

Tunisia

January 2020

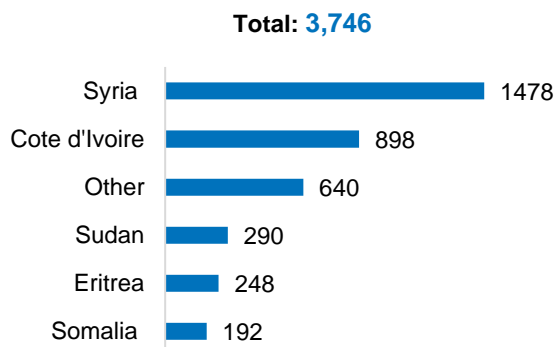
Refugees and asylum seekers originate mainly from the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa. Persons of concern reach Tunisia by land or air from neighbouring countries or sub-Saharan Africa and within mixed migration movements to/from Libya.

Tunisia has yet to adopt a national asylum system. UNHCR is the sole entity conducting registration and Refugee Status Determination (RSD). Durable solutions for most refugees and asylum seekers remain limited.

The deteriorating security and political situation of neighbouring countries, namely Libya, may trigger a major influx of persons in need of international protection and assistance. Tunisia is engaged in preparedness efforts in the event of such an emergency.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

by country of origin

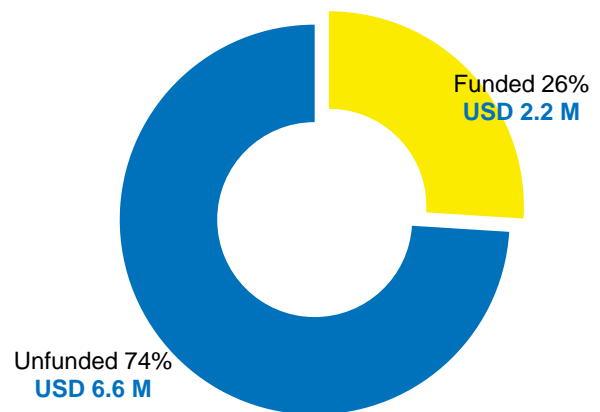


As of 31 January 2020

FUNDING (AS OF 11 FEBRUARY 2020)

USD 8.8 M

requested for the Tunisia operation



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

35 National Staff

14 International Staff

Offices:

1 Country Office in Tunis

1 Field Office in Zarzis

Field Presence in Medenine, Sfax and Gabes



Asylum seekers sitting in front of Ibn Khaldun shelter, in Medenine town, southern Tunisia © UNHCR/J. Wessels

Working with Partners

Together with the Tunisian Government, UNHCR ensures international protection and delivery of multi-sectorial assistance to persons of concern. UNHCR works with Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and the Elderly, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment among others to allow refugees and asylum seekers enjoy essential rights and basic services; and to include them in their social and economic programmes. Moreover, UNHCR has a positive collaboration with state entities at local level, namely in southern Tunisia, where the highest number of refugees and asylum seekers are hosted.

UNHCR collaborates closely with the UN Resident Coordinator and other UN Agencies, such as IOM, UNICEF, WHO, WFP and humanitarian actors for a coordinated and effective response.

The following partners implement specific sectors of activities:

- **Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR)** - capacity building and advocacy on international protection and asylum issues, including in the context of mixed populations movements and legal assistance.
- **Tunisian Association for Management and Social Stability (TAMSS)** – livelihoods and self-reliance activities, support to access employment, including vocational training, micro-business and wage employment.
- **Tunisian Refugees Council (CTR)** – profiling of new arrivals; reception and shelter management; multi-sector assistance (food vouchers and non-food items, cash assistance); support to healthcare and education; individual case management and community based protection; protection and prevention against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); child protection; psychosocial support; assistance to persons with specific needs; counselling and recreational activities in the context of mixed population flows.

UNHCR is a member of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Tunisia and contributes to the planning of the next five-year Cooperation Framework, that will constitute the backbone of UN collaboration with the Government for the period 2021-2025.

Operational context

UNHCR established its presence in Tunisia in 1963 in the context of the Algeria war and in 2011 it signed an agreement with the Government in order to address the large number of refugees and asylum seekers coming from Libya. Since then, the Libya crisis has continued to affect the country and mixed population flows resumed by the end of 2018, resulting in a three-fold increase of registered refugees and asylum seekers during 2019. At the same time, Tunisia hosts refugees and asylum seekers fleeing conflicts in the Middle East, namely from Syria, but also Iraq, Yemen and Palestine.

In the aftermath of 2011's revolution, inequalities in Tunisia society have resulted in current political disenchantment and strong migration outflows, made worst by persistent economic crisis. A more inclusive and equitable society is at the core of Tunisia development plan 2016 – 2020 and among the priorities for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

UNHCR activities are aligned with the objectives of Tunisia's Development Plan (2016-2020), with the aim of establishing a national protection system that guarantees human rights and achieves the social-economic inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Main Activities

Protection

- In the absence of a formal national asylum system, UNHCR carries out **registration of refugees and asylum-seekers** and the **Refugee Status Determination (RSD)**, to ensure that persons of concern to UNHCR are identified and documented. This helps to prevent arbitrary arrest, detention or *refoulement*.

In 2017, UNHCR introduced biometric enrolment to improve the quality of data collected and to help prevent fraud.

- UNHCR conducts **extensive capacity building programmes** directed towards members of Parliament, state agents, civil society, journalists, lawyers and judges **on the principles of international protection and refugee rights** in order to create a *de facto* protection space for persons of concern to UNHCR present in the country.
- UNHCR trains border officials to raise their awareness of **asylum and protection issues in the context of mixed population movements**. Tunisian border guards frequently rescue boats in distress off the Tunisian coast, including many departing from Libya. Groups of migrants and refugees attempting irregular crossings of the Tunisia-Libya land border (travelling in either direction) are also frequently intercepted. UNHCR seeks to ensure that border management takes into consideration the protection needs of refugees and asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR uses a participatory approach to enhance **community-based protection**, building links between different service providers and increasing engagement with refugee communities. UNHCR partner, the Tunisian Refugees Council (CTR), works to develop safe spaces and promote communication with affected communities, in order to better identify and refer people with specific needs or at heightened protection risk (i.e. survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and unaccompanied or separated minors).
- UNHCR's partner AIHR provides **legal counselling and legal representation** to support refugees and asylum seekers.

Education

- Children who are refugees or asylum-seekers have **access to primary and secondary education**. To increase school attendance, UNHCR and its partners provide one-time education grants to students, to help parents purchase books and school supplies.

Health

- Refugees and asylum-seekers have **access to basic public health facilities**. UNHCR with its partner CTR supports vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees with the reimbursement of medical expenses and medicines for basic primary health care, chronic disease, and emergency medical interventions.

Food Security and Nutrition

- Asylum-seekers and refugees hosted in shelters receive **weekly vouchers with a value of 10 USD (30 TND) to purchase food and other items of their choice**.

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

- Asylum-seekers and refugees have **access to temporary accommodation in shelters** while their refugee status determination procedure is being finalized. Refugees' basic needs are met through multi-purpose cash assistance.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- With its partner TAMMS, UNHCR is enhancing refugees' self-reliance and livelihood opportunities by supporting their access to tailored vocational training, micro-businesses and employment with private companies.

Emergency preparedness

- Given the worsening of security situation in neighboring Libya, the Government of Tunisia, UNHCR and IOM initiated a collaborative revision process of the Contingency Plan in early 2019. Towards the end of 2019, preparedness efforts have been accelerated, and sectorial meetings to detail the needs are currently taking place between relevant UN Agencies, NGOs and Ministries.

Key priorities for 2020

- Support the adoption of the draft national asylum law and, through continued capacity building, fostering good practices in the interim.
- Continue profiling, registration and refugee status determination in order to identify persons in need of international protection in the context of mixed population flows.
- Promote refugees' self-reliance by supporting access to livelihoods and to basic services, as well as prioritizing direct assistance to the most vulnerable.

Key challenges for 2020

- The comprehensive domestic legislation to establish a national protection system for refugees and asylum-seekers is still pending adoption, leaving refugees and asylum seekers in a fragile legal and socio-economic situation.
- Tunisia is significantly affected by the volatile political and security environment in the region, namely in neighbouring Libya. Increased new arrivals severely challenge the limited absorption capacity of Tunisia.
- Shelter capacity to accommodate new arrivals remains a challenge. Number of asylum seekers waiting for refugee status determination continue to accrue, in spite of enhanced staff capacity.

External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to earmarked donors for UNHCR operations in Tunisia in 2020

European Union | Italy | Monaco | Netherlands | RDPP NA – EU | Switzerland

Thanks to the major donors of softly earmarked and unearmarked funds in 2020

Canada | Sweden | Norway | Netherlands | Denmark | United Kingdom | Germany | Switzerland

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LINKS

UNHCR Tunisia country page (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/tun>)