Refugee Influx Hodh Chargui - Mauritania

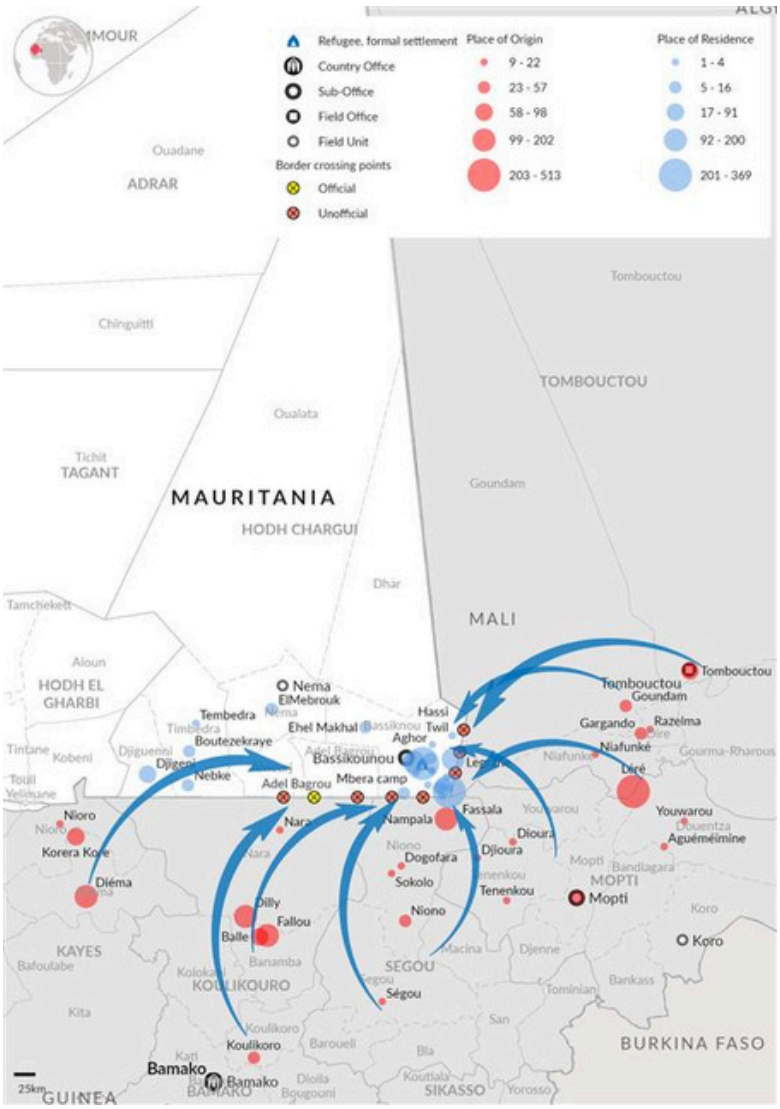
As of 02 January 2026

Overview

Renewed military activity and insecurity in parts of northern and central Mali, particularly aroundTimbuktu and along border areas of Kayes and Léré, continue to generate displacement and uncertainty.

During the reporting period, 32 new families (128 individuals) were identified in the Bassikounou area,bringing the cumulative figure to 7,438 individuals. Most arrivals again originated from Razelma, whererefugees report attacks by armed groups, fear of air operations and loss of livelihoods.

Last week, UNHCR and partners visited multiple cities in two other neighboring regions of Hodh Gharbi and Guidimakha following reports ofcross-border movements. Preliminary observations confirm protection needs and limited visibility of refugee needs in both regions. Joint mobile registration and targeted assistance are ongoing, but resources remain stretched,particularly as emerging needs in new regions may require broader coordination and preparedness.



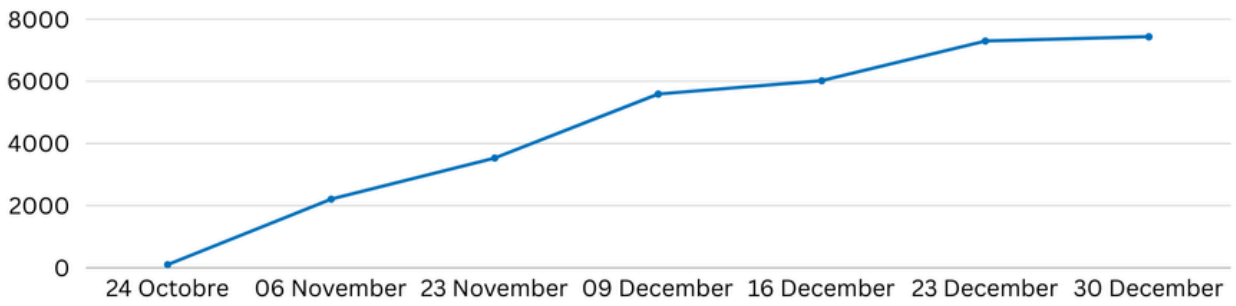
Key figures

7,438
Refugees arrived since 24th October

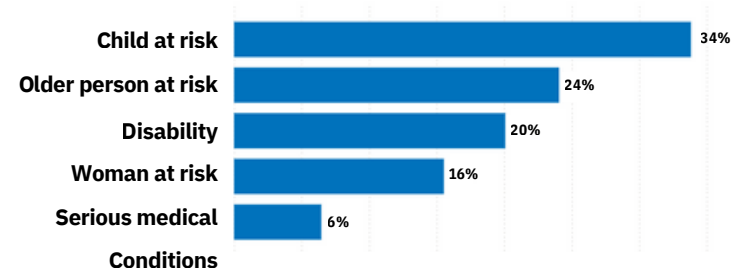
19%
Adult women

68%
Children

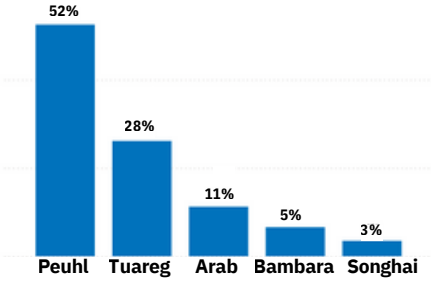
Estimated daily refugee arrivals



Vulnerabilities



Ethnicity



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© UNHCR/OMAR DOUKALI – Djeinebou (Name changed), a recently arrived Malian refugee mother, sits with her child shortly after receiving relief items during a humanitarian distribution in Aghor, southeastern Mauritania.

"I walked for days with my children, mostly at night. I was afraid of being spotted. I left everything behind. It was difficult. Along the way, I heard explosions," says Djeinebou

In northern Mali, particularly in the Timbuktu region, the security situation remains concerning. Partners report renewed military activity, including drone strikes along the Ber axis, taking place in an already tense environment marked by restricted movement and disruption of daily life. These developments have generated localized population movements and heightened uncertainty. Further south, instability persists across several border-facing zones, notably in parts of Kayes (including Nioro du Sahel). These areas continue to experience the presence of armed groups and uneven state control, with dynamics that can shift rapidly.

Mauritanian authorities in the neighboring regions have expressed concerns that renewed operations or deterioration on the Malian side could quickly translate into additional arrivals. They have therefore emphasized the need to scale up of support systems in the three border regions.

Against this backdrop, the situation on the Mauritanian side is beginning to reflect these upstream pressures. New arrivals continue to be reported across the Bassikounou area and surrounding communes.

© DW – From a Deutsche Welle evening news report featuring insights from UNHCR personnel on the humanitarian response following the refugee influx in south-eastern Mauritania.

More than 300,000 Malians have sought refuge in eastern Mauritania since the conflict began in 2012.

As fighting in Mali intensifies, more than 7,000 refugees have arrived since early November 2025. UNHCR spokesperson in Mauritania shares on-the-ground insights into the humanitarian response and the situation in refugee-hosting areas on DW's evening news programme.

"Mauritanians have shown strong solidarity with refugees."

During the reporting period, 32 additional families (128 individuals) were identified, bringing the cumulative figure to 7,438 individuals (1,193 families). Fourteen families (76 individuals) — including 46 children — arrived in Libreni after leaving Razelma in the Timbuktu region, citing attacks by armed groups, fear of air operations and the loss oflivelihoods; several reported arriving without documentation or shelter. The majority of families continue to integrate quietly within host communities, with associated protection risks linked to lack of documentation, exposure of children and precarious living conditions.

In the regions of Hodh Gharbi and Guidimakha, UNHCR and partners identified new arrivals in recent weeks from neighbouring Mali. Preliminary findings indicate that people are moving primarily due to insecurity, the presence and pressure of armed groups, and growing uncertainty around potential military operations. Local authorities estimate that, across the two regions, the number of Malians currently present may exceed 23,000, although figures remain indicative due to the fluid nature of movements. UNHCR is engaging closely with government counterparts and partners to clarify trends, identify people with specific protection needs and ensure coordinated, protection-sensitive preparedness.

Joint mobile registration by UNHCR and government partners continues in priority areas where refugees are settling, helping ensure that new arrivals are documented and able to access services. To date, around 20% of those registered are new arrivals, reflecting ongoing efforts to mitigate protection risks. Assistance is being scaled up where resources allow: non-food items are being distributed to the most vulnerable families. Since the beginning of the influx, UNHCR and partners distributed corerelief items and shelter materials to 1,084 newly arrived families and those that arrived earlier this year. This week, distribution focused on communities in El Megve and surrounding villages, with 1,643 families targeted for support across locations such as Aghor, Avernane, Baghdad and Tenwagoutine.

Identified children at risk are being referred for support and follow-up, and survivors of gender-based violence are receiving confidentialsupport through specialized services. Work with community leaders and committees is also ongoing to strengthen protection awareness, referral mechanisms and community-based support.

© UNHCR/El Mehdi Tadili– Husseinou (Name changed), a Malian refugee, pictured with his family, stands outside their shelter in Hodh Gharbi, southeastern Mauritania, where they have found safety after fleeing violence in Mali.

"When the fighting intensified in the Nioro region, we had no choice but to flee. The journey was difficult. Here, in Mauritania, we are trying to rebuild our lives so our children can go back to school and we can access water and proper shelter," **Says Husseinou**