

UNHCR 2003 Country Operations Plan

Executive Summary

Tunisia

Context and Beneficiary Population

Tunisia is party to the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention. It has also ratified the major Human Rights instruments and the two conventions on statelessness. The principle of non-refoulement is enshrined in the Constitution (art 17 prohibits the extradition of political refugees). Other provisions such as Convention travel documents and the exemption of penalties for illegal entry are contained in the national legislation. However, the country has neither refugee legislation nor a national eligibility body to respond to asylum applications.

UNHCR conducts refugee status determination, on which basis the authorities take decisions to issue residence permits, if the recommendation is endorsed by the authorities. In the absence of refugee-related legislation, refugees are subject to the same laws as foreigners. A primary concern is that UNHCR-recognised refugees may not be granted a residence permit, thereby making their residence in Tunisia illegal. For these people, access to work and ultimately prospects for local integration in the country are limited.

UNHCR also provides counselling to refugees regarding their rights, obligations and durable solution possibilities. Limited financial assistance is granted by UNHCR implementing partner to the most needy individuals and families to cover basic needs (food, accommodation, health care and education). Assistance to needy asylum-seekers is designed, in part, to deter irregular movement from Tunisia.

UNHCR's overall objective in Tunisia is to advocate for the promulgation of refugee-related legislation and the subsequent establishment of a refugee status determination procedure. With this in view, UNHCR will pursue an increased governmental role in the existing UNHCR mechanisms and more systematic granting of residence permits to recognised refugees. The Office will also promote and disseminate refugee law among NGOs and civil society. Capacity-building of some selected NGOs closely associated with UNHCR will also be pursued.

In Tunisia, the population of concern consists of urban refugees and asylum seekers whose number vary slightly on a monthly basis.

UNHCR will continue its partnership with the Croissant Rouge Tunisien (CRT), which provides assistance to vulnerable individual cases. UNHCR Tunisia also cooperates closely with the Institute Arabe des Droits de l'Homme, the Association des Etudes Internationales and the Mouvement des Scouts Tunisiens on promotional activities.

The other UN agencies present in the country include: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations UNFAP (what is FAP?), the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Operations (UNOPS) and a UN Information Centre (UNIC). The World Bank, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), International Red Cross and Red Crescent

(ICRC) and the International Federation of the Societies of Red Cross (IFRC) are also present in the country.

Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

Name of beneficiary Population/ Theme: Urban refugees	
Main Goals (s): Refugees and asylum seekers are provided with adequate protection and basic assistance is extended to the most needy.	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake Refugee Status Determination • Mandate refugees are protected in particular • Identify and pursue durable solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refoulement prevented • Refugees documented • Basic rights ensured • Irregular movement limited • Self-reliance achieved for those who have residence permits • Refugee who qualify for resettlement are resettled • Basic needs covered

Name of beneficiary Population/ Theme: Promotion of refugee law and capacity building – authorities and NGOs	
Main Goals (s): The role of the authorities in the eligibility process is increased and refugee law is disseminated with a view to improve the overall level of protection	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage policy-makers to enact a refugee law. • Increase understanding regarding refugee issues and UNHCR's role and activities. • Strengthen links with civil society NGOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more active role of the authorities in refugee issues. • Detainees better protected and refoulement prevented • The difference of treatment between the Mandate refugees and those recognised by the authorities is reduced • More refugees attain self-reliance • Improve perception and increase tolerance of refugees in Tunisia. • UNHCR's role and activities better understood. • UNHCR's work is supported by NGOs.