UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE
March - April 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

- UNHCR Representative met with Prime Minister Habib Essid and with Minister of Justice Mohamed Saleh Ben Aissa on 13 March. He thanked Tunisian authorities for their efforts in favour of refugee protection and offered UNHCR’s continuous support.
- In March and April, **four boats in distress were rescued** off the Tunisian coast. In total, the boats carried 352 survivors of various nationalities. Tunisian authorities, with the support of UNHCR’s partner the Tunisian Red Crescent, were present at disembarkation in Tunisia to provide medical and emergency assistance. Some 61 individuals approached UNHCR to claim asylum in Tunisia, mostly from Sudan and Somalia. They were transferred temporarily to UNHCR dormitories in Medenine.
- On 14 April, **UNHCR was invited by l’Ecole Supérieure de la Guerre**, the Ministry of Defense Training Centre for Officers, to facilitate a session on UNHCR’s role in crisis management where 125 Officers from Tunisia and from around the Mediterranean (Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, and Spain) were briefed on UNHCR’s mandate and activities, refugee rights and protection, and on refugee crisis management.
- With the support of UNHCR, four high-level officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Women Affairs, and Social Affairs, participated in the French session of the San Remo course on International Refugee law from 14 to 18 April 2015.

Population of concern

A total of **1,024** people of concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire</td>
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<td>Sudan</td>
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<td>Somalia</td>
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<td>Palestine</td>
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<td>Eritrea</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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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 is therefore focused on ensuring that persons of concern to UNHCR are registered, issued with UNHCR certificates, and protected against refoulement. UNHCR’s overall objective is to support Tunisia in creating a comprehensive national protection system. UNHCR supported the drafting of the draft asylum law and continues to be involved in various capacity building initiatives in order to finalize the text.

Achievements

Achievements and Impact
- **Protection**
  - In March and April 2015, **46 people applied for asylum in Tunisia and were registered with UNHCR**.
  - UNHCR continues to host survivors of rescue at sea incidents in Medenine. In March and April, four boats in distress were rescued off the Tunisian coast by the Maritime coastguard and Tunisian fishermen. The 61 survivors who approached UNHCR to claim asylum in Tunisia were provided with shelter. UNHCR is registering them and will proceed with their refugee status determination.
  - UNHCR participated in a seminar on psychosocial support for children in an emergency context organized by UNICEF and the Tunisian Association for Children’s Rights on 24 March in Djerba.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps
- Currently, there is no national asylum system in place. 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 is supporting Tunisian authorities in developing a predictable response mechanism for rescue at sea incidents.

Education

Achievements and Impact
- In southern Tunisia, UNHCR’s partner Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) works closely with parents, teachers, and local authorities to facilitate the integration of refugee children into the Tunisian public education system. In Ben Guerdane and Medenine, IRW is supporting eight refugee children with tutorial classes.
- UNHCR and IRW implement activities for refugee children during the holidays: football games, field trip to Tataouine and Djerba to visit the Science Village and attend community events. These occasions provide refugee children and their parents with opportunities to meet with Tunisian peers and to discover their host country.

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 interrupted education. Tutorial classes are therefore offered to support these children.

Health

Achievements and Impact
- Refugees continue to have access to public medical facilities in Tunisia. UNHCR is covering primary and emergency care through its partner Tunisian Red Crescent.
Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact
- In support of self-reliance, UNHCR’s partner ADRA met with refugees in Sfax, Medenine and Ben Guerdane to present a project concept to create a company specializing in recruiting refugees and asylum seekers.
- Refugee women in southern Tunisia celebrated International Women’s Day on 12 March. They discussed achievements and challenges towards gender equality and shared their experiences.
- Eleven refugees are enrolled at a private centre in Medenine for English, French, and computer training. Three women are enrolled in a hairdressing apprenticeship scheme.

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 solutions to facilitate refugee employment.

Contingency planning

Achievements and Impact
- UNHCR Representative met with Prime Minister Habib Essid and with Minister of Justice Mohamed Saleh Ben Aissa on 13 March where he welcomed UNHCR’s continuous support particularly in the area of the draft asylum law, rescue at sea, and contingency planning in case of an influx from Libya.
- On 25 March, UNHCR held a technical inter-agency meeting with UN agencies and partners to present the latest version of the Contingency Plan. The Plan was shared in April with Tunisian authorities for their final endorsement.
- On 14 April, UNHCR facilitated a session on UNHCR’s role in crisis management during a seminar organized by l’Ecole Supérieure de la Guerre, the Ministry of Defense Training Centre for Officers, for high-level officers. Some 125 Tunisian and foreign officers were familiarized with refugee crisis management and asylum issues.

Working in partnership
- UNHCR is working closely with Tunisian authorities, most notably the Tunisian Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Women Affairs, Justice and Land Affairs and Employment.
- UNHCR has three implementing partners in Tunisia, the Tunisian Red Crescent, Islamic Relief and ADRA.
- UNHCR is also cooperating with the Arab Institute for Human Rights (IADH), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and France Terre d’Asile (FTDA).

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total recorded contributions for the operation in Tunisia amount to some USD 0.5 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 unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds in 2014.

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<th>Funding received (in USD)</th>
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