

TUNISIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

1 September – 1 December 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

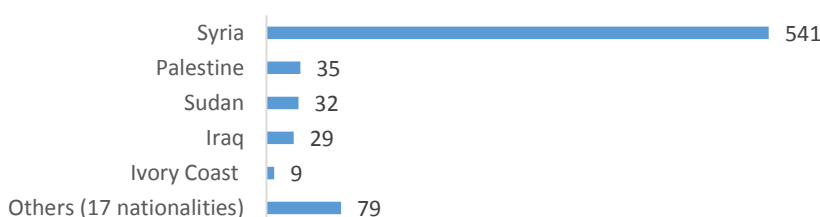
- UNHCR and IOM organized jointly on 21-22 September 2016 a **Regional Workshop on Search and Rescue for MENA region** and the **Regional Strategic Meeting UNHCR - IOM North Africa** on 1 November. Participants focused on enhancing predictability in responses and operational responses in mixed migration situations.
- UNHCR Representative met with the Tunisian Minister for Relations with Institutional Bodies, Civil Society and Human Rights on 28 September 2016. During the meeting, the Minister reassured UNHCR of the demarche for the adoption of a **National Asylum Law** in Tunisia at the earliest possible time.
- UNHCR continues to build the capacities of local Tunisian authorities. On 26 October 2016, UNHCR Tunisia organized an **advanced workshop on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the rescue at sea**. The workshop served as a final technical meeting to present and discuss the last updated and final version of the SOPs in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, and was marked by the participation of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Defence, Transport and Health as well as the Department for International Cooperation on Migration.
- On 21 – 22 October 2016, UNHCR and its partner, the Arab Institute for Human Rights, held a workshop for 23 lawyers from northern Tunisia. In addition to developing their knowledge and skills on international refugee law, the event was also set to build a network of lawyers able to provide legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia.



UNHCR meeting with the Tunisian Minister of Civil Society and Human Rights, 28 September.

Population of concern

A total of **725** people of concern as of 31st October



KEY FIGURES

725

People of concern to UNHCR as of 31st October 2016

171

Of the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers received financial assistance as of November 2016

7

Boats rescued-at-sea off Tunisian shores in 2015

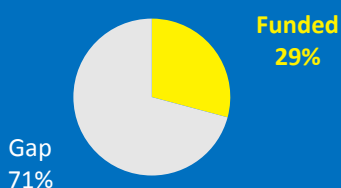
147

Individuals rescued at sea have approached UNHCR to claim asylum in Tunisia in 2015

FUNDING

USD 5.1 million

Requested for the operation



PRIORITIES

- Reinforcing and preserving the existing protection space through RSD activities and advocacy.
- Supporting the development of national legislation on asylum.
- Developing the capacity of Tunisian authorities to assume protection and RSD responsibilities once the legislation comes into force
- Enabling refugees to secure a regular income and reduce their dependency on UNHCR's financial assistance by offering increased self-reliance and livelihood opportunities.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Pending the adoption and implementation of an asylum law in Tunisia, UNHCR is the sole entity conducting refugee status determination in Tunisia. UNHCR therefore focuses on ensuring that persons of concern are registered, provided with UNHCR certificates, and protected against *refoulement*. UNHCR's overall objective is to support Tunisia in creating a comprehensive national protection system. Since 2011, UNHCR has supported the drafting of a national asylum law and continues to carry out advocacy and capacity building initiatives in order to help Tunisian authorities finalize the text.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continues to **host survivors of rescue at sea incidents** in Medenine. In order to better address their needs, psychosocial counselling sessions as well as field visits and monitoring by UNHCR staff are regularly conducted, during which it has been observed that persons taking the risk while crossing the Mediterranean are often misinformed on the jeopardies of crossing the perilous sea. In the absence of a practical alternative, many of those rescued at sea in southern Tunisia, return back to Libya within days to take the risk again. Therefore, part of UNHCR assistance to those rescued at sea is to provide them with a psychosocial support programme that gives them the opportunity to reflect on their experience, learn about grievous afflictions of taking such risks, and explore available opportunities and choices for a safe future venture.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Currently, there is no national asylum system in place in Tunisia. UNHCR supports Tunisian authorities with the development of a national legal asylum framework, in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention & 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees to which Tunisia is a signatory.
- The national response for rescue at sea, notably after disembarkation, needs reinforcement. UNHCR works in collaboration with the Tunisian authorities in developing a predictable response mechanism for rescue at sea incidents.



Education

Achievements and Impact

- The **integration of refugee children into the Tunisian public education system** continues to be facilitated by UNHCR partners, the Tunisian Red Crescent (TRC) in the North and Islamic Relief Tunisia (IRT) in the South, with the provision of grants for the 158 refugee children enrolled in schools to cover the purchase of books and school supplies.
- Recreational activities** are organized on a daily basis in the UNHCR dormitories in Medenine, and two “go-and-see” visits were organized in September and October 2016 for refugee children and youth in the South. The visits’ objective was to help refugee youth and children to discover new areas and traditions in other regions of Tunisia.



Go-and-see visit organized by UNHCR's partner IRT in Tozeur for 30 refugee children and youth from 29 to 31 October. ©IRT

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- While refugee children have full access to public education in Tunisia, they may face difficulties because of language barriers or as a result of an interrupted education.
- Continuous tutorial classes in French are needed to ease refugee children's integration into the Tunisian curriculum. UNHCR collaborated with “Tunisie Terre d'Asile” who organizes tutorial classes in French for refugee children and adults in Tunis.



Health

Achievements and Impact

- Refugees continue to have **access to public medical facilities** in Tunisia. UNHCR is covering the costs of primary and emergency healthcare through its partner the Tunisian Red Crescent (TRC).
- Awareness raising sessions** for refugees are regularly conducted in the dormitories by UNHCR partners IRT and TRC on various topics: a session on hygiene was conducted on 8 September, while on 15 and 16 October 2016 residents of the dormitories were trained on first aid assistance and preventing domestic risks. In addition, the IRT psychosocial team conducts weekly Focus Group Discussions with refugees on stress management and communication.



First aid training conducted on 15-16 October for refugees in Medenine. ©IRT



Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- In 2015, UNHCR’s partner ADRA started implementing its project to support self-reliance and employability of refugees in Tunisia. Within this framework, a service company called IGS “International General Services” was created and has begun recruiting persons of concern to work in various fields such as maintenance (electricity and A/C). Through this project, refugees sign a one-year work contract that provides a stable income and contributes towards self-reliance.
- In Medenine and Ben Guerdane, refugees have access to language (French and English) and IT training.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The lack of Tunisian documentation, especially work permits, constrains refugees’ access to formal employment. UNHCR is advocating for the issuance of temporary residence and work permits while working with partners and local authorities to find practical and sustainable solutions to facilitate refugee employment.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

- UNHCR is working closely with the Tunisian authorities, most notably the Tunisian Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Women’s Affairs, Justice and Employment.
- UNHCR has four partners in Tunisia, the Tunisian Red Crescent, Islamic Relief, ADRA and IADH (the Arab Institute for Human Rights).
- UNHCR is also cooperating with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), “Tunisie Terre d’Asile”, and the Scouts.
- UNHCR keeps a close contact with local embassies and representations in Tunisia: local fund raising activities undertaken by UNHCR have resulted in a 3-year project funded by the EU and Switzerland to build the capacity of the Tunisian authorities involved in the adoption of the draft refugee law. This project amounts to USD 1,237,500.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total recorded contributions for the operation in Tunisia amount to about **1.5 million**.

UNHCR is grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation, and to those who have contributed to UNHCR activities with non-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds in 2016:

Funding received (in USD)



United States of America (200 M) | Sweden (78 M) | Netherlands (46 M) | Priv Donors Spain (45 M) | Norway (40 M) | Australia (31 M) | Japan (24 M) | Denmark (24 M) | United Kingdom (23 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (17 M) | Priv Donors Italy (16 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Priv Donors Japan (13 M) | Germany (13 M) | Priv Donors USA (12 M) | Priv Donors Sweden (12 M) | Italy (10 M)

Contacts: Chadi Ouanes, Senior Reporting Associate ouanes@unhcr.org Tel: +216 50 504 364 / +216 71 963 383
Zeineb Marzouk, Senior Executive Associate marzoukz@unhcr.org Tel: +216 58 335 120 / +216 71 963 383