

# LIBYA

September 2020

An estimated **928,000 people in Libya are in need of humanitarian assistance.**

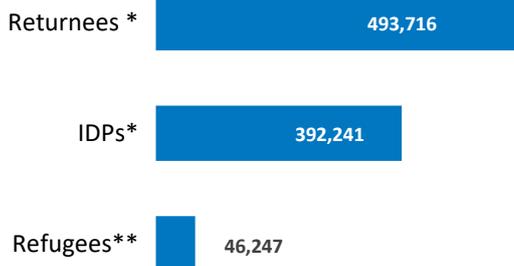
Displaced populations, refugees and migrants are amongst the most vulnerable. Around 200,000 have been displaced since clashes restarted in April 2019.

UNHCR's overall strategic objective in Libya is to enhance the **protection** environment and provide life-saving **assistance** to **displaced populations, refugees, asylum-seekers, and their host communities.** The **outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020** raised new challenges to which the operation responded, by adjusting priorities and budgeting.

In line with its regional engagement along the **Central Mediterranean route**, UNHCR's priorities in Libya include **saving lives, assisting persons in need of international protection** and ensuring their access to protection and solutions such as resettlement and family reunification.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

928,689



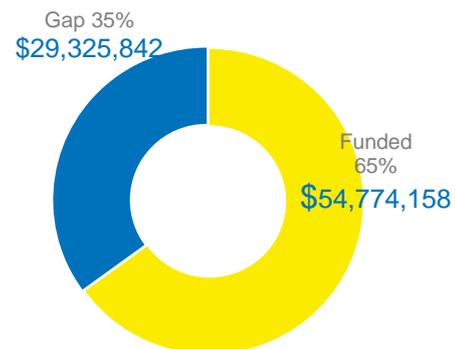
\* IOM-DTM August 2020

\*\* Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR (as of 1 Sept 2020)

## FUNDING

USD 84.1M

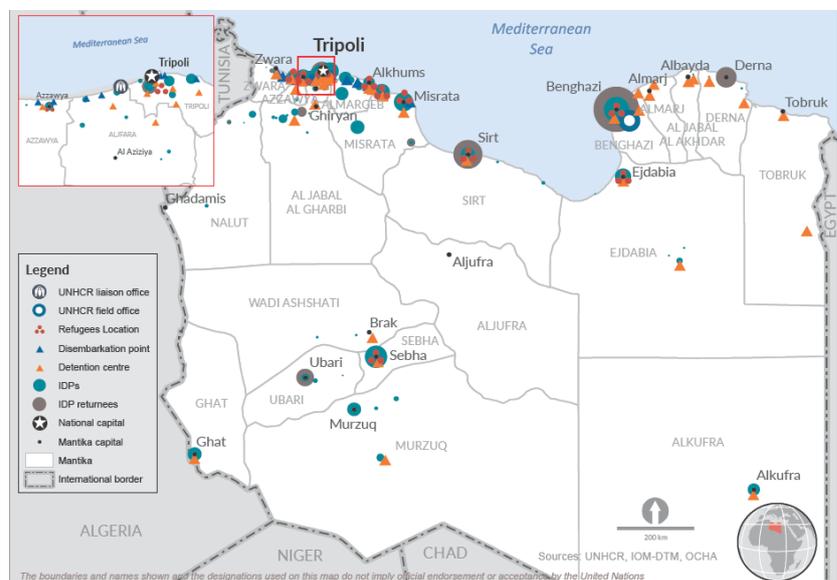
requested for the Libya operation in 2020



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

**131** national staff  
 (112 in Tripoli, **two** in Misrata, **three** in Benghazi, **14** in Tunis);  
**48** international staff



## Working with Partners

- **UNHCR is a member of the United Nations Country Team and Humanitarian Country Team in Libya.** Together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), UNHCR co-leads the Migrants and Refugees Platform. UNHCR also leads the Shelter/NFI Sector and the Protection Sector on IDPs, returnees and non-displaced population.
- **UNHCR supports the Libyan authorities to try to enhance the rights environment and provide assistance for the displaced and conflict-affected Libyan population. It works with partners to protect and assist refugees and asylum-seekers.** UNHCR is currently expanding partnerships with both international and national NGOs, as well as civil society organizations. Partners include ACTED, *Cooperazione e Sviluppo* (CESVI), the International Rescue Committee, Danish Refugee Council, *Première Urgence Internationale*, Handicap International, Norwegian Refugee Council and LibAid.

## Main Activities

### Assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs)

- **Support for IDPs is a priority. UNHCR is providing basic assistance to IDPs in Libya, such as core-relief items and cash assistance.** Cash assistance helps the most vulnerable displaced families to cover shelter and basic needs. Considering the challenges posed by the liquidity crisis in the country, UNHCR and its partners have distributed non-food items to over 37,000 IDPs and returnees in 2020 (compare 22,000 in the whole of 2019); with partners ACTED and DRC, we have also provided pre-paid debit cards that can be used to purchase basic items at Point of Sale outlets across Libya.
- **UNHCR is implementing quick impact projects (QIPs), which are small and rapidly implemented projects, to support IDPs, returnees and their host communities with a view to promote social cohesion.** Together with the communities, UNHCR and partners identify projects, mainly targeting local infrastructure, equipment and basic services within the health, education, shelter and WASH sectors. As an example, in 2019, UNHCR supported a school and a clinic in Al Awiniya, Nafusa Mountains; the agency also conducted rehabilitation works at the Abu Sitta Hospital in Tripoli. In 2020, UNHCR continues implementing projects through its partners, as well as directly, and to date 26 such projects have been finalized, mostly related to health and education, with upgrading of hospitals, clinics, and schools.

### Support following rescue/interception at sea

- **UNHCR's interventions at disembarkation points in Libya focus on the provision of life-saving assistance and protection monitoring to identify persons in need of international protection, and vulnerable individuals, including unaccompanied and separated children, elderly, persons with specific needs, women at risk and victims of trafficking.** UNHCR with its partner International Rescue Committee (IRC) has access to and conducts protection monitoring at disembarkation points in western Libya, when informed by the relevant authorities. At six disembarkation points, UNHCR upgraded reception conditions to meet the immediate basic needs of refugees and migrants being disembarked following a rescue/interception at sea. Support includes establishing health posts, constructing water and sanitation facilities, such as toilets and showers, and shaded areas to protect refugees and migrants from rain in the winter and high temperatures in the summer.

### Assistance and advocacy to end detention of refugees and asylum-seekers

- **UNHCR advocates for an end to detention in Libya and the release of refugees and asylum-seekers from detention, in particular for unaccompanied and separated children and other vulnerable individuals.** UNHCR also calls for care arrangements for children and family tracing. **In 2019, UNHCR and its partners conducted 1,351 visits to detention centres; in 2020 so far with such reduced movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 192 such visits have been conducted. In 2020, 231 refugees and asylum-seekers have been released following UNHCR's advocacy efforts (1,780 in 2019), mainly for the purpose of evacuation to a safe third country.**

**In December 2018, UNHCR opened the Gathering and Departure Facility (GDF) in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior.** The GDF, a transit centre, was the first of its kind in the country, intended to bring vulnerable refugees to a safe environment while solutions, including resettlement, family reunification, return to a country of previous admission or evacuation to emergency facilities are identified. The facility is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior, which allowed UNHCR and its partner LibAid to run operations at the GDF. Since the GDF opened, 1,713 refugees have departed Libya under the Emergency Transit Mechanisms in Niger and Rwanda, and to Italy. However, **on 30 January 2020, due to the establishment of a military training centre next to the facility, which heightened the risk of the entire area becoming a military target, and shelling close by a few weeks earlier, UNHCR announced that it was suspending operations at the GDF. UNHCR began moving persons out of the GDF to safer locations and in urban areas.**

Between October 2019 and March, over 1,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, previously accommodated at the GDF, accepted the urban assistance package at UNHCR's Community Day Centre (CDC), where they received cash grants and CRIs including hygiene kits, sleeping mats, blankets, plastic sheeting, and clothes.

- **At official government detention centres, where access is often limited, UNHCR provides medical and humanitarian assistance** and advocates for enhanced access to screening, identification and registration of refugees and vulnerable individuals both at disembarkation points and in detention centres. UNHCR also advocates for measures to be taken to reduce the risk of sexual and gender-based violence. **UNHCR distributes CRIs to persons held in official detention centres**, where particularly poor hygiene conditions contribute to the risk of spreading of diseases. In the past, UNHCR also assisted with the provision of WASH facilities for eight detention centres, including washing machines, and water tanks and generators.

### Urban Refugee Programme

**One of UNHCR's key objectives in Libya is to enhance the protection environment for refugees and asylum-seekers.** UNHCR assists persons in need of international protection through its telephone hotlines, via its Community Day Centre (CDC) in Tripoli and through outreach visits. UNHCR's partners CESVI and IRC provide specialized assistance to persons with specific needs, including unaccompanied and separated children and victims of trafficking. A new call centre, run by UNHCR and NRC, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), opened in August, providing information and advice about services and assistance.

- Refugees and asylum-seekers have limited access to Libyan health facilities. **UNHCR and partners provide primary healthcare and psychosocial support** to refugees and asylum-seekers in Tripoli and in detention facilities. So far in 2020, UNHCR and partners have conducted over 3,400 medical consultations for vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers in both the urban setting (2,261) and in detention (1,175). A 24-hour emergency medical hotline and ambulance service, for emergency cases, was launched in July, in partnership with IRC and the Libyan Red Crescent (LRC) supported by the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF).

### Durable Solutions

- **UNHCR has significantly scaled up its capacity for refugee status determination, resettlement and evacuations to third countries.** Since November 2017, a total of 5,709 refugees and asylum-seekers departed from Libya, either through resettlement (1,385 since 2017) or humanitarian evacuations (4,279 since 2017, including 3,165 to Niger, 808 to Italy, 306 to Rwanda). In 2019 alone, 2,376 departed (1,534 evacuated and 842 resettled); in 2020, 297 have departed (128 evacuated and 169 resettled).
- **UNHCR continues to seek durable solutions**, such as resettlement, family reunification and voluntary repatriation, for refugees and asylum-seekers, giving particular attention to the most vulnerable. Since January 2020, 370 cases for resettlement to third countries directly from Libya have been accepted.
- **Between September 2017 and December 2019, 8,919 refugees have been submitted for resettlement consideration from Libya and both ETMs (in Niger and Rwanda).** For 2020, the three locations (Niger, Rwanda, Libya) have 2,570 resettlement places to a total of 14 states. Out of these, 895 places will be allocated to evacuees from Libya in Niger, 800 places will be allocated to evacuees from Libya in Rwanda and 875 places will be used for resettlement processing directly out of Libya. Since 15 March, all evacuation/resettlement flights have been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic but with Tripoli airport re-opening in August 2020, it is hoped that direct resettlement departures out of Libya will resume in the fourth quarter of 2020.

### COVID-19

- **Libya declared its first case of coronavirus (COVID-19) on 24 March.** The number of new reported cases in Libya over the summer has risen sharply (15 September, 23,515 cases of COVID-19 in Libya, including 10,385 active, 12,762 recovered and 368 deaths) with more than 4,800 new coronavirus cases recorded in the first week of September. As a result, the operation has adjusted its regular programming to respect social distancing and safety protocols.
- **On 15 March, as part of global efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, Libya shut all borders and imposed curfews.** UNHCR, with its partners CESVI and IRC, briefly halted activities at the Serraj Registration Centre area and at its CDC, both in Tripoli, 18-24 March, while new health and safety protocols were introduced, including ensuring the necessary personal protective equipment. Operations have resumed, but both operations now work on an appointment-only basis, to ensure social distancing to protect the health of persons of concern, partners and staff.
- **UNHCR has strengthened its hotline response in order to improve its outreach with and provide information to refugees and asylum-seekers.** Between 1 April and 31 August, 5,558 calls in total have been received. Most of the enquiries relate to material assistance and cash, followed by queries on registration and resettlement, as well as some enquiries relating to COVID-19. The majority of calls are from people in Tripoli and the wider western area.
- **In July, a new 24-hour emergency medical hotline and ambulance service**, to refer emergency cases to secondary and tertiary hospitals and clinics, was launched in partnership with IRC and the Libyan Red Crescent (LRC). **In August a new call centre was opened**, run by UNHCR partner, NRC, to enhance two-way communication between staff and

refugees/asylum-seekers across Libya. The majority of calls related to resettlement queries. Due to Libyan curfew and movement restrictions, changes in the service opening hours and modalities at the CDC and Serraj are promptly communicated to refugees via flash updates and disseminated through social media and community contacts.

- **Despite the challenging conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR Supply unit has been able to locally procure** essential items, such as the personal protective equipment needed for staff: both disposable and N95 masks, hand sanitizer, protective gloves, and infrared thermometers.
- **Periodic assessments highlight the worrying socio-economic impact of COVID-19, which is compounding the vulnerability of refugees.** Data suggested that since the end of March, a significant proportion had lost their jobs with the inability to work due to COVID-19 related movement restrictions, particularly those who relied on temporary employment and daily labour such as in commerce or construction. With increasing prices of basic food and commodities, many PoCs cannot afford even the most basic costs of day-to-day living. During Ramadan, with the aim of reaching 4,000 persons and being part of UNHCR's strategy to diversify its urban assistance, UNHCR undertook its Ramadan distribution campaign with the aim of providing core relief items to refugees and asylum-seekers living in Tripoli. UNHCR distributed its Ramadan package—food items (to last for one month), hygiene kits, jerry cans and water purification tablets (provided by UNICEF)—to 4,728 refugees and asylum-seekers to help meet their basic needs. In June, UNHCR together with WFP commenced a pilot food distribution project, aiming to reach the most vulnerable with food packages designed to last a month. By July, some 1,500 parcels had been distributed. The project aims to reach 10,000 persons by the year end.
- **UNHCR continues to support the internally displaced (IDPs).** On 18 May, UNHCR through its partner LibAid distributed its Ramadan package to more than 500 IDP families (3,731 individuals) living in the Hay Al-Andalus district in Tripoli. LibAid has distributed nearly 19,000 bars of UNHCR soap throughout all the main eastern IDP areas. With its partner, DRC, UNHCR also distributed pre-paid cards to 500 displaced Libya households in Tripoli. The cards allow people to directly purchase goods in more than 2,000 points of sale in Tripoli, circumventing the acute banking liquidity problem that Libya is facing.
- **Detention centres (DC) present a particular health risk due to COVID-19, given the crowded and insanitary conditions.** UNHCR through its partners (PUI, LibAid, and IRC), has organized the distribution of hygiene kits and other CRIs at a number of DCs across the country, in both east and west Libya. From mid-April until the present, some 4,200 hygiene kits have been distributed to 15 detention centres. At the end of August, PUI and LibAid made distributions to several DCs in the east, delivering nearly 400 CRIs.
- **The health sector remains the focus of UNHCR's support.** To date, UNHCR has supplied six ambulances to various municipalities, hygiene kits, soap, PPE, blankets, sanitary cloth for hospital bedding, and tents. In addition, with a fluctuating power grid, the provision of ten generators has been an invaluable form of assistance. We have also provided prefabricated containers, to be used as COVID-19 testing and reception facilities at Misrata, Benghazi and Azzawya, to help expand space at primary healthcare centres.

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