

**UPDATE #2 ON THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN LIBYA
AND THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES
5 March 2011**



A group of people heading towards the Libyan border with Tunisia. The outflow of people has slowed. @ UNHCR / A. Duclos

Libya

There was a sharp drop in the numbers of people crossing the border at Ras Adjir from Libya into Tunisia on Friday, raising concern people are being impeded from fleeing. The Libyan side of the border has seen an increased presence of government forces. Information emerging from western Libya is very limited with mounting concern that essential medical care and supplies may be unavailable or inaccessible to injured people. Food supplies are expected to dwindle due to limited distribution and depletion of stocks.

Humanitarian organizations have started to access Benghazi in eastern Libya. UNHCR staff are there as part of an inter-agency assessment as of 4 March. UNHCR's implementing partner is looking into establishing a presence in Benghazi. The mission discovered a camp in Benghazi Port where 8,000 foreign nationals are awaiting evacuation, however, 305 Eritreans, 191 Ethiopians and 153 Somalis elected not to access evacuation craft. While life is reporting to have returned to a level of normalcy, there may still be a need for medical support, which may be shortly resolved with provisions from Gulf countries.

UNHCR remains highly concerned about 8000 Eritrean, Ethiopian, Iraqi, Palestinian, Somali and Sudanese refugees in Libya registered with UNHCR, many of whom appear unable to move. There are also over 3000 more asylum seekers. IOM had estimated there were 1.5 million irregular migrant workers in Libya from Africa and Asia. In addition to general safety concern, African refugees are concerned about being associated with pro-government foreign mercenaries. Four telephone hotlines, manned by national staff, receive hundreds of phone calls from those searching for assistance.

Although UNHCR Algeria is denied access to the border, it is estimated that some 2,000 persons have crossed this border.

Tunisia

As of 4 March, UNHCR estimates approximately 95,000 persons crossed the border since 20 February. The week of 1 March, 10-15,000 people were crossing the border daily which led to severe congestion and tension. IOM-UNHCR humanitarian evacuation efforts, in coordination with the authorities of a number of countries, has successfully organized the return home of some 41,000, the vast majority of whom are Egyptians. With the overwhelming show of support from multiple countries, the decongestion of the border was achieved in a matter of days. The number of Libyans crossing to Tunisia now is relatively low, with 1,727 crossing on 4 March, mostly from Libya, Egypt and Bangladesh. In addition, registered refugees from Somalia, Eritrea and Iraq crossed into Tunisia. The Protection team continues to interview people and the focus over the next few days is to refine initial registration and individual interview processes as well as Refugee Status Determination policy. Daily coordination meetings take place at the Tunisian border among all humanitarian actors present on the ground. Although the numbers of arrivals has dropped, agencies agree that they should not pause but rather adjust activities to current needs as well as be prepared for other scenarios. The visit of the European Commissioner to Tunisia last week, yielded praise the joint work of UNHCR and IOM.

Egypt

The situation at the Sallum border crossing is currently stable. Approximately 3,000 people remain in the transit area awaiting onward transportation. The Egyptian Red Crescent is assisting arrivals and the authorities have a system in place for transporting incoming Egyptians back to their places of origin. Since 20 February, 87,000 people have crossed into Egypt. They include 65,000 Egyptians, 3,636 Libyans, 15,405 third country nationals (as of 4 March). The military at Saloum border are no longer providing statistics of new arrivals to any agency, embassy or NGO. UNHCR was told to channel requests through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. UNHCR has four protection staff at the Saloum border, undertaking protection monitoring, registration, advocacy with GoE for admission onto Egyptian territory, identification of persons with specific needs

UNHCR called a meeting with the general of the port authorities to improve distribution and increase the number of meals. UNIC EF, CRS, Care, ECHO, DFID, ERC, OCHA, IOM and the military attended. New distribution places were identified and ERC and military will lead the distribution.

Europe

The total number of Tunisians to reach Italy since mid-January is 6,500, while the Government of Italy is preparing a cautionary reception capacity. UNHCR has two Protection staff in Lampedusa and one in Sicily.

Logistics

Large quantities of non-food items have been delivered to Tunisia, while many donor countries have generously offered to donate further quantities. An assessment of needs is currently ongoing to define the priority needs.

Air evacuation

Thanks to a rapid response from the international community, significant progress has been made with the evacuation of Egyptians and other nationalities from Tunisia. Belgium, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States have all offered air and sea transport, while the European Commission and the Netherlands has offered funds for IOM and UNHCR to charter flights to return people home. The Egyptian Government has made the biggest evacuation effort and has repatriated tens of thousands of their nationals in the past week.

The situation in Libya remains unpredictable. IOM and UNHCR are calling upon donor countries to maintain their level of commitment to the humanitarian evacuation, in particular by having any transport assets which have not yet been used on call.

Staffing

As of 3 March, UNHCR activated an additional 39 emergency staff for Egypt (9), Libya (8) Tunisia (22), all of whom should be on the ground during this current weekend of 5/6 March.

Coordination

- UNHCR's High Commissioner and IOM's Director General will be visiting Tunisia on Monday 7 March.
- Interagency meeting held to discuss departures using Chadian border
- The joint Libya Appeal launch will be held in Geneva on 7 March with the head of OCHA, IOM and UNHCR participating.

Funding

UNHCR's additional needs* for the North Africa and Mediterranean Emergency Response include the following:

Country	Programme	Description of Beneficiaries	Amount (USD)
Egypt	Pillar I	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	5,857,986
Tunisia	Pillar I	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	8,074,000
Libya	Pillar I	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	8,439,000
Libya	Pillar IV	Internally Displaced Persons	550,000
Europe	Pillar I	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	589,351
Regional			6,620,000
Total			30,130,337
7% Overhead Cost			2,109,124
Grand Total			32,239,461

*Note: IOM and UNHCR have appealed as part of the Regional Flash Appeal to be launched on Monday 7 March to Governments for financial support. Meanwhile the two organizations appealed jointly to Governments for in-kind support in terms of logistical assets, including planes, boats and expert personnel.