

UNHCR TUNISIA FACT SHEET (August 2010)



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UNHCR presence

At the request of the Tunisian Government, UNHCR launched an operation in 1957 to assist the thousands of Algerians seeking refuge in Tunisia. This operation in turn was concluded with the voluntary repatriation of Algerians in 1962. Subsequently, UNHCR established an Honorary Representation in Tunisia in 1963. Today, UNHCR Tunis has five staff members (one international and four national) and shares its premises with UNDP. UNHCR's Head of Office in Tunisia is also the regional focal point for asylum migration issues in North Africa.

Framework

Tunisia acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees on 24 October 1957 and to the 1967 Protocol on 16 October 1968. It also ratified the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa in 1989. Despite ratifying the 1951 Convention and its Protocol, however, Tunisia has not yet enacted a national refugee law to govern asylum and refugees matters. The 1959 Tunisian Constitution, meanwhile, prohibits the extradition of political refugees (art.17).

Population of concern (31 August 2010)

Country of origin	Number
Algeria	22
Côte d'Ivoire	15
Iraq	05
others	44
Total	86

The total refugee population in Tunisia resides in urban areas, with the large majority (95 %) in the capital. 26 individuals (30% of the total refugee population) have for many years received regular financial assistance. There are currently 39 asylum seekers, including 20 individuals from Côte d'Ivoire.

UNHCR strategic objectives in Tunisia

- Strengthen protection mechanisms for asylum-seekers and refugees within broader migration movements.
- Seek durable solutions for refugees, primarily through self reliance in Tunisia and voluntary repatriation as well as resettlement for vulnerable individuals.
- Enhance the capacity of partners, including the Tunisian government, to deliver protection and assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Key government interlocutors

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA): Director General for Organizations and International Conferences as well as Director of Consular Affairs
Comité Supérieur des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés Fondamentales
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights: General Coordinator for Human Rights

Working with partners

- Tunisian Red Crescent: registration, counselling, awareness raising, direct assistance to vulnerable refugees and facilitated access to education and health care;
- Arab Institute of Human Rights, Association of International Studies and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC): awareness raising and dissemination of refugee law principles;
- ENDA Inter Arab: micro-credits for refugees to achieve self reliance;
- IOM: assistance for voluntary repatriation.

UNHCR Operational Budget 2010

Support to refugees in urban areas	181,240 USD
Total in USD	181,240 USD

UNHCR's main activities in Tunisia

Refugee Status Determination: In the absence of a national asylum procedure, UNHCR Tunis registers asylum-seekers, conducts refugee status determination, issues documentation for refugees and asylum-seekers, and works to ensure that minimum international protection standards are met for all persons of concern and particularly for the most vulnerable.

Other protection interventions: UNHCR Tunis intervenes directly with the MFA and police stations on cases of arrested/detained refugees or asylum seekers with the aim of gaining access to these individuals and preventing their expulsion or refoulement.

Capacity building: In support of its partners (including the government), UNHCR Tunis organizes capacity building and training activities on refugee issues. It also promotes the adoption of national asylum legislation through presentations on refugee law and protection principles in a diverse range of discussion groups and fora.

Education and health: With the support of the Tunisian Red Crescent (CRT), UNHCR Tunis works to ensure that refugee children have access to education and that adolescents and adults can access vocational training as well as income generating activities. UNHCR and CRT also cooperate to ensure that all refugees and asylum-seekers can access health care.

Self-reliance: Working in partnership with ENDA, UNHCR Tunis aims to shift its current programme gradually away from direct financial assistance to increased self-reliance through counseling, vocational training and eventually micro-credits. Depending on the success of these efforts, financial assistance would then be available to only the most vulnerable.

Durable solutions: UNHCR Tunis will continue to pursue a comprehensive approach to durable solutions, working closely with refugees and its partners. As such, attention will be focused on facilitating self-reliance in Tunisia, as well as providing assistance for voluntary return. Resettlement will be used as a protection tool to assist extremely vulnerable cases, as well as refugees that face an immediate protection problem in Tunisia.

SGBV- HIV/AIDS: Together with CRT and other UN agencies, UNHCR Tunis convenes regular counselling and awareness raising sessions with persons of concern on HIV/AIDS and SGBV.

Age, gender and diversity mainstreaming: Across its activities, UNHCR Tunis prioritizes refugees with special needs, in particular women, children, elderly and the chronically ill. Special measures are also pursued for particularly vulnerable asylum seekers.