

QUARTERLY REPORT 4

2023

#MASE Programme
A Strong Partnership Towards a Safe and Secure Maritime Domain



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Disclaimer

All analyses in this report are based on collected data from various sources and reconciling the data from concerned sources. The intention is to present factual data on maritime crimes in a specific region as per RMIFC's mandate, after research and confirmation.

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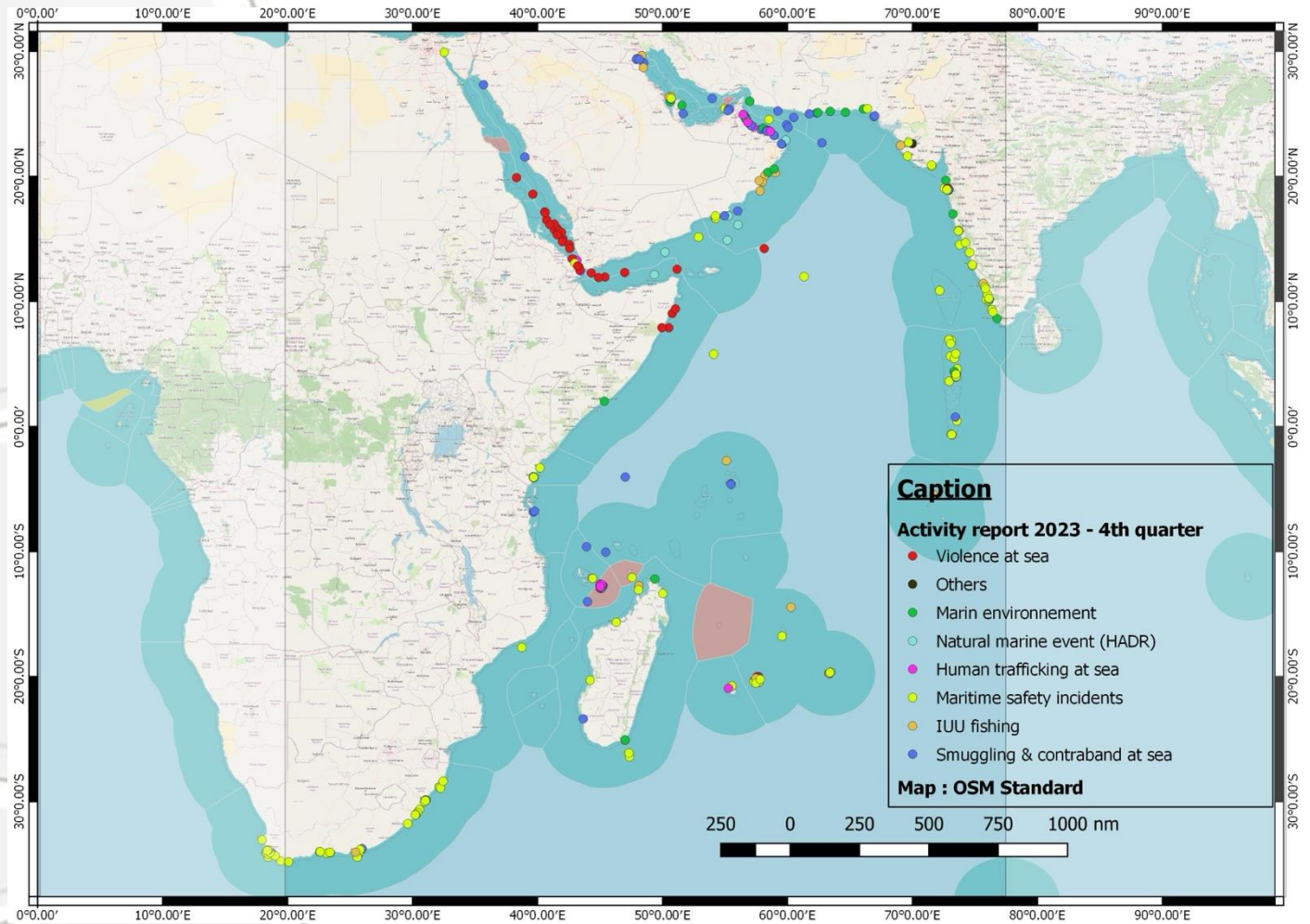
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	Pg.
CHAPTER 1 - VIOLENCE AT SEA	
Analytics	06
CHAPTER 2 - ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING (IUU)	
Analytics	10
CHAPTER 3 - SMUGGLING AND CONTRABAND BY SEA	
Analytics	15
CHAPTER 4 - HUMAN TRAFFICKING AT SEA	
Analytics	22
CHAPTER 5 - MARITIME INCIDENTS	
Analytics	27
CHAPTER 6. MARITIME ENVIRONMENT	
Analytics	36
CHAPTER 7 – NATURAL EVENTS	
Analytics	38
CHAPTER 8 – OTHERS	
Analytics	40

OVERVIEW OF THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 2023

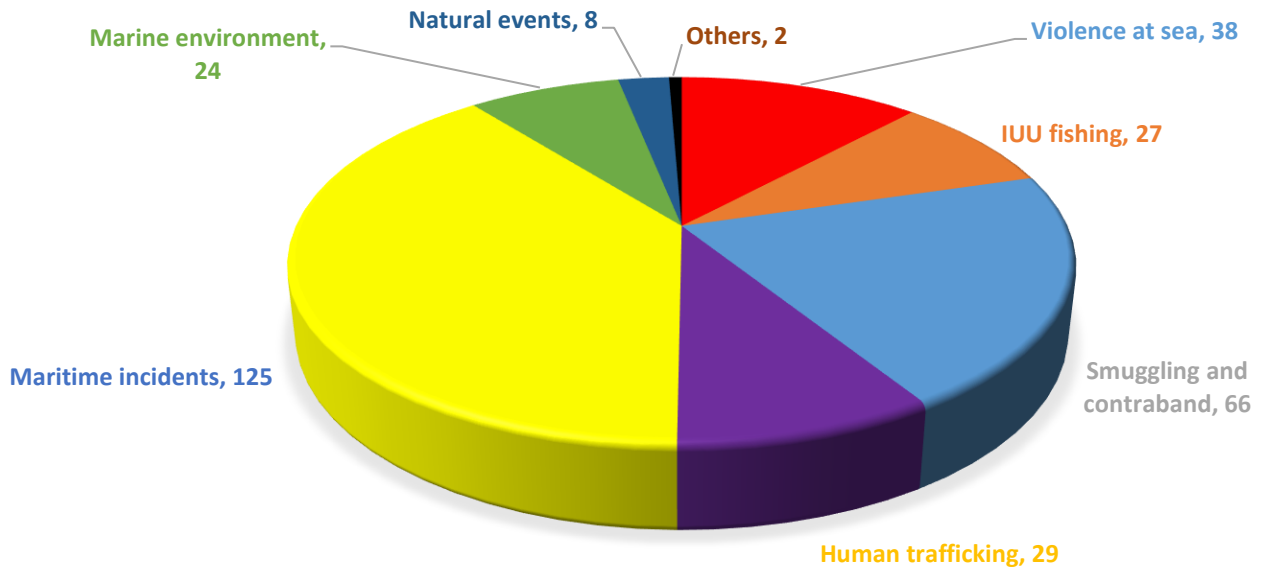
The total number of incidents at sea recorded from October to December 2023 is **319**, as compared to **244** in the third quarter, showing increase in the number of activities at sea.

Geographic representation of all events recorded in RMIFC's general area of interest from October to December 2023, as per their respective categories is as hereunder:

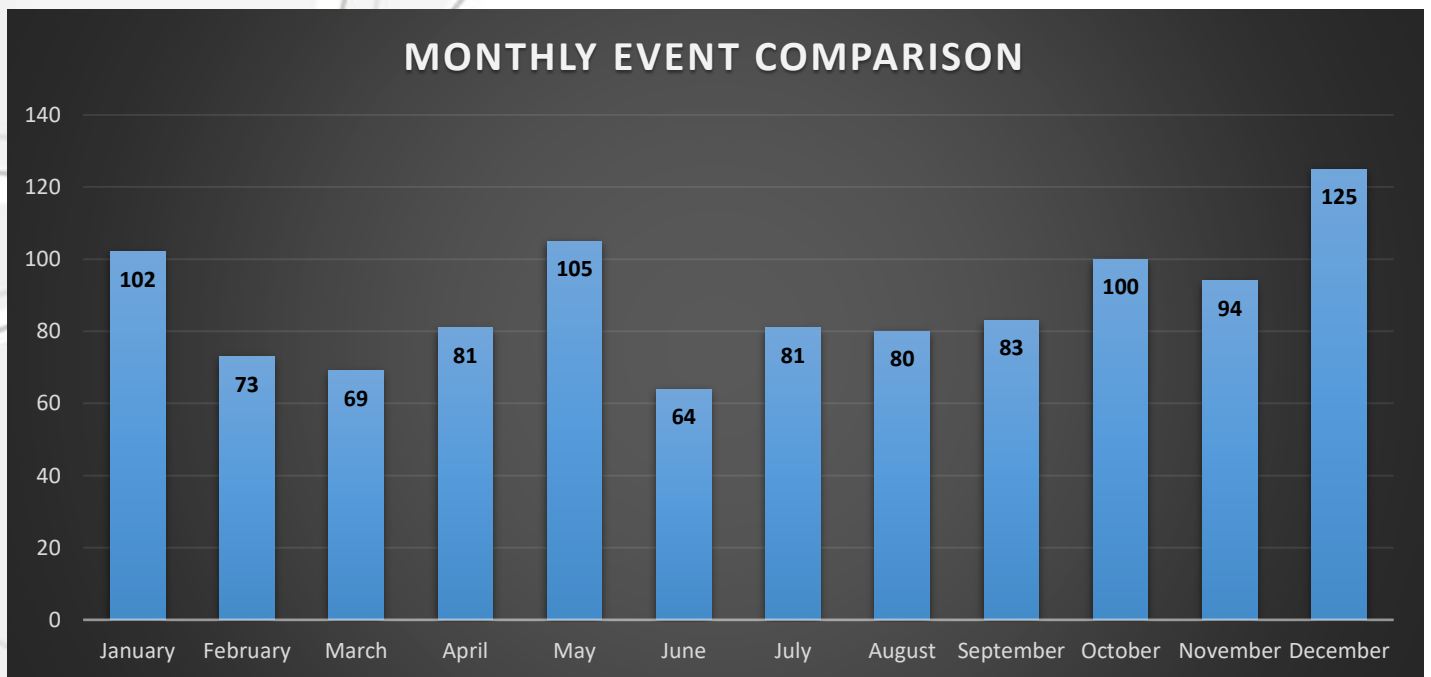


Summary of the volume of activities recorded as per their categories is shown in the chart below:

EVENTS RECORDED IN THE ESA-IO FROM OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2023



Monthly volumes of activities in the ESA-IO Region from January to December 2023 can be observed in the chart below:

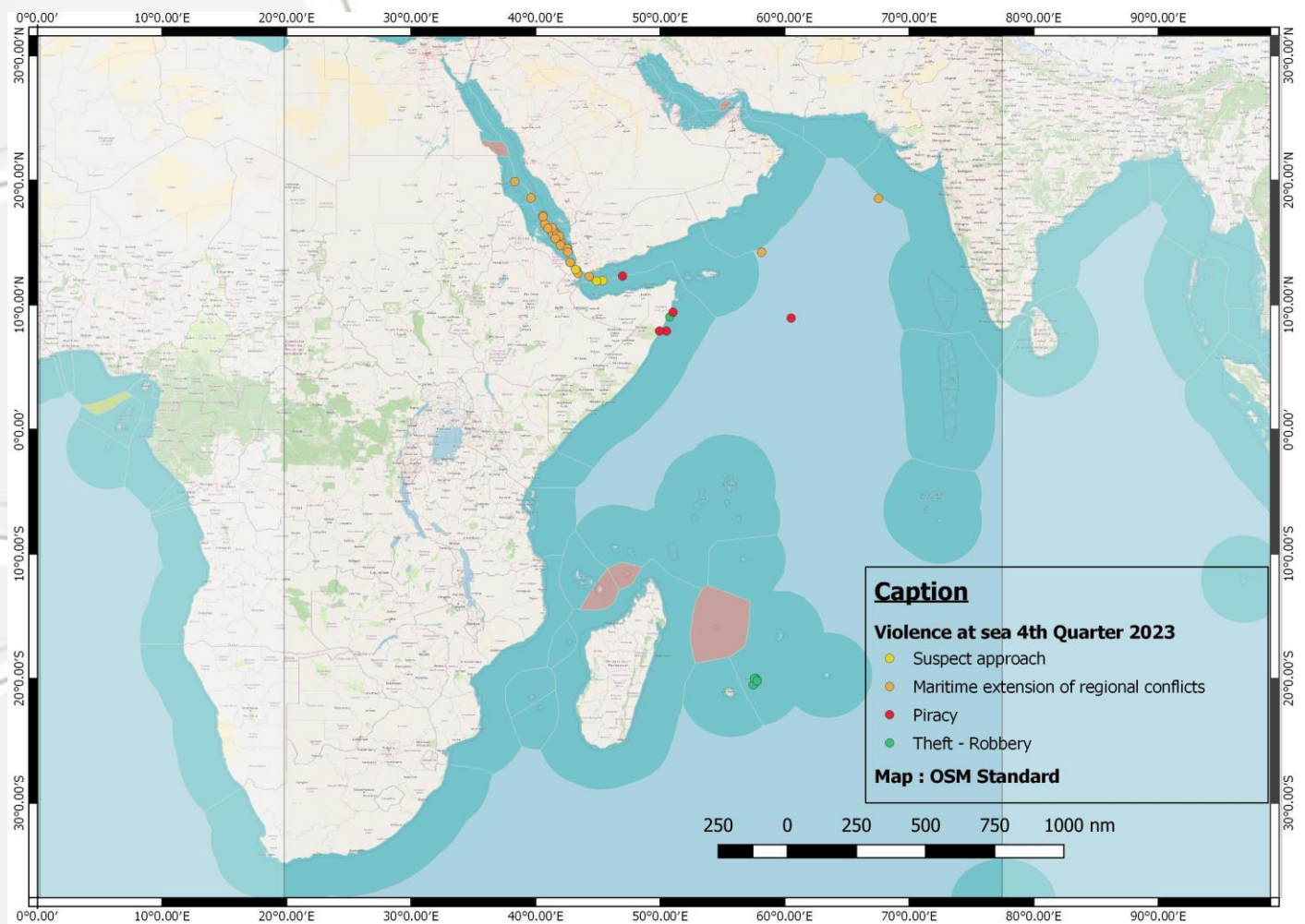


1. VIOLENT ACTS AT SEA

38 activities were recorded under the heading "Acts of violence at sea", divided into the following categories:

- Maritime extension of regional conflicts : 23
- Robbery – Theft : 6 ;
- Piracy : 5
- Suspicious approaches : 4 ;

The figure below shows the geographical distribution of the different events recorded during the fourth quarter:



The number of events in the fourth quarter of 2023 (38) was up sharply on the third quarter of 2023 (11) and on the fourth quarter of 2022 (13) mainly due to the crisis in the Red Sea.

1.1 Incidents related to the maritime extensions of regional conflicts resulted in the following events this quarter

DATE	LOCATION	EVENT
16/11	RED SEA	USS Thomas Hudner shot down a drone in the Red Sea. The drone had come too close, forcing the crew to take defensive measures. According to the Pentagon. The drone originated in Yemen and was heading towards the destroyer, which was in international waters, when it was shot down.
18/11	RED SEA	MV GALAXY LEADER was hijacked in the Red Sea by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia in Yemen. The ship's last AIS signal was detected 350 nm north-northwest of Hodeida, Yemen. The vessel was en route from Turkey to India, and was hijacked because it was owned by an Israeli company, the Houthis having vowed to hijack all Israeli vessels if it sailed close enough to be attacked. No AIS for the last 27 hours from 1440 UTC November 19, vessel status and location unknown. 25 crew members of Bulgarian, Philippine, Mexican and Ukrainian nationality were on board.
19/10	RED SEA	USS Carney intercepted three missiles and several drones launched by the Iranian-allied Houthi movement from Yemen. It was operating in the northern Red Sea when it shot down the projectiles, and there were no injuries.
23/11	RED SEA	Several attack drones launched from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen were intercepted by the US warship USS THOMAS HUDNER (DDG 116) patrolling the Red Sea. The ship and crew suffered no damage or injuries.
24/11	ARABIAN SEA	The 15,000-TEU SYMI container ship was attacked by an Iranian Shahed-136 "suicide" attack drone in the Indian Ocean. The ship was damaged, but the crew was unharmed.
29/11	BAB EL-MANDAB	US Central Command said the destroyer USS Carney had shot down the drone, an Iranian-made KAS-04, which had been launched from a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen and was heading towards the warship. The ship was operating in the southern Red Sea and heading towards the Straits at the time of the incident. The Carney was escorting a Military Sealift Command fast supply ship, as well as another US-flagged vessel carrying military equipment to the region. There were no injuries to personnel and no damage to the vessels, the command said in a statement.
03/12	RED SEA	Three merchant ships (NUMBER 9, SOPHIE II et UNITY EXPLORER) were hit by missiles fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels, while the destroyer USS CARNEY shot down three drones in self-defense.
03/12	BAB-EL-MANDAB	A potential explosion has been reported in the vicinity of the Hanish Islands in the Bab el Mandeb Strait following an aerial systems activity (UAS) report. The report indicates that the activity originates from the direction of Yemen.
06/12	RED SEA	A drone from a part of Yemen controlled by the Houthi group was shot down by the US Navy.
10/12	RED SEA	Two drones launched from the coast of Yemen onto the M/V CENTAURUS LEADER were intercepted and destroyed by the Languedoc multi-mission frigate 110 km off the Yemeni coast, in the Al Hudaydah region.
11/12	BAB-EL-MANDAB	A missile launched by Houthi-backed rebels hit the Norwegian-flagged oil tanker STRINDA off the coast of Yemen. The tanker reported damage causing a fire on board, but no casualties have been reported for the moment. A US Navy destroyer had heard the vessel's distress call and was providing assistance.
13/12	RED SEA	The tanker ARDMORE ENCOUNTER (IMO: 9654579) was approached by a speedboat with 2/3 people on board. 5/10 shots were fired at the vessel, no casualties or obvious damage. The armed security team fired warning shots and the speedboat moved away and was lost from sight. The vessel is in position 14 47 00N 041 58.8E, with a speed of 13 knots.
13/12	RED SEA	USS Mason shot down an unmanned aerial vehicle launched from Houthi-controlled areas after the group attacked the commercial vessel Ardmore Encounter aboard skiffs, CENTCOM reported
14/12	BAB EL-MANDAB	United Kingdom Trade Operations (UKMTO) cites a report of a ship that saw an explosion about 50 meters off its starboard side in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait area. The vessel is identified as the MAERSK GIBALTAR , a 2016-built container ship owned by Seaspan and chartered by Maersk. The shipping line confirmed to Danish publication Shipping Watch that one of its vessels had been involved in an incident, stating that both crew and vessel were safe and that the voyage was continuing.
15/12	RED SEA	A drone launched from Houthi-held territory struck the Liberian-flagged MSC PALLATIUM III as it sailed south in the Red Sea close to another merchant vessel, the container ship AL JASRAHA .
18/11	RED SEA	The Norwegian ship MSC CLARA and the SWAN ATLANTIC were attacked by Houthi rebels. The Houthi spokesman claims to have launched a drone attack on the two ships after their crews failed to respond to calls. A water tank on the SWAN ATLANTIC was damaged in the attack, while the MSC CLARA suffered a minor fire which the crew brought under control.
23/12	INDIA	The Indian Coast Guard's Maritime Rescue Coordination Center in Mumbai has received reports of a fire on board the MV CHEM PLUTO . The merchant vessel, with a crew of 20 Indians and 1 Vietnamese, was reportedly attacked by a suspected drone strike on an aerial platform.
25/12	RED SEA	The ICG ship Vikram escorted the vessel during its crossing under the surveillance of the ICG operations center, which is closely monitoring the situation. The merchant ship had begun its voyage in Saudi Arabia on December 19, 23 and was heading for the port of New Mangalore, where it arrived on December 25, 23. Between 3 and 8 pm (Sana'a time), the USS LABOON (DDG 58) was patrolling the southern Red Sea as part of Operation PROSPERITY GUARDIAN (OPG), and shot down four drones from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen that were heading towards the USS LABOON. There were no injuries or damage. At around 8pm (Sana'a time), US Naval Forces Central Command received reports from two ships in the southern Red Sea

		that they were under attack. The M/V BLAAMANEN , a Norwegian-flagged chemical tanker, reported that it had been grazed by a drone, with no injuries or damage. A second vessel, the M/V SAIBABA, a Gabonese-owned, Indian-flagged oil tanker, reported being hit, with no injuries. The USS LABOON (DDG 58) responded to distress calls following the attacks.
26/12	RED SEA	The United States said on Tuesday that it had shot down twelve attack drones and five missiles, which it claimed were launched by the Iranian-backed Houthis. There was no damage to ships in the area or injuries reported, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said.
27/12	RED SEA	Pentagon Central Command reported that 12 drones, 3 anti-ship missiles and 2 surface-to-surface missiles were shot down during the 10-hour operation. No Houthi vessels were damaged and no one was injured in the attack.
28/12	RED SEA	A missile and a drone were fired from Yemen between 5.45pm and 6.10pm (Sana'a time) on December 28th, and were shot down by the missile destroyer USS Mason. According to CENTCOM, none of the 18 ships in the area were damaged, and no injuries were reported.
31/12	RED SEA	At 6:30 am (Sana'a time) on December 31, the container ship MAERSK HANGZHOU issued its second distress call in less than 24 hours, reporting that it was under attack from four small boats belonging to the Iranian-backed Houthis. The small boats, originating from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, fired at the MAERSK HANGZHOU, coming within 20 meters of the vessel, and attempted to board. A contract security team aboard the MAERSK HANGZHOU returned fire. American helicopters from the USS EISENHOWER (CVN 69) and GRAVELY (DDG 107) responded to the distress call and, as they made verbal appeals to the small boats, the latter fired on the American helicopters with service weapons and small arms. The US Navy helicopters returned fire in self-defense, sinking three of the four small boats and killing their crews. The fourth boat fled the area. American personnel and equipment suffered no damage.

Following the outbreak of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, the end of the year saw an increase in the number of incidents of harassment in the Red Sea, including missile strikes, repeated drone attacks and the hijacking of a ship bound for Yemen.

The boarding of the GALAXY LEADER on November 18th marked a turning point in this crisis, demonstrating a strong desire on the part of the Houthis, and also Iran, to play a growing role in this conflict, openly asserting their support for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip by initially attacking commercial vessels with even the slightest link to Israel.

These attacks severely disrupted world trade, with the group also targeting several commercial vessels with little or no apparent connection to the State of Israel. This situation led to a multilateral military response led by the United States against the Houthis. Following the suspension announced by a number of companies of the transit of their ships through the BAM, Operation Prosperity Guardian was launched on 19 December.

Despite this, some major companies have decided to at least temporarily remove their ships and crews from this danger by redirecting their trade routes to southern Africa and the Cape of Good Hope, thereby extending their journeys to Europe or the American continent by more than ten days.

As a result of a multi-factorial increase in the cost of maritime transport (insurance, fuel, longer delays), the entire world economy could be affected by the situation in the Red Sea through a new supply-chain crisis, and certain countries such as Egypt and Djibouti could also find themselves destabilised by the drop in traffic through the Bab-El-Mandeb Strait and the Suez Canal.

1.2 Piracy

DATE	LOCATION	EVENT
04/10	SOMALIA	The Iranian-registered fishing vessel MV AL-MIRAJ 1 was the victim of an armed attack by local Somali fishing communities dissatisfied with the illegal fishing activities of Iranian vessels near Eyl in Puntland. The attackers were armed with AK 47s and RPGs and were carrying ladders on board two skiffs. For the same event, it was shared on MERCURY on 23 November 2023 that the Iranian authorities had confirmed that the MV Al-Miraj 1 had been attacked by pirates. The crew is made up of 18 Iranians.
05/10	GULF OF ADEN	USS MASON responded to a distress call from the merchant ship CENTRAL PARK in the Gulf of Aden, which had been seized by armed individuals. The ship was carrying a cargo of phosphoric acid. The assailants left the ship, which is now safe. Five armed individuals attempted to flee in a speedboat, but were pursued by the US warship and eventually surrendered.
15/11	ARABIAN SEA	The Maltese bulk carrier MV RUEN has been hijacked by Somali pirates. The Indian destroyer INS Kochi is in the vicinity of the hijacked vessel. On 17 December 2023, the bulk carrier headed for Mogadishu in Somalia.
25/12	SOMALIA	Somali security authorities have confirmed that suspected Somali pirates have hijacked another vessel off the coast of Somalia. The latest victim, a Yemeni fishing boat known as the Emerat-2, was last spotted heading north, around 8 miles north of Eyl on the Somali coast.
31/12	SOMALIA	The fishing dhow ALSAQAR-1, manufactured in Oman and registered in Yemen, was hijacked in HAFUN, which is currently located in HUL, around 9 kilometres from the BANDAR BAYLA district.

Although there had been no reports of piracy for several years, the end of 2023 saw a significant resurgence, with 5 acts identified as such in less than two months.

Fishing dhows appear to be the preferred target and may then be used as mother ships to take part in acts of piracy against larger vessels in the open sea, such as the hijacking of the MV Ruen, a merchant ship flying the Maltese flag, on December 14th, around 600 nautical miles off the Somali coast, which requires extensive logistics.

The motivation for these acts is unclear, but they represent a worrying trend. Any link with the attacks by the Houthis has not been established, especially as the dhows targeted are either Yemeni or Iranian, and we could also wonder about the role of the Shebbab militia, which after suffering a number of setbacks on the ground could be tempted to turn indirectly towards piracy to finance its activities.

1.3 Suspect approaches

DATE	LIEU	EVÈNEMENT
04/10	GULF OF ADEN	A Liberian-flagged chemical tanker and a Greek-flagged oil tanker were approached by two skiffs. The crew of the Greek-flagged tanker heard the skiffs approaching the chemical tanker via VHF. The Liberian-flagged vessel tried to warn the warships but did not receive an immediate response. The Greek-flagged vessel reported a similar encounter. The crew spotted a dark skiff with four individuals wearing white scarves and carrying a ladder. The skiff turned back after the armed crew on board displayed their weapons. A white skiff, also accompanied by four individuals and a ladder. This skiff changed course after the armed team showed their weapons. The two vessels continued on their way in complete safety.
05/10	GULF OF ADEN	10 small boats with 7 POB 59 NM south of ADEN at position: Lat: 1157.5N /Long: 04525.2E approached an MV at a distance of 50 to 100 mts. Ladders were seen on two of the boats and the alarm was raised. A boat continued to follow for 15 minutes before moving away. The vessels and crew members are unharmed.
14/11	IRAN	A ship's safety officer reported that on 14 November 2023 (09:50 UTC), a vessel was approached to within half a nautical mile by four armed individuals in a small boat. The incident took place at position 24° 0' 15.00" N-60° 33' 21.00" E (approximately 80 nautical miles south of Shahid Beheshti, Iran). The small boat left the area without being engaged. It has been confirmed that all crew and passengers are safe.
19/12	RED SEA	A vessel was approached by 4 small blue/grey boats with 4-5 people each 80NM north-east of Djibouti. The closest boat followed the vessel until 0.5NM before moving away. The captain reported that no calls were heard and no weapons were seen.

Suspicious approaches increase the feeling of insecurity in the maritime community, which has already been severely damaged by the Houtis attacks. It is extremely difficult to tell the difference between this and actual attempted criminal acts, especially as there are practices in this region linked to fishing or goods trafficking, which can explain why boats sometimes approach at high speed without any need for navigation. Strict application of and compliance with the BMPs is recommended to guard against this threat or at least limit its effects.

1.4 Robbery – Theft

DATE	LIEU	EVÈNEMENT
04/10	MAURITIUS	A pirogue moored in Riambel lagoon was stolen on Wednesday 4 October. Its value is estimated at Rs 80,000. According to the owner, in a statement to the police, his pirogue disappeared between Friday 29 September and Tuesday 3 October. He added that it was not fitted with a motor on the day of the theft. According to the initial investigation, two individuals were lurking in the area, very close to the 13-foot-long pirogue, at the time of its disappearance.
19/10	MAURITIUS	On Thursday 19 October 2023 at 2.10pm, the owner of a diving club in Grand Gaube made a report that the following items had been stolen by a person or persons unknown, from his pleasure boat registration PC 5496 OL 11 which was moored inside the lagoon at St Geran, between 4pm on Wednesday 18.10.23 and 9.15am on Thursday 19.10.23: (i) two orange fuel tanks, each containing forty (40) litres of methylated spirits, (ii) a DAN oxygen kit, (iii) a JBL loudspeaker (iv) One black Scubapro torch, (v) Two black and yellow Scubapro masks, (vi) One pair of black and grey Scubapro fins, (vii) One Standard Horizon VHF portable radio model HX 300E sno :8802618084, (viii) Five orange lifejackets, (ix) One boat hook, (x) Four blue and white fenders.
25/10	MAURITIUS	On Wednesday 25 October 2023, a skipper made a statement to Grand Bay NCG that he was robbed by a person or persons unknown between 16:30 on Tuesday 24 October 2023 and 08:00 on 25 October 2023 aboard the pleasure boat registration PC 2356 OL 33 which was white in colour with blue stripes and with the WAHOO logo, Croisières Australes which was moored inside the Grand Bay lagoon at a distance of approximately 150 metres from the shore opposite Sunset Boulevard and in a depth of 03 metres of water, the following items: - (i) 14 bottles of rum, (ii) 15 pints of beer, (iii) a bottle of water, a sum of 7000 rupees, (iv) a shoe storage basket, (v) a heavy duty rubbish bin and (vi) 08 bottles of wine.
24/11	MAURITIUS	A skipper has made a report that he was robbed by a person or persons unknown to him between 11.30am on 23.11.23 and 10am on 24.11.23 from his pleasure boat, registration PC 3554 OL 15, white in colour, fitted with two OBM 150 Hp Mercury, with the logo "MIAMORE", which was moored in the Belle Mare lagoon approximately 50 metres from the shore opposite The Residence hotel. The following items were reported stolen: (a) Twenty-five snorkels (b) Twenty-five masks of various sizes (c) Five swimming goggles (d) Twenty pairs of fins of various sizes, black and blue, "CRESSI" brand. (e) Nine stainless steel padlocks. (f) One jerry can containing eighteen litres of methylated spirits. (g) Two fuel tanks, each containing fifty-two litres of petrol. (h) One pike pole (i) A cool box containing various drinks.
24/11	MAURITIUS	Another skipper reported that the following items had been stolen by a person or persons unknown between 1pm on 23.11.23 and 8.15am on 24.11.23 from a dark blue pleasure boat, registration PC 8508 OL 16, fitted with two Suzuki OBM 150 HP, which was moored in the Belle Mare lagoon in front of The Residence hotel: - (a) Two red fuel tanks, each containing twenty-five litres of petrol. (a) Two red fuel tanks, each containing twenty-five litres of petrol. (50 litres) (b) One jacket (c) Three 03 reels (d) Two fishing rods
29/11	SOMALIA	The Iranian-owned fishing vessel AL-ASHKAAN, which was legally fishing in Somali territorial waters near QANDALA, has been hijacked by an armed group of between 6 and 8 people. The armed group were carrying AK47s and RPG7s and their intention was to carry out piracy activities in the Red Sea.

RMIFC QUARTERLY REPORT IV - RESTRICTED

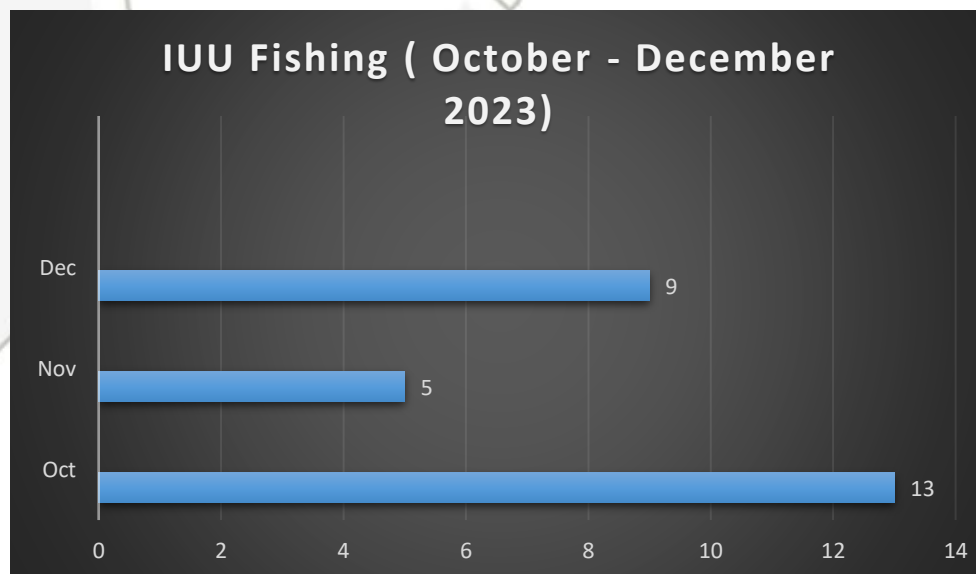
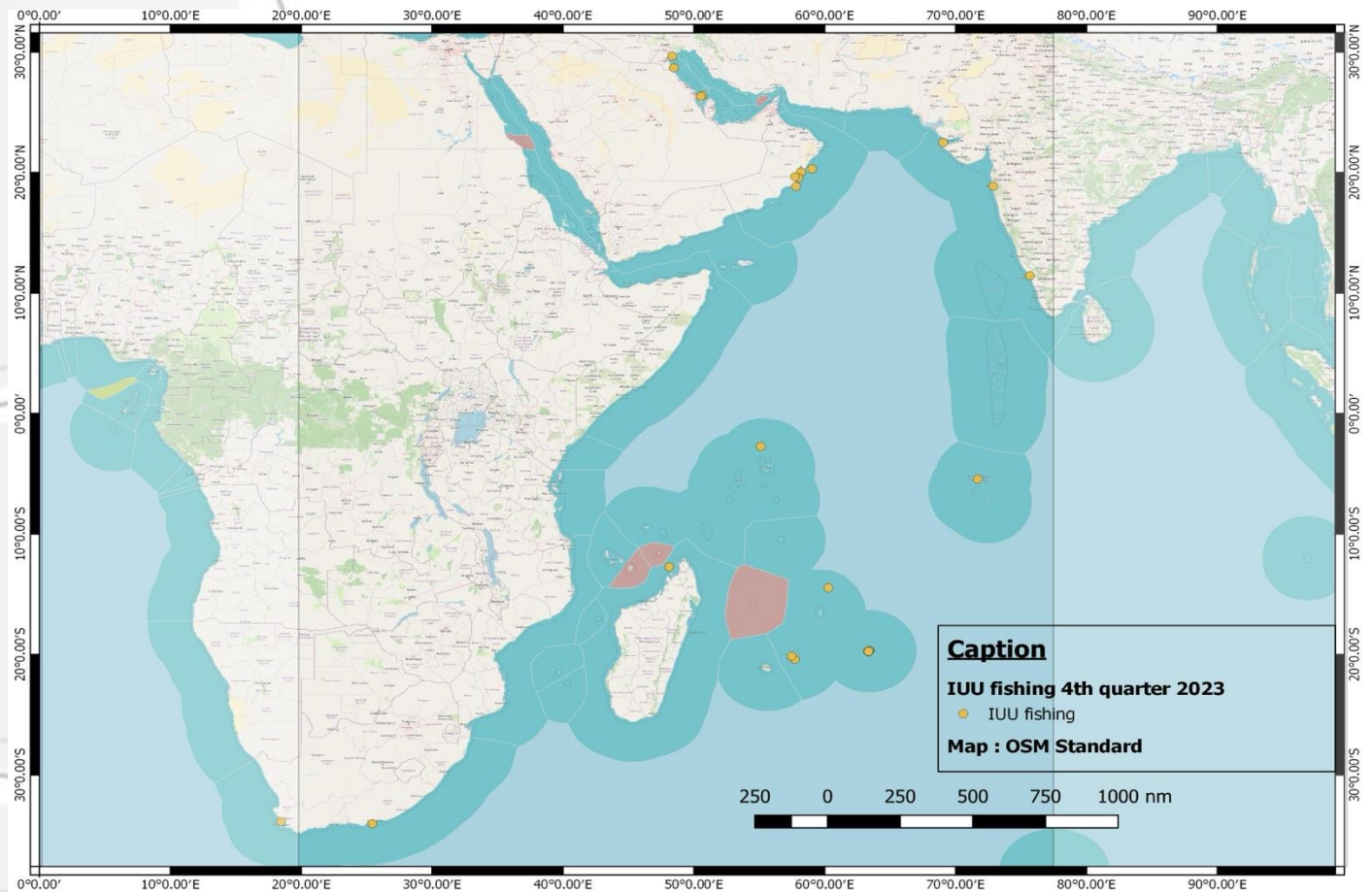
The vessel is towing a skiff and the crew are still on board. Last known position Latitude: 11.53757N Longitude: 49.89361E with MMSI No 422342018 and call sign CH16 the fishing vessel has no IMO number.

The attack against the fishing vessel AL-ASHKAAN November 11th cannot be considered an act of piracy insofar as it took place in territorial waters. Furthermore, the QANDALA region near the town of Bosasso is known to be the scene of numerous trafficking operations and battles between rival criminal networks.

2. ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING

27 activities were recorded by the RMIFC during the fourth quarter of 2023 under the theme "IUU fishing", involving 13 events in October, 05 events in November and 09 events in December in the ESA-IO region. A slight decrease was observed in the number of events compared with the third quarter (29 cases).

The figure below shows the volume of monthly activity during the fourth quarter:



The month of October

For this month of October 2023, a memorable event relating to the implementation of the regional maritime security architecture known as MASE (Maritime Security) deserves to be mentioned in this report. On 19 October, as part of the MASE programme, and in collaboration with its two regional centres (RMIFC and RCOC), the Malagasy Navy sent the RC TROZONA on patrol in the north-west of Madagascar to combat illegal immigration, trafficking and smuggling by sea, as well as IUU fishing. During this patrol, the TROZONA intercepted an unmarked dhow, probably from Asia given its characteristics, suspected of drug trafficking and IUU fishing according to information from the RMIFC. A search of the boat by Malagasy sailors revealed a number of highly suspicious clues, leading to the boat being diverted to Nosy Be for further investigation.

As a result of the determined efforts of Madagascar's offshore units to combat IUU fishing, regional partners such as EEOFISH are continuing to support the Big Island in setting up a system that will provide more information on the contribution of fishing to the national economy. The system, known as BEFSA, was launched in Madagascar from 25 to 26 October 2023.

The thirteen (13) other events recorded by RMIFC in October relating to IUU fishing in its area of interest, Mauritius, included five (05) activities mainly linked to the seizure of fishing nets and gear not authorised by fishing regulations. The areas identified are respectively: Mahébourg, Rodrigues, Grand Baie, etc. The other events are listed in the table below:

DATES	COUNTRIES	EVENTS
06 OCTOBER	Indien Ocean region	The British Navy has arrested 32 Indian fishermen for entering the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) while fishing on the high seas. The BIOT authorities also confiscated two deep-sea fishing vessels and their catch. The two fishing boats named 'Manjumatha', with a crew of 16 on each, had left the fishing port of Thengapattanam on 15 and 27 September.
OCTOBER 09	Oman	It has been reported that 1,074 kg of king mackerel caught out of season were seized by the Al Wusta governorate fish control team in the wilayats of Mahout and Duqm. Legal proceedings are under way against the offenders..
OCTOBER 10	Koweït	An Iraqi fisherman, injured by warning shots fired by the coastguard patrol stationed on the island of Bubiyan when the latter drew a gun to shoot at the patrol boat, was taken to hospital by helicopter. The incident occurred when the fisherman entered Kuwaiti territorial waters to the north and disregarded the orders of the security personnel. The coastguard patrol noticed the Iraqi vessel crossing the border and asked the captain to stop, but he did not comply.
OCTOBER 12	Oman	Three small-scale fishing boats carrying 500 kilograms of king mackerel caught during the ban period were seized by fisheries control teams during their work at sea in the Wilayat of Mahout. 130 kilograms of king mackerel were seized by the fisheries control team in restaurants in the Wilayat of Mahout and 61 kilograms of charkha fish in a vehicle on the coast in the Wilayat of Duqm were seized by the fisheries control team in the governorate of Al Wusta. They were caught during the closed season. The quantities seized were confiscated, and legal action was taken against the offenders.
OCTOBER 15	Bahreïn	Coastguard maritime patrols seized four boats in the western region of the country for fishing with illegal fishing gear. She urged all sailors and fishermen to respect the law and stop practices that threaten the country's fish stocks and harm the marine ecosystem.
OCTOBER 17	India	A special search operation conducted by the Navy at Gurunagar jetty on the morning of 17 October 2023 uncovered 1.95kg of TNT explosives and a 3ft 04in long safety fuse which was hidden in the shrubs. It is suspected that the explosives were hidden for use in illegal fishing activities.

OCTOBER 20

Seychelles

Approximately 111NM from Mahe within the Seychelles EEZ. The PS TOPAZ intercepted a foreign fishing vessel. Name of vessel: HAMBANTOTA EXPRESS Status: Unflagged (at time of boarding) Personnel on board (POB): 06 Sri Lankan crew members.) The captain on board declared having left Sri Lanka on 16 August 2023 for fishing activities in Madagascar. They left Madagascar eight days ago to go to Sri Lanka. When asked about the GPS on board, he stated that there was no GPS chart on board. When the ship was searched, a certain quantity of freshly salted sharks, rays and bonito were found. The vessel was escorted to Port Victoria, but due to a battery malfunction it had to be towed away and handed over to the SFA.

The month of November

Out of nine (05) events related to IUU fishing recorded in November, Mauritius has 02 events which are again seizures of unauthorized and unregulated fishing nets and gear. These seizures took place in Rodrigues on 14 and 19 November respectively, again carried out by NCG officers. It should be noted that in Mauritius, most of the IUU fishing-related events recorded by RMIFC during the year were seizures of unauthorized and unregulated fishing nets and gear.

As one of the major economic resources in Mauritius, the fisheries sector requires synergy between agencies working in the field of fisheries monitoring, control, and surveillance.

With this in mind, EEOFISH is supporting Mauritius to maximize and rationalize the use of the limited resources available for the development of the fisheries sector. The program organized a workshop to improve cooperation between agencies working in the field of fisheries monitoring, control, and surveillance in Mauritius on November 15.

Other events recorded in other countries are listed below:

On 21 November, in India, the Pakistani vessel NAZ-RE-KARAM with 13 crew members, fishing in Indian waters, was apprehended by the Indian Coast Guard vessel ARINJAY. The vessel was taken to Okha for a thorough search and joint investigation.

In India, on 23 November, three fishing trawlers were seized by the Indian authorities off Koyilandy, Kozhikode, Kerala, India. The fishermen were allegedly engaged in illegal fishing using illegal methods.

In Oman, it was reported on 26 November that 13 expatriate workers were arrested by the fisheries control team of the General Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the governorate of Al Wusta, in cooperation with the coastguard police, for breaching the sea fishing law and the labour law in the wilayat of Duqm. Eight banned nylon nets and two fishing boats were seized.

The month of December

On 15 December 2023, an important date for Madagascar's fisheries sector, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Blue Economy made public Madagascar's 2022 report to the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTi) to national institutions linked to the fisheries sector.

The aim of the FiTi is to help countries progressively improve levels of transparency throughout their marine fisheries sector. This report is a very important tool in the fight against illegal fishing in the Grande

Ile, where the fishing sector contributes more than USD 800,000,000 (6% of GDP) to the economy, employs 200,000 people, and is therefore more important than tourism.

Out of nine (09) events relating to IUU fishing recorded in November, South Africa counts 02 events relating to the seizure of 26 bags of abalone containing 5,700 units weighing approximately 1,000 kg on 09 December, and a second seizure of 21 bags of abalone worth more than 500,000 rand which took place on 18 December. This type of abalone poaching has taken off in South Africa because of the high demand in Asia, which is leading to their over-exploitation along the South African coast. This situation could have devastating consequences for local populations, who use them for food and to earn a living, as well as for sensitive marine biodiversity.

As for Mauritius, 03 events involving the seizure of unauthorized and unregulated fishing nets took place in Rodrigues and the Nassau Bay Red Sea lagoon on 05, 16 and 20 December respectively.

In Kuwait, on 01 December, following a report received by the operations room indicating the presence of a fishing boat with three people engaged in catching fish in the Al-Hayshan marine area, the coastguards quickly intervened. Once on site, it turned out that a Kuwaiti citizen and two expatriates were on the fishing boat. Decisive action was taken by the Ministry of the Interior against the offenders.

On 03 December in Bahrain, two fishermen were arrested by the coastguard in possession of 320 kg of illegally caught prawns. They were sentenced to one month in prison and will be deported at the end of their sentence.

In Oman, on 20 December, four unlicensed fishing boats were seized, and three foreigners were arrested for illegal fishing during an inspection of fishing vessels in the fishing port of the Wilayat of Duqm. Two fishing boats had no number on either side, and two other fishing boats had no license. The three expatriate workers were arrested at the Duqm police station.

Also in Oman, on 24 December, nine expatriates were arrested for violating the law on sea fishing, the protection of living aquatic resources and the labor law in the wilayat of Mahout. The fisheries control team from the General Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the governorate of Al Wusta, in cooperation with the coastguard police, also seized a number of fishing boats. The offenders have been prosecuted.

3. TRAFFICKING AND CONTRABAND

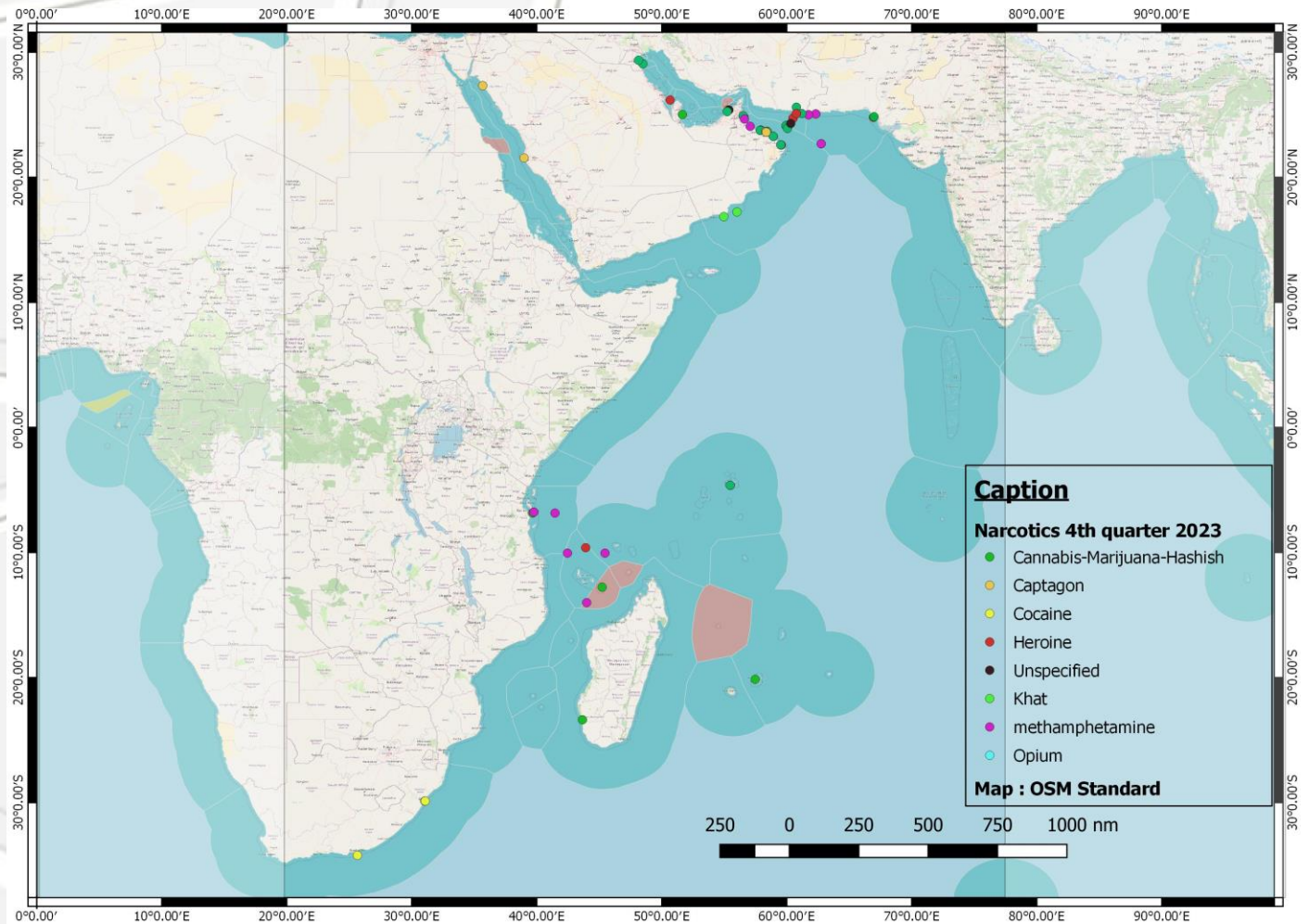
66 events were reported under this category in the third quarter of 2023, as compared to 38 in the third quarter. 50 cases refer to drug seizure and the other 16 events refer to the smuggling of fuel, tobacco, cigarettes, liquor, sandal wood, abalone and lobster.

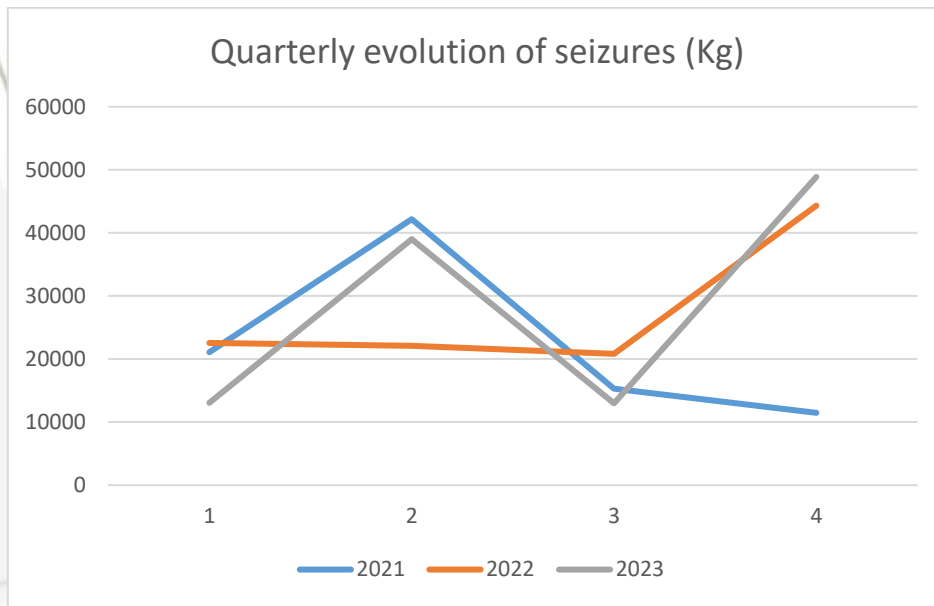
3.1 Drugs

50 cases (compared with 30 in the third quarter of 2023 and 39 in the fourth quarter of 2022) of seizures of narcotics products were recorded from September to December 2023, representing a total of 48878.23 kg of products seized over the period, compared with 12,979.45 kg in the third quarter of 2023 (44,320 kg in the fourth quarter of 2022), excluding Khat and Captagon.

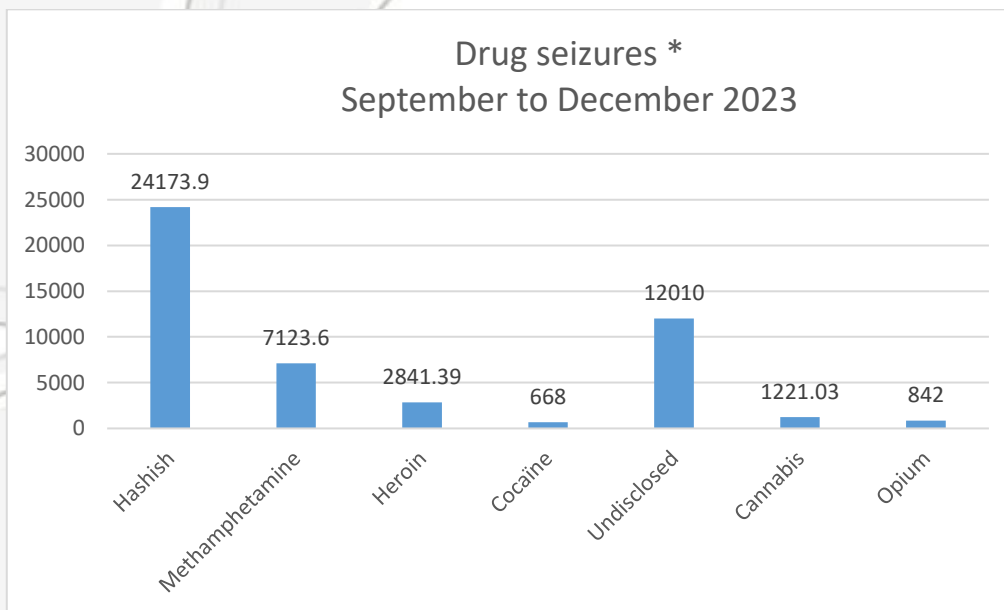
There was a sharp increase in the quantities seized compared with the previous quarter and the same period last year.

The graph below shows the geographical distribution of narcotics seizures in the fourth quarter:





The graph below represents the volumes of the different types of narcotics seized during the third quarter.



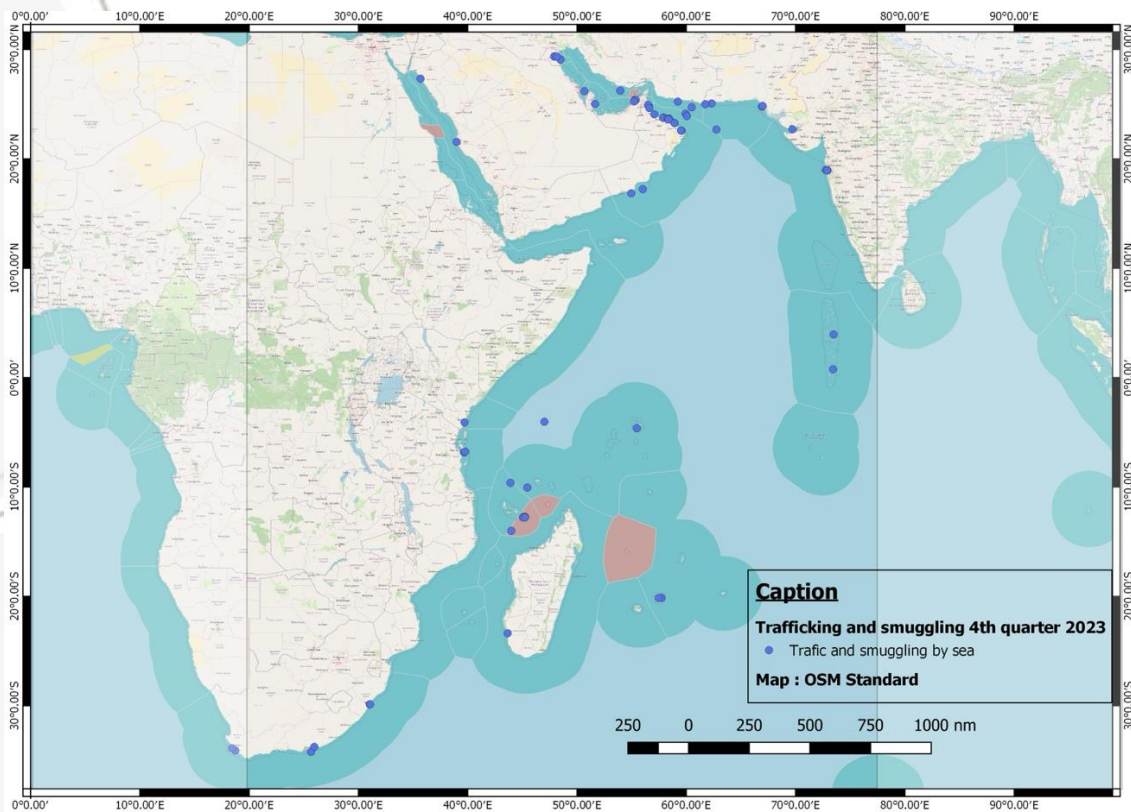
* Khat, Captagon and medicines diverted from their therapeutic uses are not included in this table because of the way they are counted (number of tablets or packets). However, almost 2 million Captagon tablets were seized during the period (down on the previous quarter), mainly in the Arabian Peninsula, where demand for this product is particularly strong. These products from the Middle East are concealed among various legal shipments: building materials and foodstuffs.

Hashish remains by far the most frequently seized product. Methamphetamine seizures rebounded significantly this quarter, with volumes almost doubling compared with the same period last year. Heroin seizures appear to have stagnated, reinforcing the argument that the eradication policy advocated by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is having an effect.

However, this quarter saw a high proportion of undetermined seizures (12 tonnes), due to incomplete information from Iran.

3.2 Other contrabands

The fourth quarter of 2023 witnessed **16** cases referring to various types of commodities and fuel smuggling in the ESA-IO region, as compared to 08 in the third quarter. They refer to the smuggling of fuel, tobacco, cigarettes, liquor, sandal wood, abalone and lobster.



Tobacco and cigarettes

Six cases were recorded which refer to the smuggling of cigarettes and tobacco. 03 of the cases were in India, 01 in Kuwait and 02 in Mayotte.

All three cases referring to India were seized by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), where the smuggled goods were declared on paper as fruit or mushroom boxes.

Fuel smuggling

Two cases of fuel smuggling were reported in the 4th quarter of the year as tabulated below:

DATE	LOCATION	EVENT
15 NOV	India	Six persons were arrested by the Yellow Gate police for allegedly attempting to smuggle diesel in a boat via the Arabian Sea, near Sewri jetty. After being alerted; the Coast Guard officers went to the place where they discovered the smugglers who moved the fuel using a pipeline to take it illegally to another location. After further investigation, the police found in a deck storage fuel tanks 19,500 litre of diesel, which has a market value of Rs 18 lakh.
06 DEC	Persian Gulf	Two vessels carrying more than 4.5 million liters of smuggled fuel were seized by the IRGC Navy. After three days of monitoring, the IRGC Navy carried out an operation and seized the two vessels in the south of Bomusi Island. The smuggling vessels were handed over to the judicial authorities for legal procedures. The first vessel with 13 crew members was carrying 2,280,000 litres of smuggled fuel, while the second with 21 crew members was carrying 2,300,000 litres.

Alcohol smuggling

Three cases refer to the smuggling of fuel, one in Kuwait and two in Maldives. The significant one was the one in Kuwait where on the 27th of November, more than 2,000 liters of imported alcohol were seized at the Shuwaikh Port by Officers from Kuwait Customs in cooperation with the customs authorities. The cartons of imported alcohol were neatly hidden in a shipment of suspect cast iron arriving at the port of Shuwaikh. The suspicious shipment was seized and the imported alcohol was found hidden inside. The preliminary information indicates that the shipment came from one of the Gulf countries.

Smuggling of abalone

Two cases of abalone smuggling were recorded and both were in South Africa, involving millions of rands. They are as follows:

On 26th of November, two people were arrested by Maitland flying squad members on the N2 freeway, in Cape Town in possession of abalone worth R3 million. One was arrested for possession of abalone worth 900,000 rand and the other for more than 5,000 units of abalone worth an estimated 2 million rand.

On 29th of November, members from the Bloemfontein and Provincial Stock Theft Units followed up on information they have received through the Eyes and Ears Initiative (E2) about a vehicle loaded with abalone travelling from Gqeberha to Bloemfontein. The information has been followed up since yesterday afternoon and just after 23:00 last night, the Ford Ranger bakkie was spotted and pulled over in OR Thambo Road near the South Campus in Bloemfontein. Inside the bakkie, black bags containing abalone were found on the seats and at the back of the bakkie. The estimated weight of the abalone is about 1.1 tons with an estimated value of R4,2 million. Police also confiscated the vehicle. The 46-year-old suspect will appear in the Bloemfontein Magistrate's Court tomorrow for possession of abalone.

Caustic soda - Kenya

On the 08th of October, seven containers out of 104 shipped from India through the port of Mombasa containing stolen goods worth Ksh267 million were recovered by Kenyan police in conjunction with their Ugandan counterparts and Interpol. The search and recovery started when Indian businessman, Surya Parkash, who is also the Chief Executive of Kutch Chemical Industries LTD, supplied a consignment of 104 containers of caustic soda (sodium hydroxide) to fictitious companies between December 12, 2022, and April 22, 2023.

Lobster – South Africa

On 21st of November, five suspects for the possession of West Coast Rock Lobster without a permit were arrested by police members during an intelligence driven operation. The police members spotted the target tow truck on the N2 near Macassar and pulled it off the road. As the occupants appeared suspiciously nervous, the members ensued with a search of the vehicle. During the search the members discovered and confiscated 397 West Coast Rock Lobster, 6069 lobster tails, a Ford Ranger LDV, a FAW flatbed tow truck as well as five cellular telephones.

Sandal wood - Mauritius

On the 11th of December, following information received from MIC and FIO personnel regarding illegal activities at Bras d'Eau, a Joint operation was carried out comprising personnel of Poste Lafayette NCG, FIO

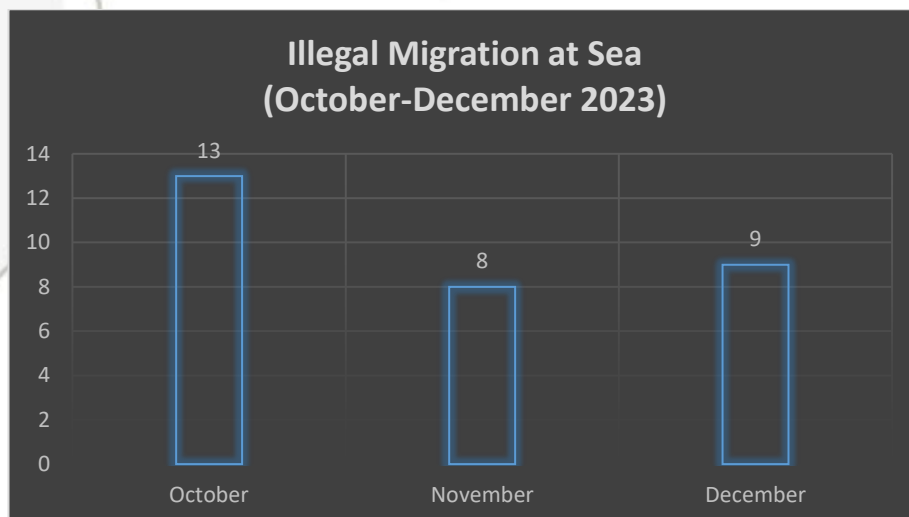
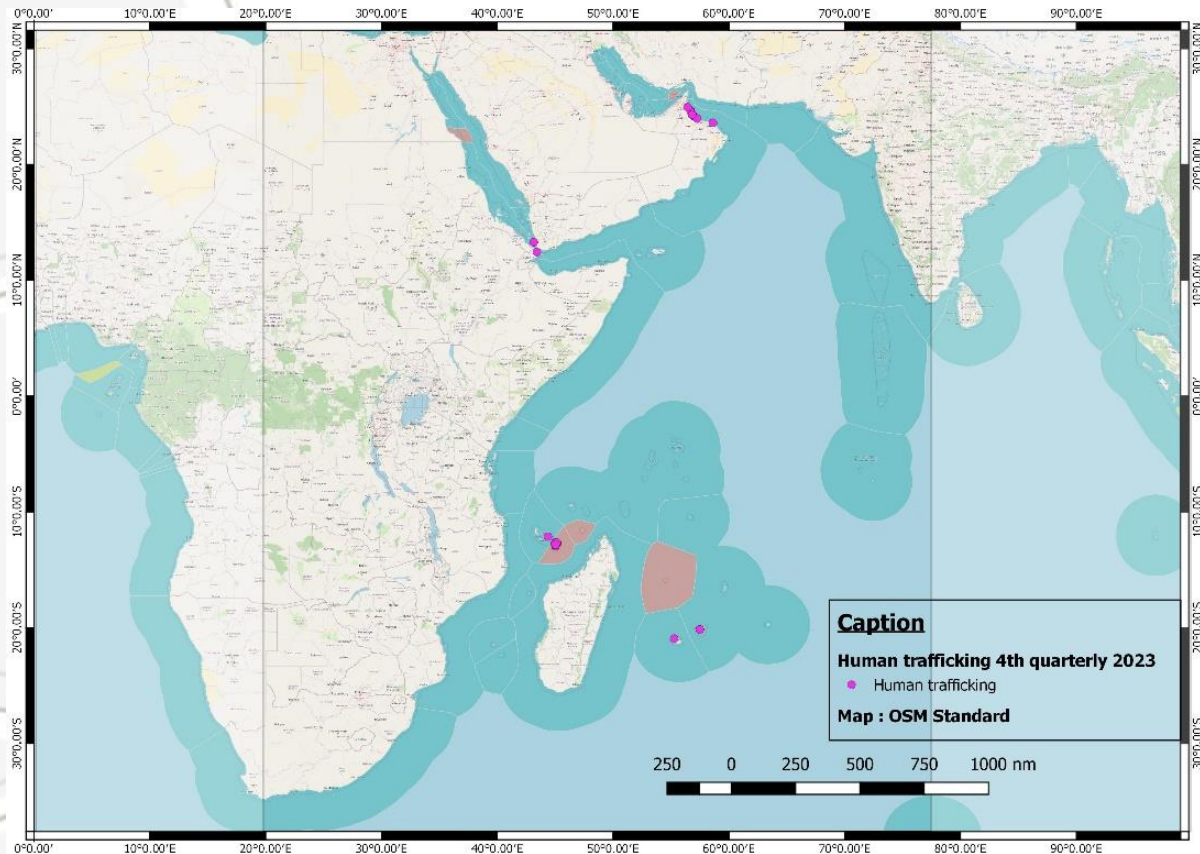
and MIC personnel from 1555 h to 1730 h at Bras d'Eau National Park. Three Contraventions were established for the offence of "Interfering with a protected plant on a state land" to wit cutting of sandal wood" against 03 persons.



4. HUMAN TRAFFICKING AT SEA

29 events were recorded by the RMIFC under this theme in the ESA-IO region during the fourth quarter of 2023. The number of interceptions increased slightly compared with the third quarter of 2023, when a total of 27 events were recorded. However, the number of illegal migrants is on the increase, with **3,475** people in an irregular situation recorded compared with 2,527, an increase of **36%** compared with the third quarter. Economic reasons, followed by environmental shocks and conflicts, are the main reasons for people leaving their country of origin.

A graphical representation of the volume of activity during the fourth quarter:



October 2023

October was the month with the most illegal migration activity recorded compared with November and December. 13 events were recorded in the Indian Ocean involving 1,062 people in an irregular situation with 3 cases of stowaways on board commercial vessels.

In Mayotte, 05 kwassas-type boats were intercepted, involving 845 people, by the Mayotte AEM headquarters as part of the fight against illegal immigration. These figures are down compared with the same period in 2022, with 1,036 people in an irregular situation, a fall of 18%. The number of kwassas intercepted jumped by 41% compared with the same period in 2022, and 59 smugglers were arrested by the Mayotte gendarmerie, compared with 55 in October 2022, a slight increase of 7%. Smugglers imprisoned in Mayotte are deported to their country of origin at the end of their sentence.

In Djibouti, on 06 October, a large-scale operation carried out by units from the Djibouti Coast Guard's Khor Angar Maritime Coast Surveillance Station led to the arrest of a "galba" type boat near Godoria, carrying a total of 126 vulnerable migrants, including 74 men and 52 women, all of Ethiopian origin. The three Yemeni smugglers responsible for this tragic attempt were apprehended, testifying to the determination of the forces to combat the criminal networks involved in people smuggling by sea.

Last September, no clandestine migration events were recorded, and this drop in flows was linked to the high temperatures that prevailed, combined with the checks carried out by the Djibouti coastguard. The resumption could be due to a reduction in border controls with Ethiopia, combined with false rumours of a resumption of boat departures from the coast of Obock, where migrants usually cross the Gulf of Aden to reach the Arabian Peninsula.

In Mauritius, on 10 and 16 October, 3 stowaway events were reported at the port of Louis by port police staff, in conjunction with staff from the Passport and Immigration Office. The stowaways were from Kenya and Tanzania, coming from South African ports.

In Oman, 88 infiltrators of Asian origin were arrested by coastguard police in the governorate of Al Batinah North as they attempted to enter the country illegally on board a fishing boat. Legal proceedings were taken against them.

November 2023

In November, the most events were recorded in Mayotte, involving 1,348 illegal immigrants, compared with 666 in 2022, with 83 kwassas seized and 70 people smugglers arrested.

These events are summarised in the table below:

DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTIONS
05 NOVEMBER	Mayotte	Mayotte's AEM HQ coordinated the interception of 24 kwassa-kwassa boats, with a total of 351 illegal immigrants and 19 suspected smugglers.
12 NOVEMBER	Mayotte	Mayotte's AEM HQ coordinated the interception of 20 kwassa-kwassa boats, representing a total of 354 illegal immigrants and 17 suspected smugglers.
19 NOVEMBER	Mayotte	Mayotte's AEM HQ coordinated the interception of 13 kwassa-kwassa boats, with a total of 166 illegal immigrants and 9 suspected smugglers.
25 NOVEMBER	Mayotte	Mayotte's AEM HQ coordinated the interception of 15 kwassa-kwassa boats carrying a total of 264 illegal immigrants, including 14 suspected smugglers.
26 NOVEMBER	Mayotte	Mayotte's AEM HQ coordinated the interception of 11 kwassa-kwassa boats, representing a total of 213 illegal immigrants for 11 suspected smugglers..

On 13 November in the RED SEA, 26 migrants of African origin were arrested by the Yemeni coastguard in the Red Sea after their boat sank in the waters off the coast of Mocha, to the west of Yemen. The boat was carrying 75 migrants, including women. 49 are still missing. The boat sank due to strong winds and the loss of the boat on the waves, causing all the passengers to fall into the water.

IN OMAN, Coastguard police in the governorate of Al Batinah North seized a boat carrying seventeen people of Asian origin as they attempted to enter the country illegally. The legal procedures against them have been completed.

On 19 November in COMOROS, a French national disembarked by Kwassa from Mayotte with two bags full of personal effects: clothes, Madagascan currency and euros. However, among his luggage, the authorities discovered a taser (an electrical weapon), a computer and tear gas. This raises questions about the nature of his journey.

December 2023

The month of December is marked by the celebration of International Migrants' Day. On this occasion, the IOM wishes to highlight migration as one of the solutions to global challenges, in particular adapting to climate change or providing better economic opportunities for communities.

On 07 December, a boat registered IMULA 0813 KLT and bearing the name "MALITHA PUTHA" arrived at the Grand Port Maritime in Réunion. The 7 passengers, all of whom were men of legal age, were taken in charge by the French government for their medical check-up and placement in a waiting zone.

No one was ill or injured. This is the third arrival of migrants on the territory since the beginning of 2023. According to the prefecture's press release, the ship had refuelled on the sister island before setting sail again for Reunion Island.

In Mayotte, 557 illegal immigrants were apprehended, compared with 849 in 2022, a fall of 34%. The number of smugglers apprehended also fell, with 34 suspected smugglers arrested compared with 55 in 2022, and 37 kwassas detected, compared with 63 in 2022.

In Oman, 3 events were recorded in the northern Indian Ocean involving 32 infiltrators of Asian origin who were attempting to enter the Sultanate of Oman illegally on-board fishing boats by the coastguard police in the governorate of Al Batinah North.

These events are summarised in the table below:

DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTIONS
09 DECEMBER	Mayotte	Mayotte's AEM HQ coordinated the interception of 7 kwassa-kwassa boats carrying a total of 80 illegal immigrants, including 7 suspected smugglers.
16 DECEMBER	Mayotte	Mayotte's AEM HQ coordinated the interception of 14 kwassa-kwassa boats, with a total of 249 illegal immigrants and 14 suspected smugglers.
22 DECEMBER	Mayotte	Mayotte's AEM HQ coordinated the interception of 16 kwassa-kwassa boats, representing a total of 228 illegal immigrants and 13 suspected smugglers.
30 DECEMBRE	Mayotte	Mayotte's AEM HQ coordinated the interception of 26 kwassa-kwassa boats, representing a total of 352 illegal immigrants and 27 suspected smugglers.
24 DECEMBER	Oman	The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has arrested 28 Asian infiltrators who were attempting to enter the country illegally. The legal procedures have been completed.
28 DECEMBER	Oman	The coastguard in the governorate of Al Batinah North arrested a fishing boat carrying two people of Asian origin who were attempting to enter the country illegally. Legal proceedings are under way against them.

In a statement, the ROP said: "The North Batinah Coastguard Police seized a boat carrying two Asian migrants as they attempted to enter the country illegally". Legal proceedings have been initiated against them, the statement added.

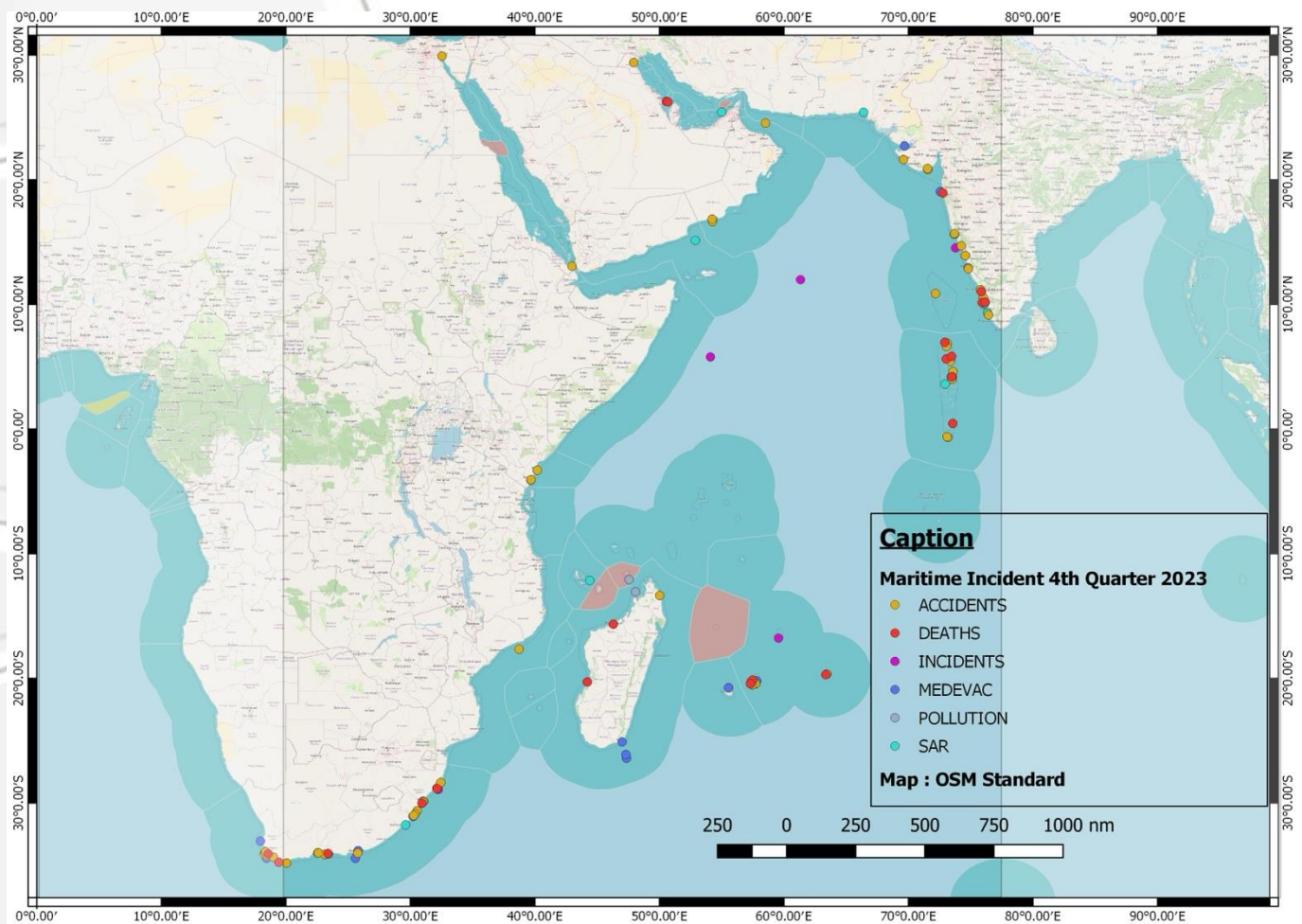
Conclusion

- **Migration from Mayotte/Anjouan:** 14 illegal migration incidents were detected at sea, with a total of 3,102 illegal immigrants arrested by the police, twice as many as in the third quarter of 2023 (1,334), reflecting the authorities' determination to combat illegal migration from the neighbouring islands by increasing naval and air resources and making intervention units available.
- **Migratory flows from the Gulf of Aden,** 2 events were recorded during the fourth quarter, 201 Ethiopian migrants intercepted by the Djibouti coast guard. This represents a decrease compared with the third quarter of 2023, when 909 migrants were intercepted, and an even smaller decrease compared with the same period in 2022.
- **Migratory flows in the Gulf of Oman,** 8 events were reported and 141 people, mainly Asian nationals, were arrested for attempting to enter the Sultanate of Oman illegally, a slight increase compared with the third quarter of 2023, 133 and around ten Asian boats were seized off the coast of the governorate of North Al Batinah by the coastguard police.
- **Stowaways,** 3 stowaway events all originating from East Africa were reported at Port Louis in Mauritius. For ships, and by extension for the maritime transport sector, the repatriation of stowaways can be a very complex and costly procedure involving captains, shipowners, and port authorities.

5. MARITIME INCIDENTS

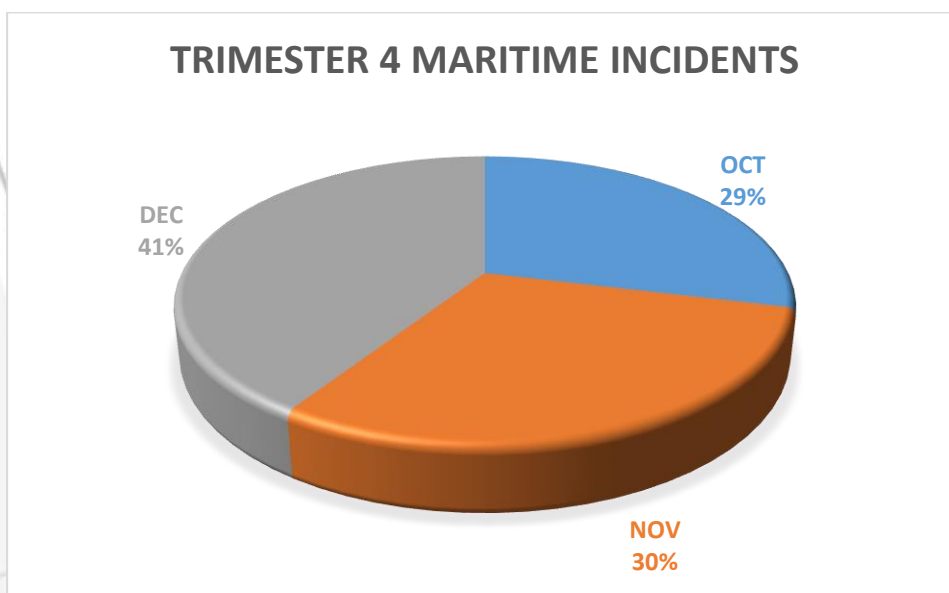
A total of **125** events were recorded in this thematic in the 4th quarter of 2023, representing a 23.8% increase when compared to the number of events recorded in the last quarter, that is during the months of July, August and September 2023, where **101** events were recorded. Within this thematic, a total of **69** maritime events related to Search and Rescue (SAR) operations was recorded during the period under analysis which, represented an increase of 11.3% when compared to similar events in the last quarter where **62** incidents were recorded. Meanwhile, there was an exponential increase in the number of maritime accidents whereby **67** events were recorded during the period thus indicating a staggering 76.3% incline when compared to the previous quarter which had recorded only **38** accidents.

Geographical representation of all maritime incidents and their sub-categories in the months of October, November, and December 2023:



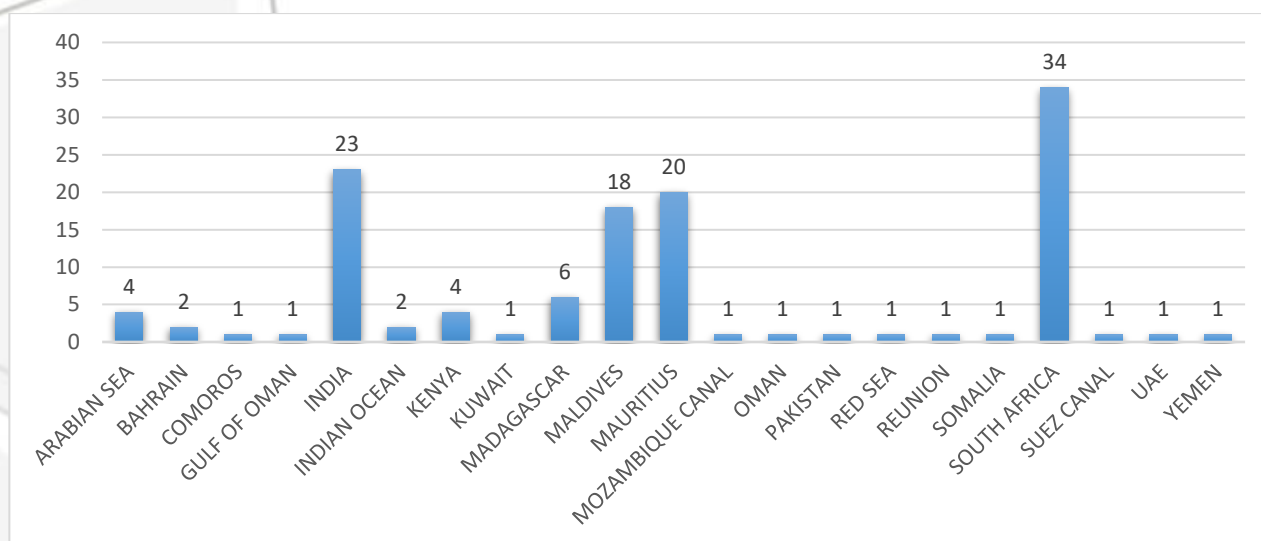
It is important to note that the events at the Red Sea coupled by the threat of the reemergence of piracy off the coast of Somalia has already led many shipping companies to re-route their vessels through the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. The influx of vessels through this part of the region also presents a number of challenges including refuelling and restocking, but at the same time it raises the probability of maritime incidents to occur, especially pollution. Previously, there have been incidents where vessels have lost engine power causing drifting and posing the danger of running aground and leading to other major disasters. This was the case in 2022 when MV Ore Shandong lost engine power off the coast of St Brandon and begun drifting, following the events of MV Wakashio two years before, decisive action had to be taken to avoid the possibility of another major disaster occurring.

Maritime incidents between the months of October, November, and December 2023:



As noted in the opening statement, the RMIFC recorded a 23.8 percent increase in the number of events related to maritime incidents, these events were mainly attributed to incidents such as missing persons at sea, vessels capsizing, drowning incidents, vessel collisions, vessels running aground among others. Further analysis revealed that many of the incidents occurred largely in South Africa, where a total of 34 events were recorded. India and Mauritius followed in second and third place and recorded a total of 23 and 20 incidents respectively. This has been a consistent theme in previously analyzed reports with South Africa leading in the number of events related to maritime incidents. However, it should be noted again that South Africa with its large coastline, also experiences a large number of blue economy activities including marine tourism. Hence, the potential for incidents to occur is high. At the same time, South Africa’s robust maritime safety and security response mechanism allows the country to react effectively and efficiently to incidents thus minimizing the number of casualties and damages to the marine environment.

The chart below shows the distribution of all maritime incidents during the 4th quarter of 2023:

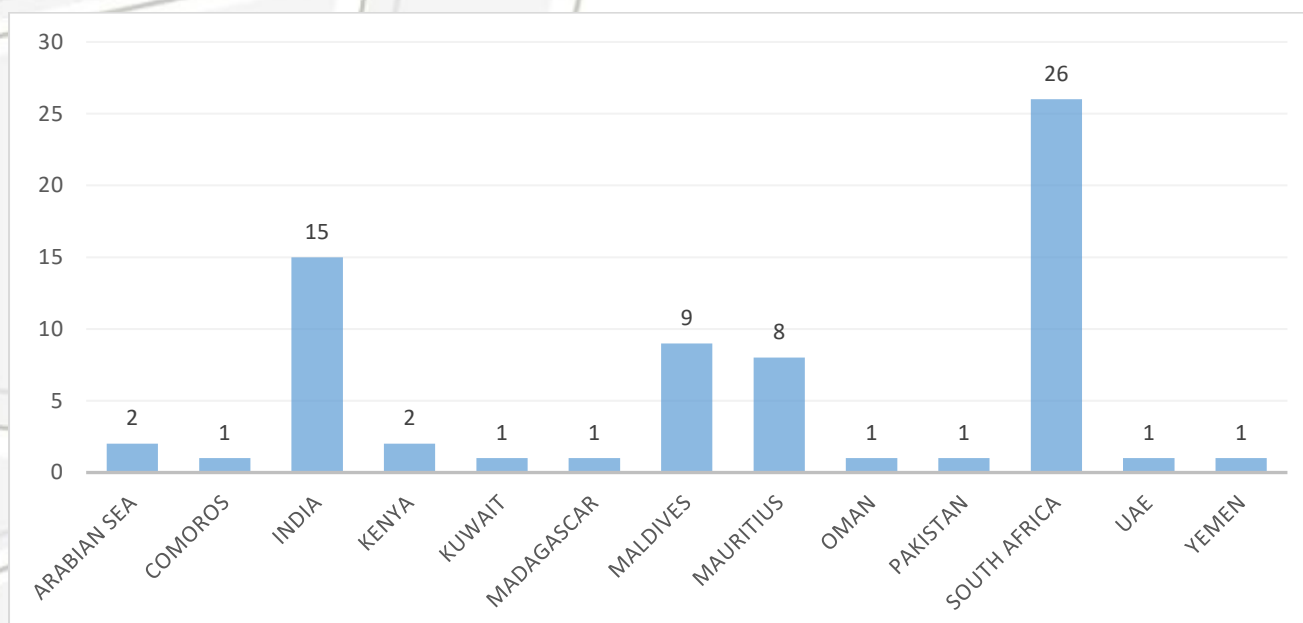


Maritime Incidents

Search and Rescue (SAR)

As earlier observed, the number of Search and Rescue operations recorded in this period indicated a slight increase of about 11.3 % when compared to the previous quarter. Even though it does not highlight a major difference it can also be attributed to the high number of vessel activities in the region, especially after the events manifesting in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia. The illegal seizures of vessels transiting close to the maritime borders of Yemen and Somalia are susceptible to attacks, including from drones, suspected pirates as well as missiles. These events also called for increased vigilance and readiness from SAR personnel in order to respond in adequate time to any distress situation. Despite the aforementioned, the highest number of SAR operations was recorded in South Africa, while India followed behind in second place. Most of the SAR operations were related to drowning incidents, missing persons at sea, medical evacuations among others.

SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) OPERATIONS IN 4th QUARTER, 2023



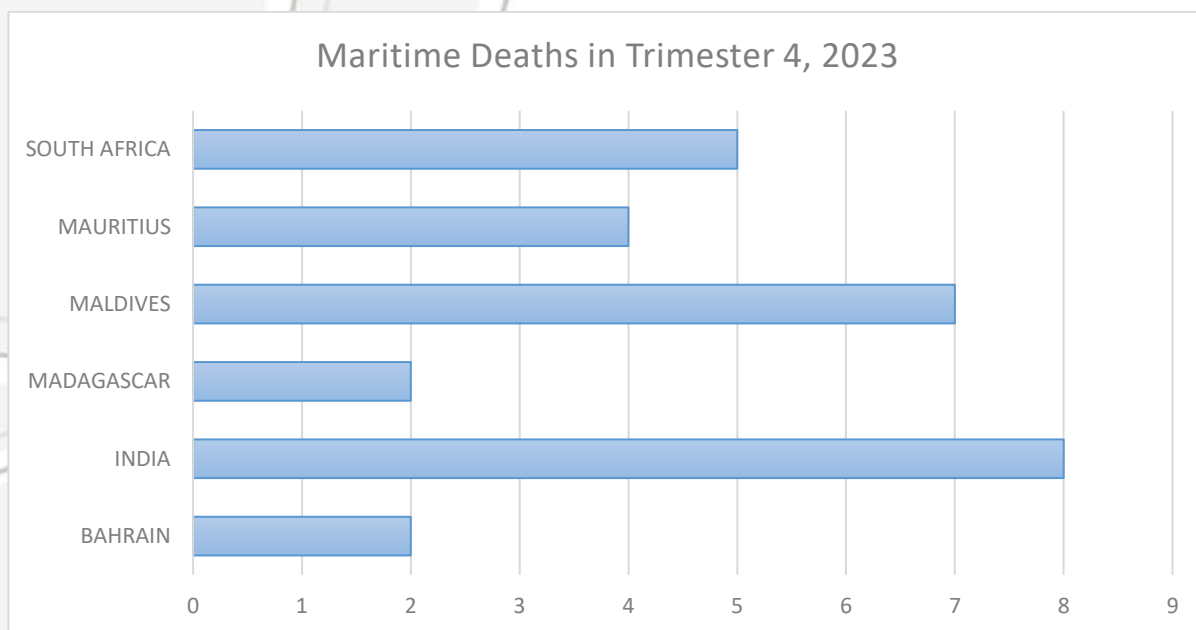
In this period, it was notable that most of the incidents were mainly related to drowning as well as SAR operations, however, it was observed that poor navigation as well as human error had a potential of causing major accidents. To emphasize, on 1st October 2023 in Mauritius, a request was received from skipper on Pleasure craft reg no. PPC 7556 OL 10 to the effect that he got stuck inside lagoon of Pte Koenig due to shallow water in company of eight persons on board. Personnel of Black River NCG on afloat patrol on board HDB H10 directed to attend same request. Reaching there at 2010 hrs, found said pleasure craft with on board the skipper and eight persons who stated that the pleasure craft, colour Blue turquoise fitted with one OBM 140 HP make Suzuki got stuck on coral whilst coming from Benitier island to proceed to Black River. All nine persons were embarked on board coast guard craft and the said pleasure craft was towed safely to Black River NCG inside La Balise Marina. Nobody was injured.

Another similar event was recorded on 8th October 2023 in India where a major disaster was averted. As many as 17 persons were rescued from drowning in Goa at Arambol beach, Calangute beach, Morjim beach and Candolim Beach. At Arambol beach, a father-son from Kazakhstan encountered a large wave and were

saved by another kayaker and an on-duty lifesaver, while an Indian was rescued by a beach safety patrol officer, with the help of a surfboard. At Calangute beach, two men who lost their balance and slipped into the deep end of the sea, forcing lifesavers to quickly respond and bring them back to shore safely. And four people unable to swim back to the beach were rescued too. Two people who had waded into the deep sea and were unable to swim back to shore were rescued by using a rescue tube and surfboard. At Morjim beach, two men caught in a rip current were rescued by lifesavers, while at Candolim Beach, a couple was rescued with the help of a rescue tube and surfboard. Additionally, a man was rescued at Baga Beach and at Anjuna by a lifesaver on duty conducted a rescue operation. Two children, at Calangute beach and at Baga Beach, who were reported missing were located by the lifesavers on duty. The changing currents and weather patterns are likely to play a part in creating unfavorable conditions to beach goers and raising the chances of drowning, however, the alertness of lifesavers and SAR personnel played an important role to ensure minimum casualties.

Maritime deaths

28 deaths were recorded during the fourth trimester which revealed a considerable decrease of about 40% when compared to the previous quarter where 47 deaths were recorded. The cause of deaths was mainly attributed to drowning incidents, capsizing of vessels, vessel crashes among other events.



The highest number of deaths were recorded in India and Maldives followed closely behind. To highlight, on 8th October 2023, the bodies of the four fishermen who had gone missing after their fibre boat capsized some 10 nautical miles off the Munambam coast were recovered. The boat named 'NANMA' carrying seven people was returning from Malipuram after collecting fish overturned. Three men managed to stay afloat by holding on to drinking water cans. The survivors were found by another fishing boat named 'ST JUDE' while the other four were missing. They were admitted to a hospital in Fort Kochi. A joint search operation by the Coast Guard, coastal police, and fisheries authorities is underway to find the missing individuals.

Another incident was recorded on 18th November in Mauritius, where Two tourists drowned. On the one hand, a Russian died in the sea at Le Morne while kitesurfing. He was picked up by volunteers on the beach. The National Coast Guard in Bel-Ombre was also called in. On the other hand, an American found herself struggling to get back on board the boat, while snorkeling in Grand-Gaube. The woman was taken to a

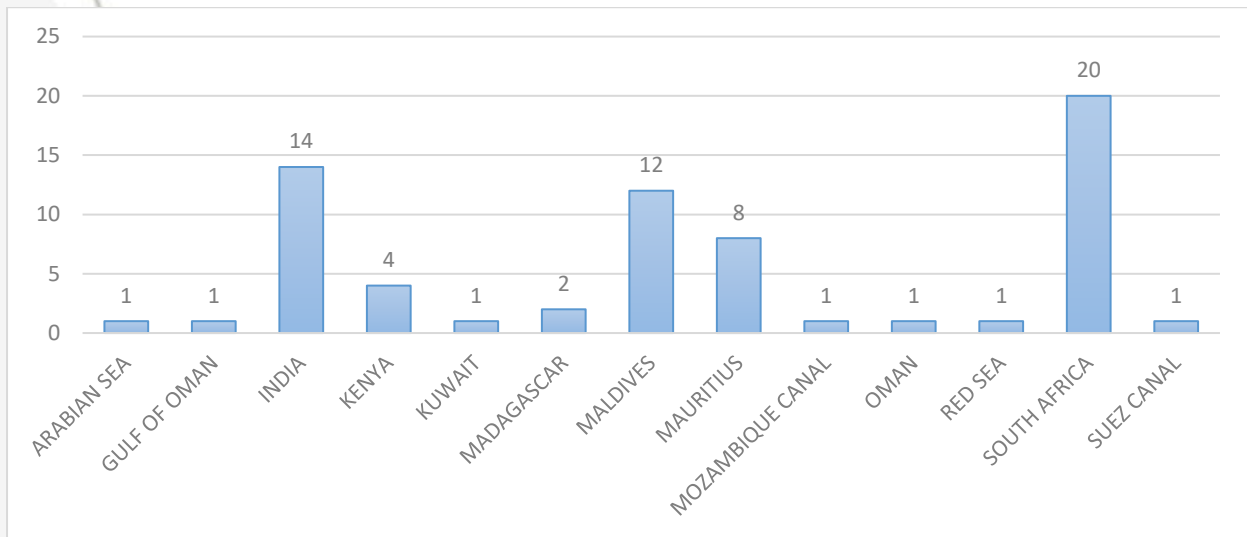
clinic. She died en route. Her death was attributed to "asphyxia due to aspiration of stomach content". The incidents highlight the fact that despite appropriate measures being undertaken to ensure safety and security of tourists at sea as well that of vessel operators, the rapidly changing weather conditions may alter currents and waves thus putting vessels as well as persons in dangerous situations that may at times become fatal.

Maritime Accidents

As earlier noted, there was a considerable increase in the number of maritime accidents whereby **67** events were recorded, this represented an upsurge of about 76.3% when compared to the previous quarter which had recorded **38** incidents. A notable event was recorded on 4th November 2023, in India where 1 fisherman was killed while 7 were rescued when their boat was involved in a collision off Munambam. One fisherman drowned after two fishing boats collided with each other off the Munambam coast near Kochi amidst heavy downpours. A mechanised fishing boat NOURIN MOL collided with SILVER STAR, a fibre boat that operated from Thoppumpady. The eight crew members on board the fibre boat jumped into the sea after their vessel, that broke into two in the impact of the collision, began to sink. The crew of the mechanised boat managed to save the other seven fishermen using ropes.

Another accident occurred on 18th November 2023 in South Africa where two seamen were evacuated after sustaining injuries in rough seas. 5 duty crew and Netcare 911 ambulance services were activated to prepare to launch to respond to a bulk carrier motor vessel offshore of the Port of Durban to evacuate 2 seamen onboard who were critically injured. It appeared that in rough sea conditions a wave had swept over the deck of the motor vessel reportedly sweeping the 2 crewmen off a ladder who were both unable to hold on against the rush of water causing the men to sustain critical injuries. Due to the nature of the critical injuries sustained to both men the paramedic requested that they continue to render medical treatment onboard the motor vessel, to stabilize their conditions, rather than risk a patient transfer at sea in the rough 3-to-4-meter sea swells caused by the strong North Easter that had swept through Durban earlier in the day. Both patients were transferred onto the Quayside and in serious but stable conditions they have been transported to hospital, by Netcare 911 ambulance, where they are receiving ongoing medical care in hospital.

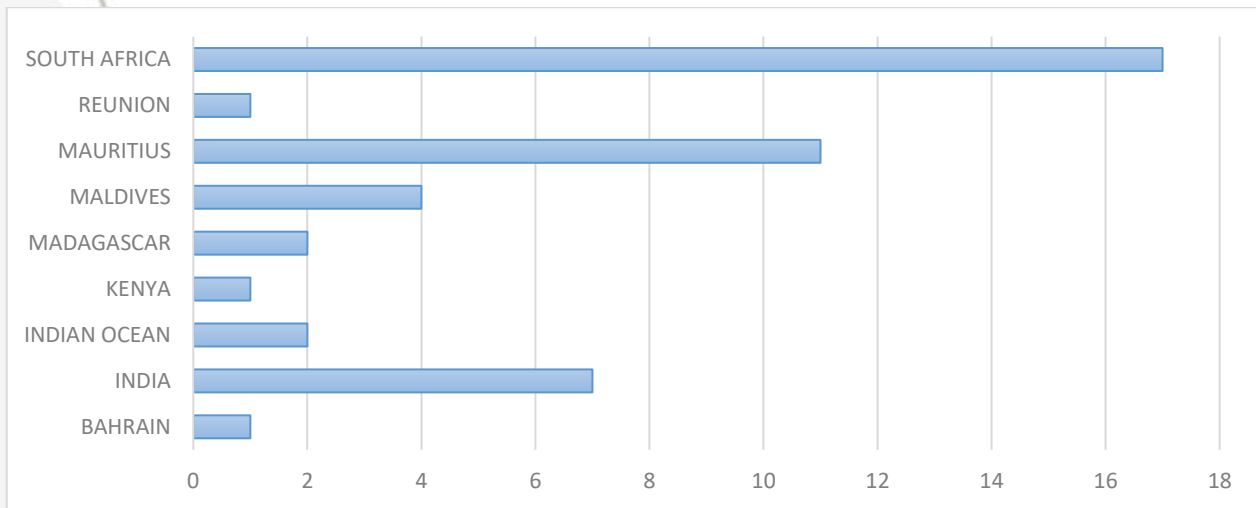
Meanwhile, on 6th December 2023, in Madagascar, a collision between an oil tanker and a speedboat was recorded. An oil tanker, flying the Luxembourg flag, collided with a speedboat on the day of its departure from the port of Iharana, in the Sava region. The cause is thought to be a minor control problem during the manoeuvre in which it collided with the small, moored boat. The boat operator then continued ahead without noticing it. The boat was in front of him. The collision was unavoidable. The tanker suffered no material damage. The other was badly damaged. Its cabin and gangways were almost 100% destroyed. Men from the port brigade were sent to the scene to carry out rescue operations and take the necessary measurements. These incidents also continue to highlight the aspect of human error and its contribution towards maritime accidents. Despite there being no damage inflicted on the tanker, the incident could have led to other catastrophes including death.



In the period under review, the largest number of events related to maritime accidents were mostly recorded in South Africa and India. It is likely that the activities in this period were mainly attributed to increased activities during the festive period between November and December, as well as towards the end of the year. On. 4th December 2023, in India, 20 children rescued from drowning in the sea at Kadappura. The children were being washed away by huge waves in the sea at Kadappura in Kasargod and were rescued by local fishermen in a swift move. The children aged around 12, 13 and 14 had been to the Ayyappa Deepotsava near Kadappura. They had ventured into sea by tying the empty cans of fishermen. However very soon they were washed away and fishermen who noticed this immediately plunged into the water and rescued them.

Maritime Medical Evacuations (MedEvac)

In this period under review, there was a relative increase in the number of medical evacuations of about 70% after 46 events were captured in the current trimester while only 27 events were recorded in the latter. Most of the MedEvac incidents were recorded in South Africa, India and Maldives. These countries possess large coastlines and, in many cases, attract a lot of marine tourism hence the chances of incidents occurring that require medical attention remains high. Indeed, on October 15th in South Africa, Just after 04h00 the NSRI were alerted to a 73-year-old fisherman on a fishing boat suffering a medical complaint deep-sea off-shore between Agulhas and Hermanus. During the voyage towards Hermanus the crew onboard the fishing vessel reported that the man sadly passed away. EMS rescue paramedics were transported to the fishing vessel onboard the NSRI Hermanus rescue craft, The Legacy, and on arrival at the fishing vessel EMS paramedics declared the man, from Mossel Bay, deceased from a medical condition. NSRI Hermanus ferried 2 Police detectives to the vessel where the body was recovered, in cooperation with the Police, onto the NSRI rescue craft and he was brought to Hermanus and taken into the care of Government Health Forensic Pathology Services.



Maritime incidents related to pollution

Incidents related to maritime pollution were minimal during this period under review, however two incidents relating to oil spills were recorded in Madagascar. On 5th November 2023, Pollution was detected north of Nosy Be, Madagascar where a slick of undetermined characteristics was detected 17.8 nautical miles north of Nosy Be in Madagascar's EEZ. Its surface area was estimated to be 8.94 nautical miles long and 2.42 nautical miles wide. No estimate of the slick's drift was provided. Three days after on 8th November 2023, another slick of undetermined characteristics was detected 70.86 nautical miles north of Nosy Be in Madagascar's EEZ. It is estimated to be 18.84 nautical miles long and 2.66 nautical miles wide. No vessel was associated with the pollution and no estimate of its drift was provided. It was also unclear if the last incident was related to the first one, however, no vessels was linked to either of the pollution incidents which highlights the need for superior surveillance capabilities to identify the sources of the oil spills.

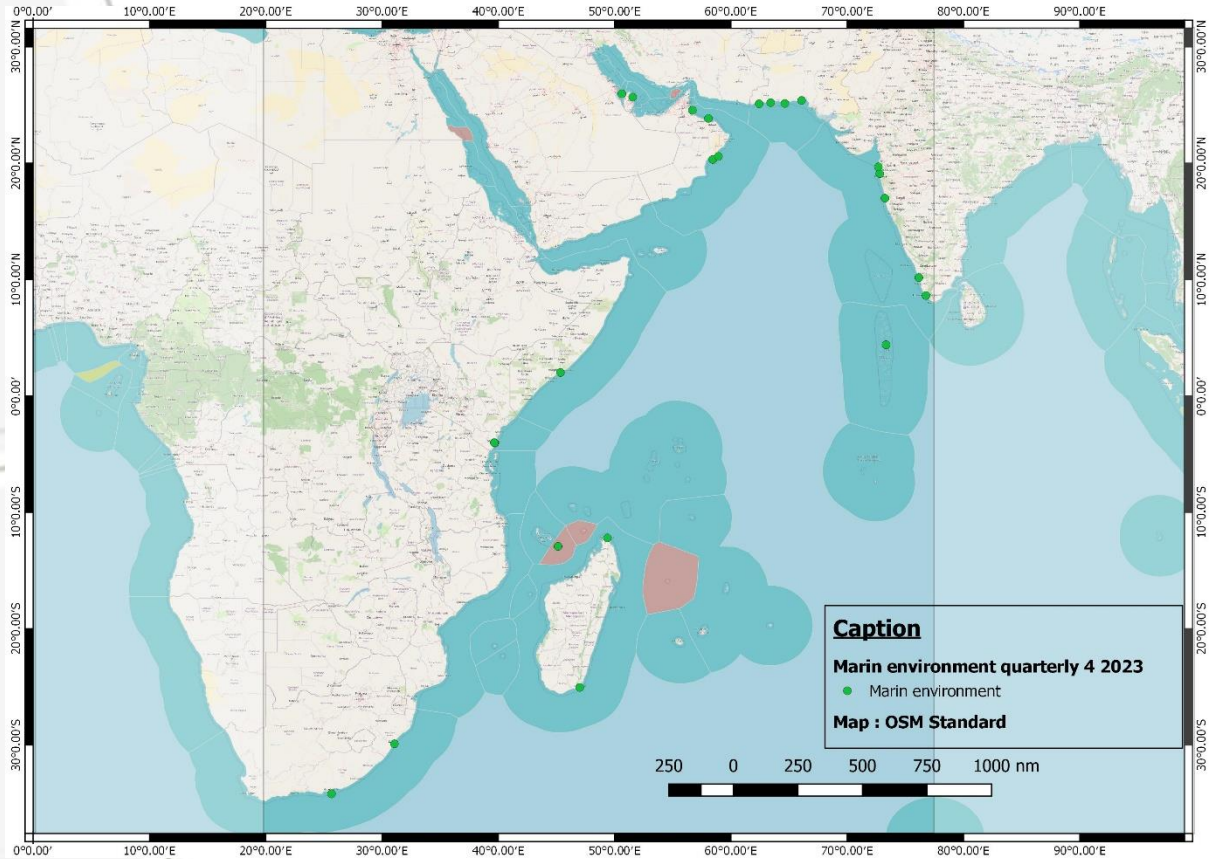
In conclusion it is evident that most of the activities linked to maritime incidents in the previous quarters continue to play a major role in the present. However, based on the analysis and identification of hotspots and trends, the RMIFC endeavors to develop an early warning system that will provide maritime law enforcement agencies and relevant maritime departments with necessary information that will assist in their decision making and contribute towards ensuring maritime safety and security. It is also noteworthy that the threat of reemergence of piracy off the coast of Somalia as well as attacks by Houthis at the Red Sea and off the coast of Yemen is likely to lead to high traffic volume in the Southern part of the Western Indian Ocean, thus raising the probability of maritime incidents occurring off the coast of South Africa and in waters close to Indian Ocean Countries where already a large number of vessels transit through.

It is evident that maritime security incidents related to deaths at sea, accidents, medical evacuations and search and rescue operations remain prevalent and require continuous efforts from both national and regional agencies. The persistent efforts by these agencies are critical in order to avert major disasters which may be occasioned by loss of lives at sea, through for example overloading of dhows, explosions, collisions, as well as capsizing of vessels. Again, the danger of pollution incidents also remains a threat, not only to a country's economic development but to the marine environment and its biodiversity as well. A development that calls for concerted efforts to formulate a more robust regional contingency plan to prevent and contain maritime pollution.

6. MARINE ENVIRONMENT

As in the quarters of 2023, marine animal rescues, mangrove plantations, cetacean strandings and coastal protection are the main events recorded during this period in the RMIFC general area of interest.

The figure below shows the geographical distribution of the 24 identified events :



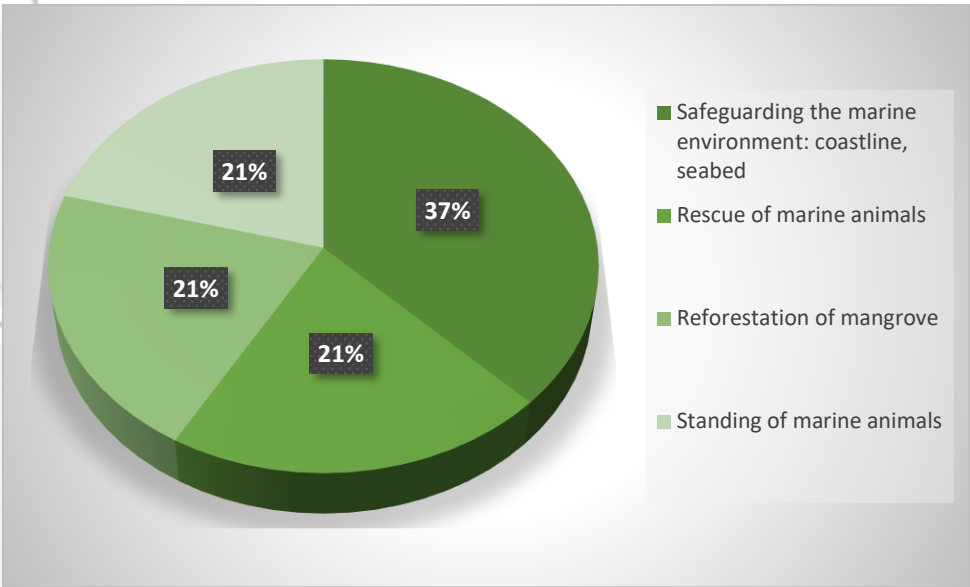
Activity analysis

The table below summarizes all the events of this theme recorded in the ESA-IO region during this period :

LOCATION	DATE	DESCRIPTIONS
SOUTH AFRICA	14 October	Rescue operation of a stranded dolphin
	20 December	Rescue operation of two Zambezi sharks trapped in the dry dock of the port
BAHRAIN	07 December	Cleaning and collection of 500kg of rubbish on beaches
INDIA	02 October	Beach Cleanup Campaign
	05 November	Discovery of dead sardine on the shore of Navapur-Dandi
KENYA	09 November	Rescue operation of a whale shark entangled in a seine net
	14 November	Rescue operation of a stranded whale
	26 November	Clean-up and collection of 3 tons of plastics recovered along the coast of Munambam
MADAGASCAR	30 October	Ocean Conservation Awareness Campaign to Prevent Plastic Pollution
	07 November	Planting 60,000 mangrove trees
MALDIVES	24 November	Planting 5,800 of mangrove propagule
	20 December	Rescue operation of a stranded dolphin
MAYOTTE	03 November	Rasfari Reef Coral Propagation Program Begins
	18 November	Mangrove clean-up and restoration operation
OMAN	5-7 October	Clean-up and collection of 3 tonnes of marine litter
	5 December	Clean-up operations to preserve coral reefs
	10 December	Beach Clean-up Operation
PAKISTAN	12 December	Start of the 50 000-mangrove planting campaign
	05 November	Discovery of a dead dolphin on a beach

QATAR	10 November	Discovery of a dead whale on the coast of Pasni
	25 November	Rescue operation of a sperm whale caught in a net
	07 December	Discovery of a dead blue whale after grounding
	09 November	Planting of 600 mangrove seedlings
	SOMALIA	10 October

Of the 24 events listed in the table, 5 list the rescue of protected marine animals, 5 on the grounding and carcasses of mammals, 5 on the reforestation of mangroves and 9 on the protection of the coastline and the seabed.



Safeguarding the coastline and seabed

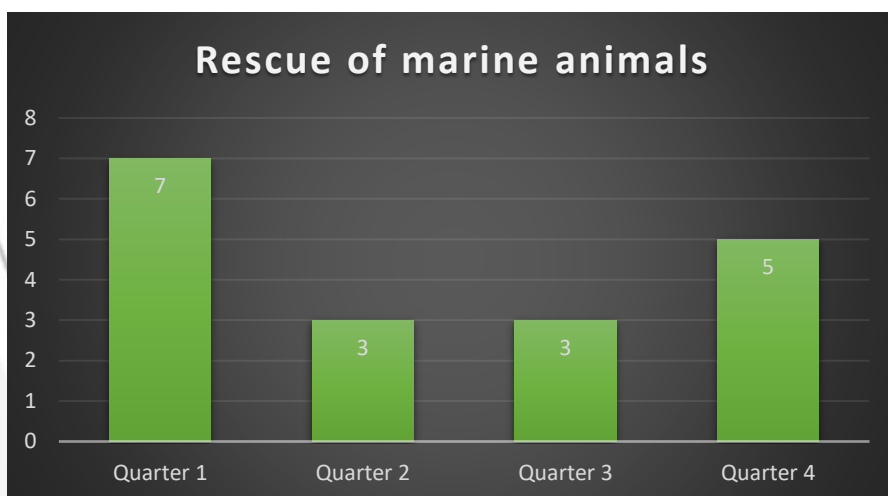
Nine incidents were recorded in this sub-category, mainly beach clean-ups and marine corals. These events show the effects of raising awareness among the population to protect and restore marine coastlines. Countries such as Oman, Kenya, Madagascar, and Maldives are the most affected in this area. Other countries in the region are beginning to consider the need for these coastal safeguards by first planting mangroves and protecting the various marine parks.

Stranding of a marine mammal



The peak in strandings was observed during the third quarter of the year, the last quarter showed the reversion to the mean of this type of event.

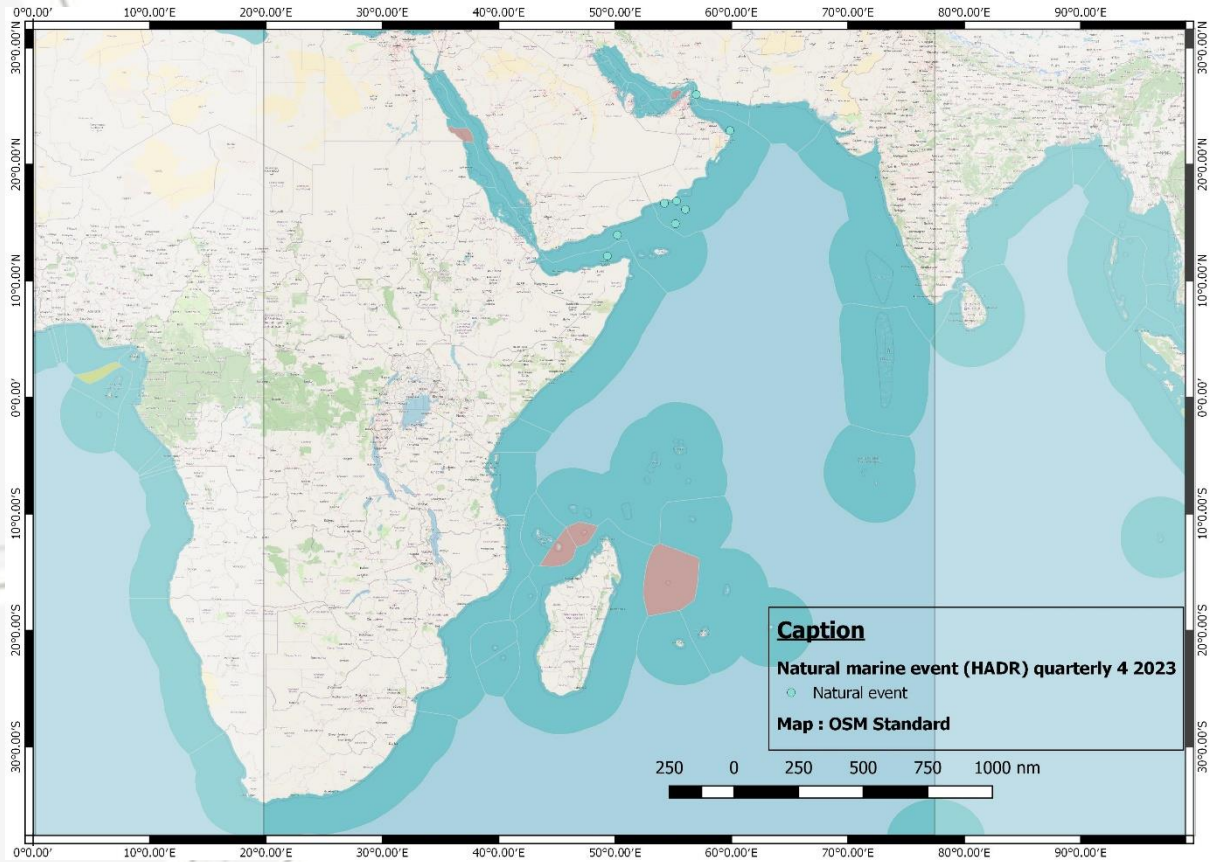
Marine animal rescue



In conclusion, the fourth quarter saw a return to normalcy after the peak of the third quarter, both in terms of carcass discoveries and animal rescues.

7. NATURAL EVENTS (HADR)

08 events were recorded in this theme during this last quarter of 2023 as shown below :

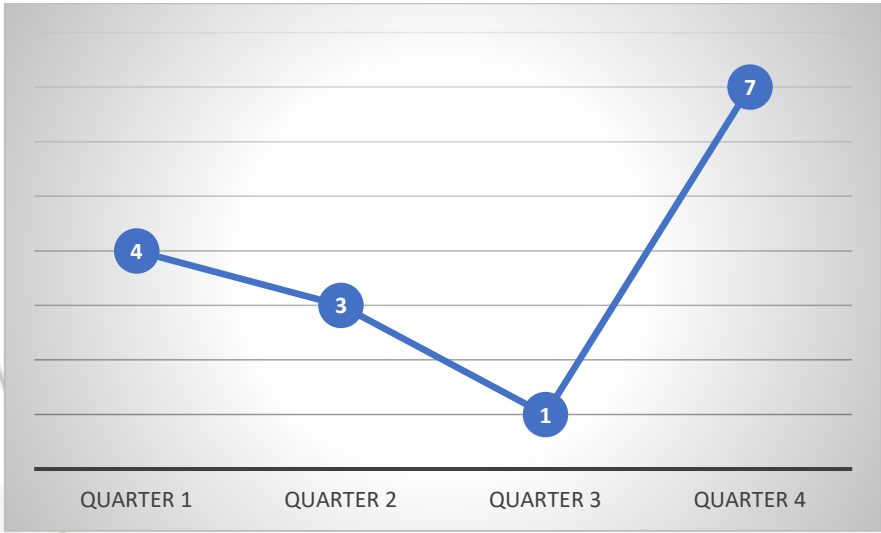


Activity analysis

LOCATION	DATE	DESCRIPTIONS
OMAN	12 October	Earthquake of magnitude 3.3 at a depth of 3km
	21 October	Earthquake of magnitude 4.8 at a depth of 5km
	23 October	Cyclone TEJ with wind gusts of 100 to 112 knots
	29 November	Earthquake of magnitude 5.3 at a depth of 8km
	26 December	Magnitude 4.9 earthquake
GULF OF ADEN	05 December	Magnitude 5.7 earthquake at a depth of 10km
	07 December	Earthquake of magnitude 5.1 at a depth of 10km
IRAN	13 December	Earthquake of magnitude 4.4 at a depth of 10km

Underwater Earthquake

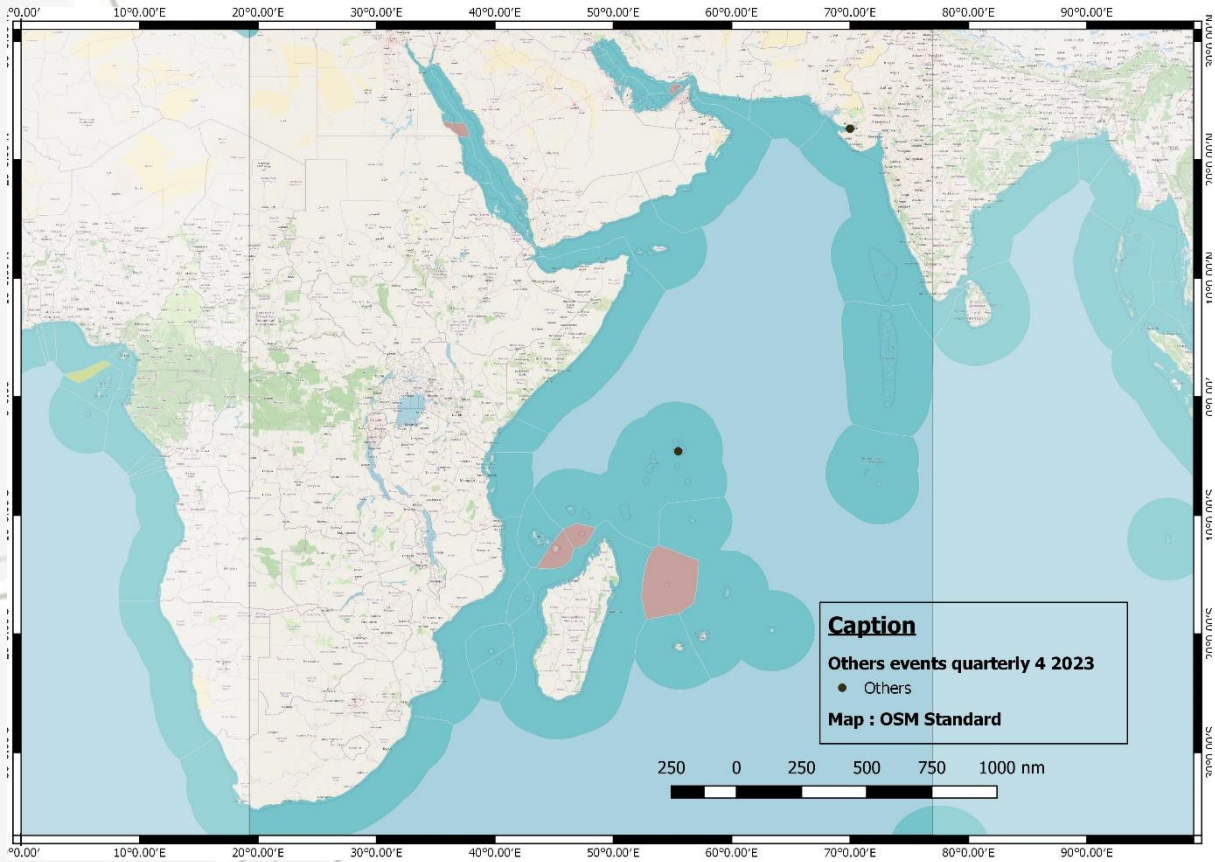
Underwater earthquakes are the most significant events of the last quarter of 2023. The graph below shows the numbers of these events during the year 2023:



The Western Arabian Sea was the most affected due to the presence of the undersea rift off the coast of Yemen and Oman.

8. OTHERS

02 events have been classified in this theme during this third quarter of this year as below :



INDIA

On 05 November, navy personnel reportedly killed himself with his service rifle while on duty at INS VALSURA, a base located near Jamnagar, Gujarat. He shot himself in the chest and hands in a watchtower.

SEYCHELLES

On 20 December, a fight broke out on board a Taiwanese fishing vessel flying the flag of Seychelles, the JAIN LIH No 212 MMSI: 416005233, between two crew members: a Vietnamese man, the ship's cook, and another sailor from Myanmar. Armed with a knife, the cook attacked the other sailor, who died from his injuries. The incident took place in the EEZ of Seychelles and the vessel then proceeded to Port Victoria to hand over the attacker to the Seychelles authorities.

END OF REPORT