibrahim Al-Khalil has 36 staff – including 30 at the incoming gate and 6 at the outgoing gate. There is no health staff present at Fishkhabour.




Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)




Surveillance Referral

All three border crossing points have official public health SOPs on the site. The SOPs cover preventative measures for staff, health screening, and registration of travelers, as well as processes for the notification of suspected cases and medical referrals for unwell travelers.



Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)



Surveillance Referral

COVID-19 information products containing advice on symptoms and prevention strategies were still available at Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour crossings, but not at Bashmagh. Enumerators at all three locations' staff were not providing this information directly to travelers.

Ibrahim Al-Khalil and Fishkhabour crossings were recorded as having a functional handwashing station containing chlorinated water or soap, while Bashmagh crossing still does not have one. All three points were making surgical masks available to the travelers suspected of contracted with COVID-19.

All three crossing points had non-contact thermometers for temperature checking of travelers, as well as dedicated spaces for health screening (caravans, sheds, umbrellas, etc). Mandatory COVID-19 testing was introduced for all the incoming travelers at Ibrahim Al-Khalil. Travelers crossing at Bashmagh (incoming and outgoing) and Ibrahim Al-Khalil (incoming) are required to submit a health declaration form, but this is not required at Fishkhabour.

2- Sporadic Transmission: If it occurs in a scattered manner, occasionally or in random instances. Cluster of cases: If the transmission is concentrated in a limited locality, the source of infection is known, and cases can be traced. It is common where cases are imported

Data sources: World Health Organization (WHO)

International Borders Analysis

From the beginning of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Countries in the MENA region applied complete, partial or no restrictions on their external borders, as well as internally to limit movement between areas and cities. Implementation of complete restrictions means that no movement is permitted within and to/from the country, while implementation of partial restrictions indicates that some movement is permitted. Figure two shows the trends observed in the period under analysis:

- Complete restrictions were not implemented only any country at the end of the considered period to prevent or deal with the rising number of cases;
- Partial restrictions have always been the most common measures applied in the region throughout the period although a decreasing trend was observed during the month of September;
- No restrictions were adopted in four countries only in July and August, while the number doubled in September when around half of the countries lifted all their restrictions.

In addition to partial or total closure of borders, some countries- around 10 and 11 respectively on average- have also declared a national emergency, applied additional measures at national level as the adoption of national quarantine for arrivals from other countries, or modified or loosened visa restriction both to prevent entry of selected nationals and to allow for overstays upon the expiry of visas.

In this reporting period, the most common measures implemented with respect to visa are:

- “leniency towards or removal of fines for visa overstay, expiration of residency or work permit” and “temporary opening of the borders to allow otherwise stranded migrants to go home” applied by around half of the countries;
- “suspension of movements into this location for all residence permit holders” on one hand, and “suspension of movements into this location for all valid visa holders” on the other hand, that have been implemented in a smaller number of countries.

Restriction Measures at Country level

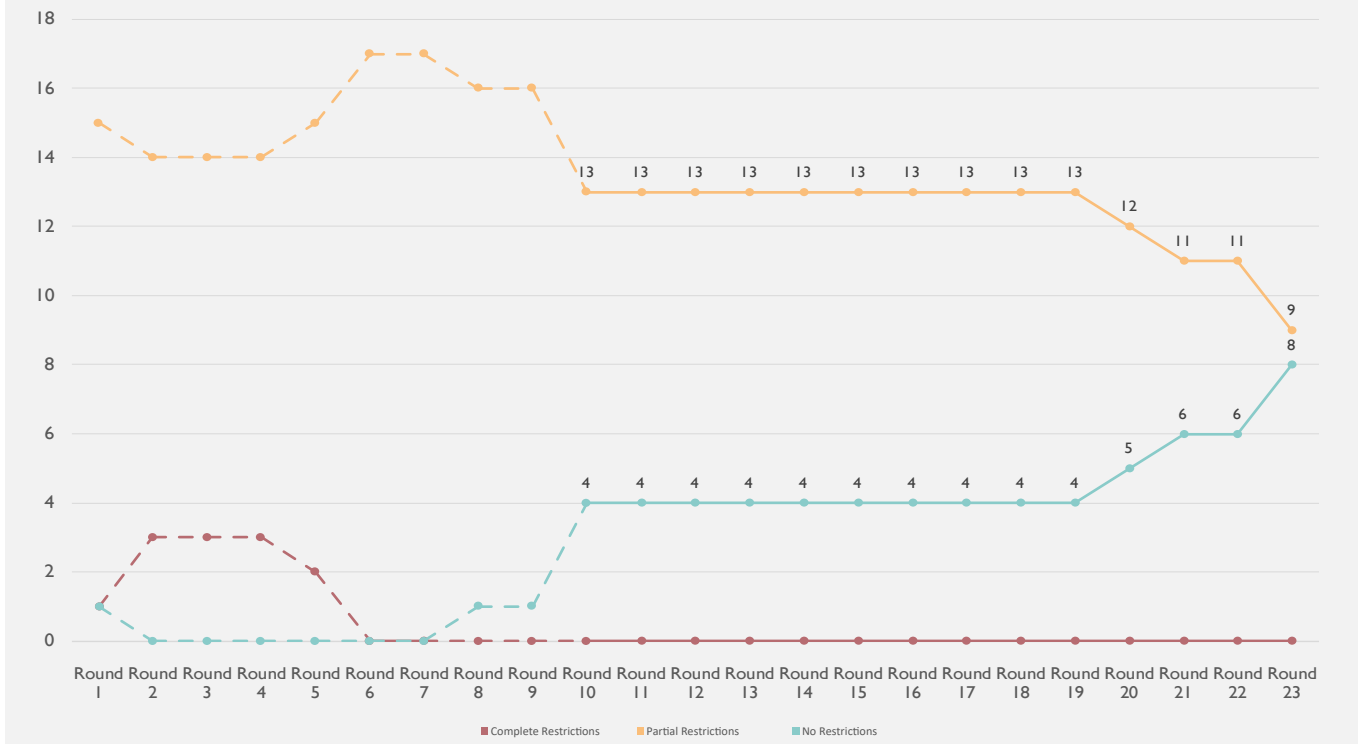


Figure 4: Measures at Country Level

Note: Dotted lines refer to the period before the reporting period. This is not analyzed in this document.

BOX 2

Unofficial Points of Entry

Points of Entry that lack border officials and related monitoring of travellers and/or goods are considered unofficial. Through this exercise in the considered period till the end of September 2020, we monitored the status of 27 unofficial points of entry in the region. They consist of 22 land border and 5 blue border crossing points. The ports are all located on the Yemeni coast while 22 unofficial land border crossing points are identified in Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. All the blue border crossing points remained fully operational during the entire considered period. It is interesting to observe that they were the only ports open in the surrounding Arabian Peninsula countries. For what concerns the considered unofficial land border crossing points, their operational statuses changed during the three-months-period considered: the number of the land borders classified as completely closed and partially operational slightly decreased in the considered period, while, on the other hand, a progressive process of re-opening characterized these unofficial points of entry in the period between July and September 2020.

International Airports

In this section we analyse the main trends observed at international airports at regional and sub-regional- North Africa, Middle East and Gulf Cooperation Countries- level:

- Around half of international airports were classified as fully operational at the end of the considered period marking a reopening process that characterized all the region starting from the beginning of June 2020;
- During the observed period, more than 40 per cent of the international airports were closed except for emergency and humanitarian flights. A sharp decrease in the share and numbers of closed international airports was recorded during the latest observed week;
- During the first part of the three months considered, Northern African and Middle Eastern countries recorded the largest shares of airports operational while airports in GCC countries reported lower shares till the latest week when they reopened in three countries of the above-mentioned sub-region.

By the end of the reporting period, a widespread and rapid process of reopening was observed in the region.

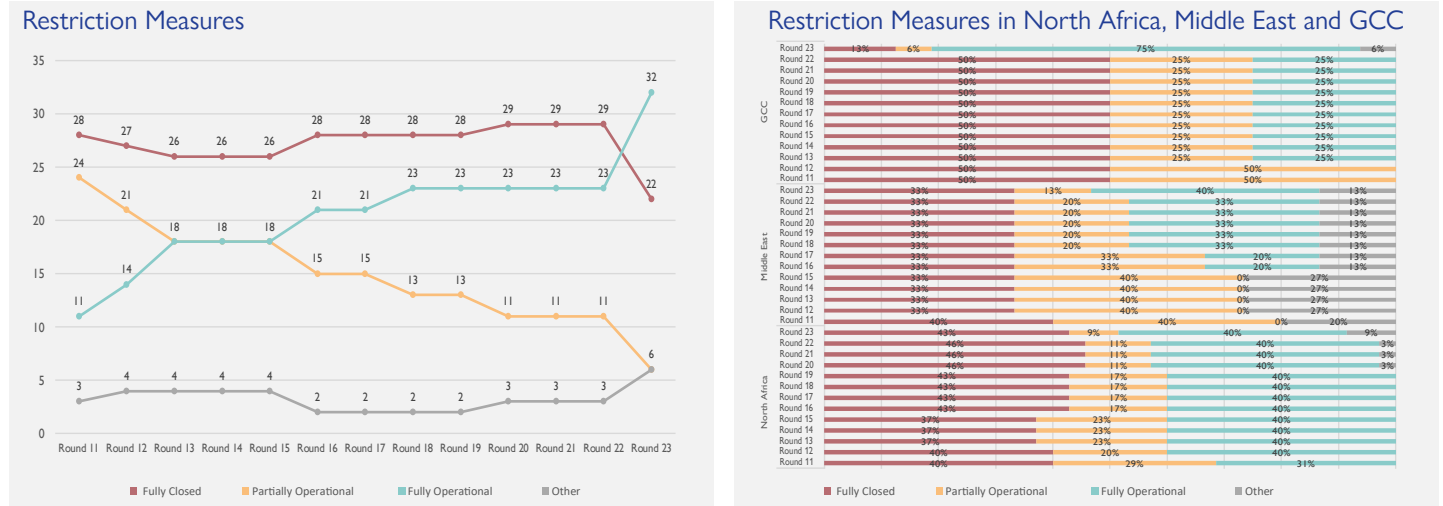
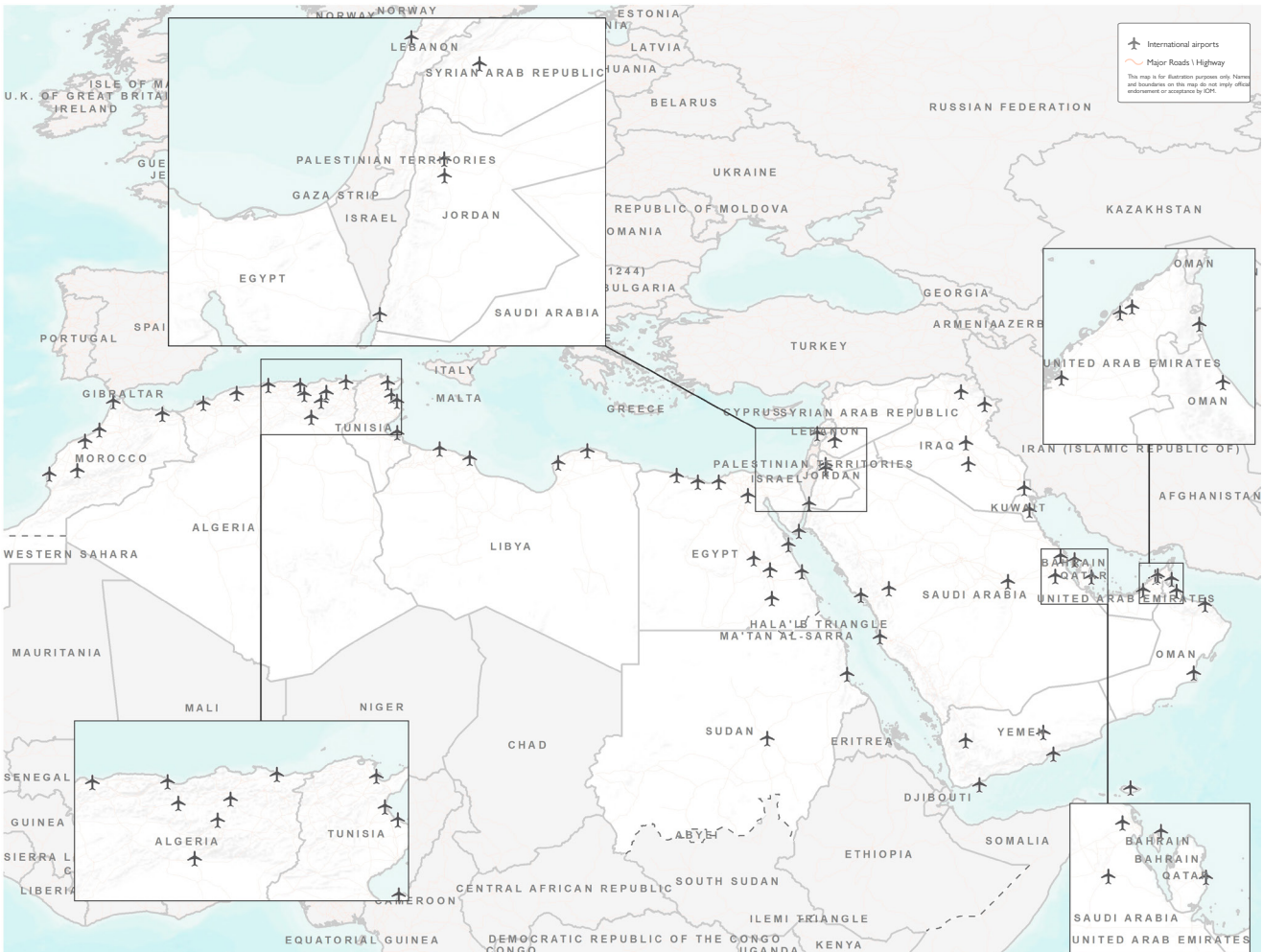


Figure 5: Restriction Measures by Round at Regional and Sub-regional level

- Notes:
- Under the category "Partially Operational" we include "closed for entry", "closed for exit", "open only to returning nationals and residents" and "open only for commercial traffic only". The totals are relative to the monitored Points of Entry.
 - Sub Regions are North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan, Middle East is: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic and Republic of Yemen and GCC are: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates

Overview of monitored International Airports in MENA



International Sea Border Crossing Points

At seaport level some slight changes have been recorded either at regional or at sub-regional level:

- Between 55 and 60 per cent of the sea borders were classified as fully closed and the remaining as partially closed (33-36 per cent)- or fully operational (five - seven per cent). No significant changes have been reported over time.

When looking at the sea borders at sub regional level, we observe that:

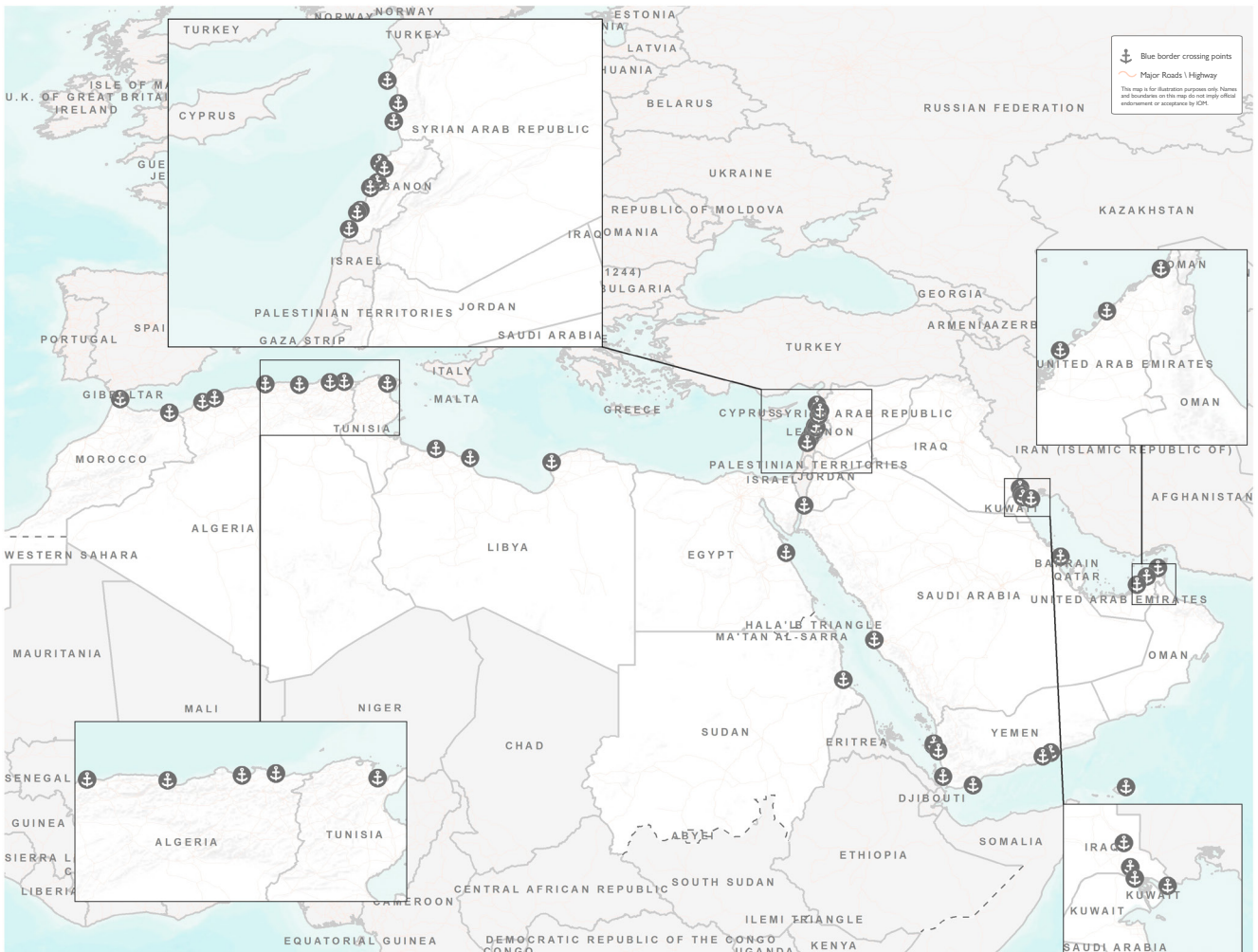
- In GCC countries all blue border crossing points were closed to passengers during the entire period considered;
- In North Africa as well most of the seaports- slightly less than 64 per cent at the end of September- were closed and the remaining were partially operational- 29 per cent and fully operational- seven per cent;
- Blue border crossing points in Middle Eastern countries were classified as partially operational in 48 per cent of cases, while 39 per cent were closed. Only two seaports were fully operational by the end of the observed period.



Figure 7: Restriction Measures by Round at Regional and Sub-regional level

Notes: • Under the category "Partially Operational" we include "closed for entry", "closed for exit", "open only to returning nationals and residents" and "open only for commercial traffic only". The totals are relative to the monitored Points of Entry.
• Sub Regions are North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan, Middle East is: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic and Republic of Yemen and GCC are: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates

Overview of monitored Blue border crossing points in MENA



Assessing the Impact of Border Closures on Population Movement

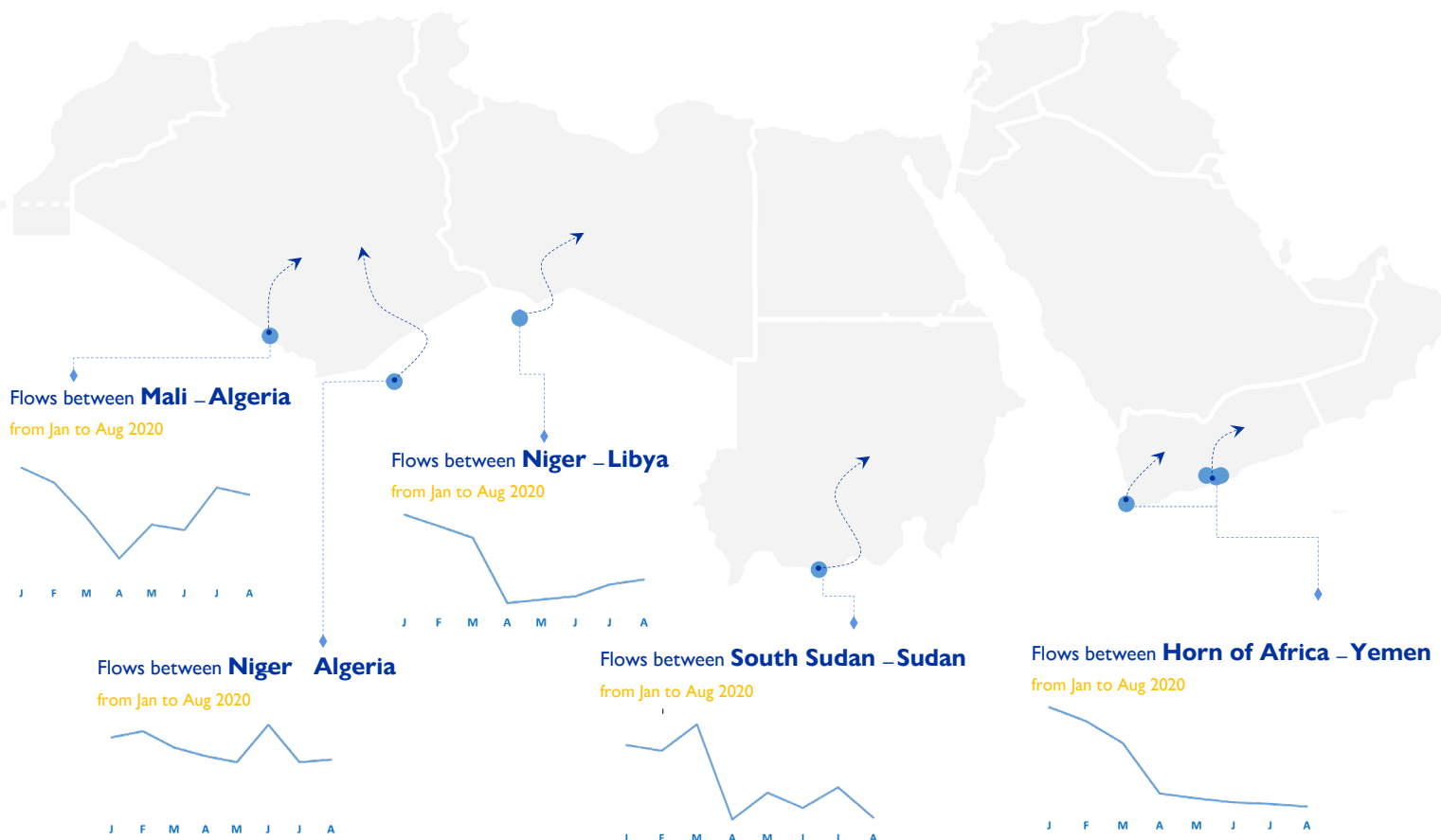
In Africa, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring (FM) methodology monitors the flow of migrants between countries and it collects information on numbers and characteristics of migrants on the move at selected high transit areas, mainly in the vicinity of land border crossing points.

In this box we analysed flow data collected at the borders between a) Sudan and South Sudan, b) the Horn of Africa (Somalia and Djibouti) and Yemen, and c) in the Sahel region (between Mali and Algeria, Niger and Algeria and Niger and Libya) with the objective of comparing the volume of people on the move between the pre and post COVID-19 period, and assess how COVID-19 related restrictions and closures impacts the mobility of migrants between countries. Migrants' mobility has been affected regardless of the operational status of the Points of Entry (Official or Unofficial) through several channels and an overall reduction is recorded in selected border points presented below.

At the Abyei border point between South Sudan and Sudan, for example, where data is available until August 2020, the analysis shows a 32 per cent decline in volume of flows between January and August 2020, as compared to the same time period in 2019. This data shows clearly the trends of sharp reduction as consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the fact that the border - an unofficial PoE - was officially closed between March and July 2020.

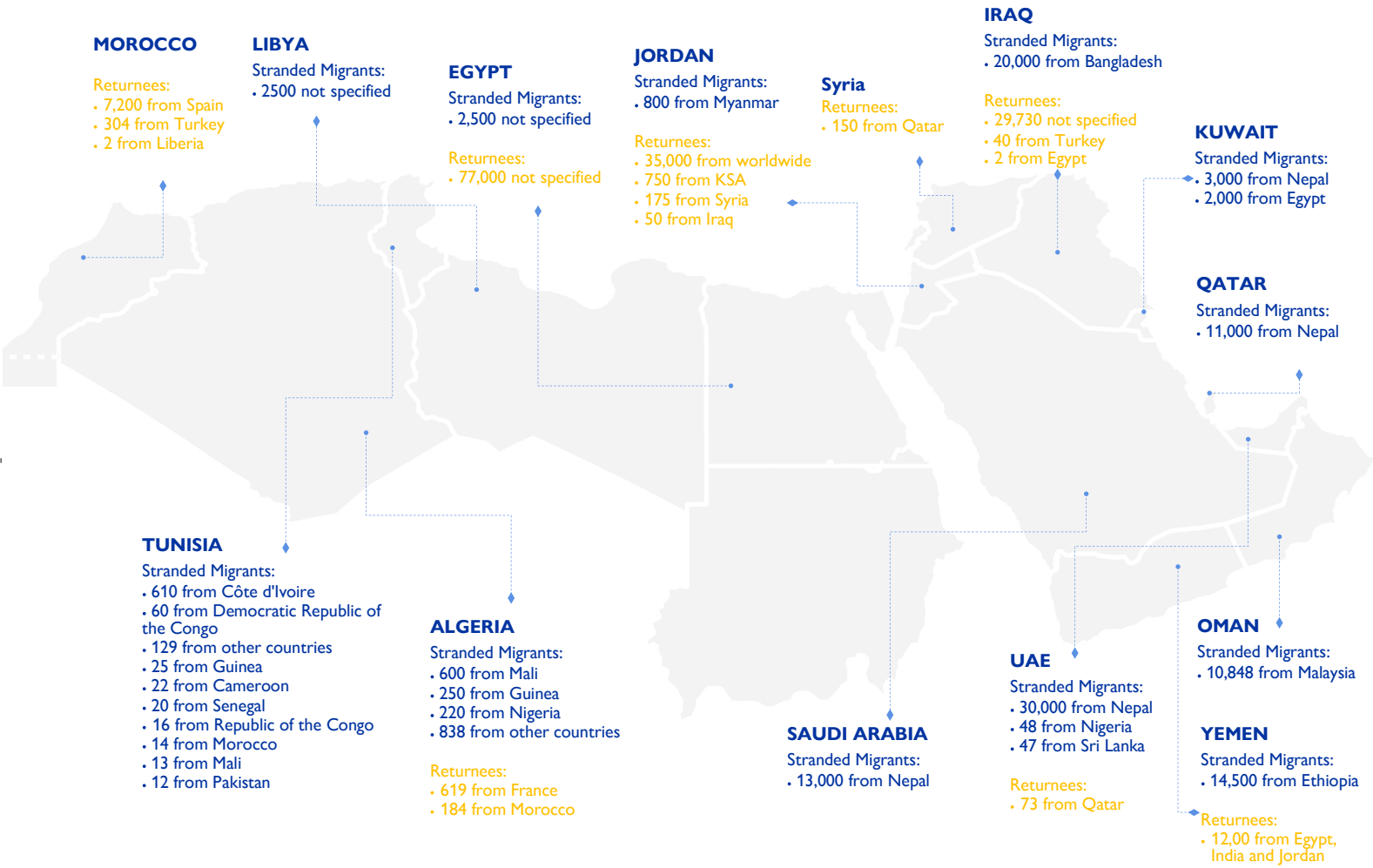
COVID-19 related movement restrictions show a huge impact on migration flows from the Horn of Africa to Yemen too. In fact, the number of arrivals in Yemen in the period January-August 2020 declined by 67 per cent as compared to the same period in 2019. Looking at the overall trend from the beginning of 2019, it is clearly observable how a declining trend is recorded starting from March 2020 when mobility restrictions were implemented although these ports remained open in the period considered.

Looking at movements between sub Saharan Africa and North Africa, a sharp decline was observed in outgoing flows from March onward. Flows from Niger to Algeria declined by 30 per cent between January and August 2020 compared to the same period of 2019. Flows from Mali to Algeria also show a 21 per cent drop during the first eight months of 2020 compared to the same period of 2019. The considered Algeria borders remained closed since the outbreak of the pandemic. For what concerns the border between Niger and Libya and looking at the same period considered for the other borders, we observe a decrease of 44 per cent in outgoing flows from Niger to Libya and this confirms the huge impact of mobility restrictions between countries.



Overview of the impact of border closures on population movement

Stranded Migrants and Returnees in Middle Eastern and Northern African countries



Overview of number of Stranded Migrants and Returnees in MENA*

* These data are partial and their source is media

Methodology

To better understand how COVID-19 affects global mobility, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has developed a global mobility database mapping the locations, status and different restrictions of Points of Entry (PoE) by country or territory, globally. These points include airports, land border crossing points, water border crossing points (including sea, river and lake ports), internal transit points and areas of interest (including regions, cities, towns or sub-administrative units). Data is collected by utilizing DTM's local expertise from IOM offices globally who adhere to a systematic and structured approach to data collection.

Information collected include: (1) Movement restrictions on entry and/or exit (1) closed for entry and exit, (2) closed for entry (3) closed for exit (4) open for commercial traffic only (5) open only to returning nationals and residents (6) open for entry and exit (7) other and (8) unknown), (2) Changes in visa requirements, (3) Restrictions applied to certain nationalities to disembark at this location, (4) Changes in identification documents needed to disembark, (5) Medical measures applied such as Health Staffing/Medical Personnel, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), Infection prevention and control (IPC) and Surveillance and Referral.

Data collected by DTM includes information on types of restrictions, measures applied, and the population category affected by such measures. This information is collected for each type of observation point, which includes points of entry, transit points, and areas.

DTM developed the global mobility impact assessment database and dashboard. They are based on the methodological framework, which includes details on sources, observation units, planned analysis and limitations.

For more information on the categorization of the major types of restrictions, please see the methodology and other documents on the COVID-19 portal (see: <https://migration.iom.int/>).

Limitations of this analysis and data collection mechanism are related to the extremely time sensitive nature of the data being collected.

Restrictions, and who they affect, are continually changing, and it is often difficult to collect accurate information in real time. Considering this, all DTM data made available is timestamped, in order to reflect the reality of the situation at the specified time. In this report we cover the entire region regardless if the country is or not part of DTM. This report does not include the analysis of internal transit locations.

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