

# NORTH AFRICA

## Regional Overview

Algeria • Libyan Arab Jamahiriya • Mauritania • Morocco • Tunisia • Western Sahara

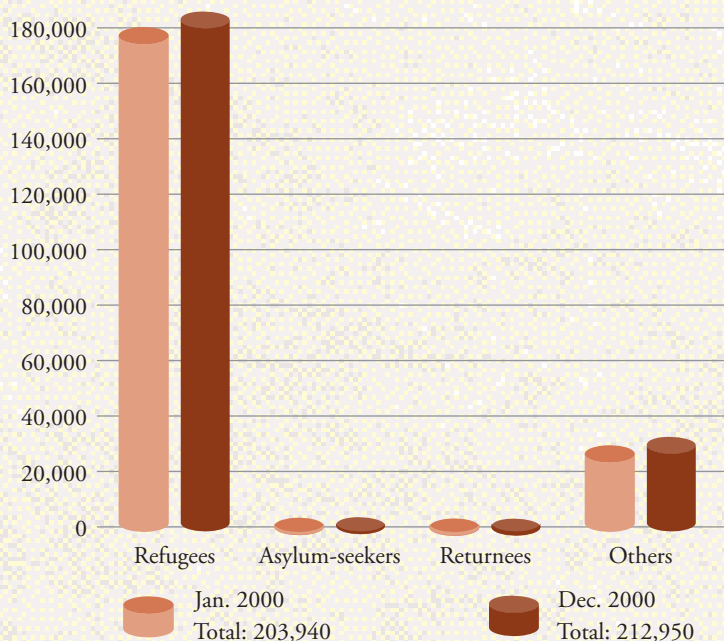


## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

The refugee situation in North Africa remained relatively stable throughout the year. UNHCR continued to participate in the UN Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. Under this plan, UNHCR is responsible for the eventual voluntary repatriation of Western Saharan refugees and their families from Algeria, Mauritania and other countries to the Western Sahara Territory, to enable them to participate in the referendum (on independence from or integration with Morocco). In 2000, the Settlement Plan had yet to be implemented. The main obstacles to implementation are the unresolved political differences between the parties over the process of voter identification (considered crucial for the results of the referendum). There was considerable frustration among the refugees living in four camps in the Tindouf region in Algeria, and ten-

sions increased significantly during the annual Paris-Dakar Rally in December. Refugee leaders threatened to take hostile measures against the participants competing in the Rally, claiming that crossing the Western Sahara

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



Territory was a violation of the cease-fire in place since 1991. In the absence of long-term solutions, UNHCR continued to provide assistance to the most vulnerable among the 165,000 refugees (Government estimate) living in the Tindouf camps.

A dispute arose in July between Mauritania and Senegal over use of water from the Senegal River. Both countries were on the verge of expelling each other's nationals. Following a series of negotiations, a peaceful solution was reached and tensions subsided. UNHCR closely monitored the situation in northern Mali; the volatile security situation caused the flight of some civilians to the border area of Bassikounou in Mauritania and to Tamanrasset in Algeria. In Libya, tensions emerged between migrants of African origin and nationals, due to social and cultural differences; the resulting clashes were rapidly brought under control.

In general, the North Africa region remained a favourite crossroads for migratory movements, particularly from sub-Saharan countries to Europe.

## CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

The political impasse in the Western Sahara has so far impeded progress towards a durable solution for the Western Saharan refugees living in the Tindouf camps. The difficult economic situation in several countries of the region led to illegal immigration, mainly to Europe; human trafficking increased significantly. The lack of national capacity to deal with refugees and asylum-seekers resulted in increasing demands being placed on UNHCR, whose resources were already stretched.

## PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

All countries in the region have acceded to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol except Libya, which is a party only to the 1969 OAU Convention. UNHCR continued to advocate for the adoption of national refugee legislation and refugee status determination procedures. In addition, the Office completed an in-depth review of its presence and strategy in North Africa, which focuses on enhancing UNHCR's protection role in the region. The main objective is to assist the North African countries to establish national legislation to deal with refugee and asylum issues and, subsequently, take over programmes to assist refugees and find durable solutions. The strategy envisages strengthening the existing national bodies dealing with refugee issues through training of government officials and NGO staff.

## OPERATIONS

UNHCR's programme in **Algeria** is presented in a separate country chapter.

In the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**, UNHCR had overall responsibility for about 8,000 Palestinian refugees. UNHCR also assisted some 3,000 Somali refugees. Of these, some 850 lived in a compound in the centre of Tripoli provided free of charge by the Government. In 2000, UNHCR maintained and repaired the compound to improve living conditions. Some 850 Palestinians, 400 Somalis and 100 other refugees received monthly subsistence allowances to cover food, housing and medical care expenses. With the support of a local NGO, UNHCR managed to obtain the authorities' approval to exempt Palestinian students from university fees.

The number of people seeking asylum in **Mauritania** increased in 2000. About 260 were recognised as refugees, of whom 100 were classified as vulnerable persons. Altogether, UNHCR assisted roughly 350 urban refugees (mainly from Sierra Leone) living in Nouakchott. Assistance included food, health, housing, clothing and education. A total of 24,600 Western Saharan refugees were pre-registered in 1999. They were not assisted by UNHCR in 2000, as they had spontaneously integrated with the local population.

In **Morocco**, UNHCR assisted 120 refugees of various nationalities with monthly subsistence allowances for food and housing. The refugees also received medical and education assistance, as well as tuition for French language classes. With UNHCR's assistance, 36 refugee children were able to attend school. Four workshops were conducted to train government officials in refugee law and refugee status determination procedures.

In **Tunisia**, the Office assisted 175 refugees (out of 435 in the country). UNHCR provided monthly subsistence allowances, covering food and housing expenses, as well as medical and education fees. UNHCR continued to intercede with the Government to obtain residence and work permits for the refugees, as well as registration in local schools. The Office also continued to advocate for the adoption of national refugee legislation and refugee status determination procedures. The 1961 Convention on Statelessness was ratified in 2000.

Pending a solution to the political differences over implementation of the UN Settlement Plan for **Western Sahara**, UNHCR completed preparatory activities in case of voluntary repatriation. In October 2000,

UNHCR completed a comprehensive pre-registration exercise (begun in June 1997) using the provisional list of voters identified by the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The aims of the exercise were to ascertain the willingness of the refugees and their families to repatriate, and to determine their final destination in the Western Sahara Territory. A total of 129,863 refugees were pre-registered for voluntary repatriation. (See separate country chapter on Algeria).

## FUNDING

The significant reduction in funding and resources available for the region forced UNHCR to prioritise its programme, especially with regard to urban and/or long-staying refugees. Monthly subsistence allowances for the refugees could not be adjusted to the rising cost of living. In the Tindouf camps, health, water, educa-

tion, vocational training and income-generating activities were reduced.

The 2000 Global Appeal included a box describing the situation of Western Saharan refugees, which indicated total financial requirements for the year in an amount of USD 5,700,300. The box was intended to summarise UNHCR's strategy, to highlight the complexity and regional nature of the refugee situation and to facilitate the transition from the former Special Programme for the Western Sahara Operation to the unified budget structure, which was launched on 1 January 2000. Earmarked contributions received for the refugee situation are reflected in the table at the end of this Regional Overview. Total expenditure for the situation in 2000 amounted to USD 3,749,359. A description of the corresponding activities may be found in the Operations section of this Overview and in the country chapter for Algeria.



Voluntary Contributions - Restricted (USD)			
Donor	Earmarking <sup>1</sup>	Annual Programme Budget	
		Income	Contribution
Japan	Algeria	210,000	210,000
	Mauritania	10,000	10,000
	Western Sahara	60,000	60,000
Sweden	North Africa	225,225	225,225
United States of America	North Africa	2,424,000	2,424,000
<i>España con ACNUR (SPA)</i>	Algeria	8,353	12,264
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>		<b>2,937,578</b>	<b>2,941,489</b>

<sup>1</sup>For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

<sup>2</sup>Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unearmarked voluntary contributions, broadly earmarked contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

Budget and Expenditure (USD)		
Country	Revised Budget	Expenditure
	Annual Programme Budget	
Algeria	4,539,683	4,043,063
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1,152,320	1,104,527
Mauritania	231,151	222,344
Morocco	491,338	370,875
Tunisia	290,774	201,622
Western Sahara Territory	464,646	329,970
Bureau at Headquarters	243,340	231,386
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,413,252</b>	<b>6,503,787</b>