

TUNISIA

Highlights

30 June 2020

Key figures

4,720

Persons of concern to UNHCR (asylum seekers & refugees)

2,430

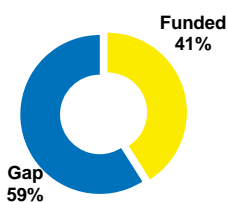
Vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers received cash assistance (regular programme + COVID-19)

164

Individuals were profiled so far in 2020 to assess their need for international protection

Funding

USD **11.6 M** required in 2020



USD **4.7 M** received as of 1 July 2020

As of 30 June 2020, Tunisia recorded 1,175 confirmed cases of COVID-19; with 50 deaths and 1,038 cases recovered, while 87 cases remained active. Most of the new cases have been detected among people repatriated from abroad. The progressive ease of confinement measures arrived at its last stage, borders between governorates re-opened on 4 June and international borders on 27 June. On 8 June, the night curfew was lifted. UNHCR in-presence activities resumed at 100%, namely registration, refugee status determination (RSD) and resettlement (RST) interviews.

Rescue at sea operations and interception at land/sea continued at a high pace off Tunisian coasts during June. Following the [shipwreck](#) occurred on 4th - 5th of June off Kerkennah Islands, the Tunisian authorities retrieved the bodies of 61 people from the sea, mostly women and children from sub-Saharan Africa, including one asylum seeker. The boat allegedly departed from Sfax in the direction of Italy. On 17 June, Tunisian authorities reported to have thwarted 17 attempted departures from Tunisian coasts and arrested 185 people in one single day. On 19 June, 20 third-country nationals (18 from Egypt and 2 from Yemen) have been rescued by the Tunisian coast guard around Kerkennah Islands, off Sfax coast; as their boat went adrift due to bad weather. The boat departed from Zwara in Libya toward Italy. The rescued were placed in quarantine and profiling is scheduled for July, after which, UNHCR will proceed with registration and assistance as needed.

Operational Response

Between the 1st and 11th of June, registration, RSD and RST interviews resumed. Since then, 306 individuals have been registered, 30 RSD cases have been processed, seven individual cases were submitted for resettlement consideration and one urgent case approved. UNHCR reached out to resettlement countries' embassies to explore the possibility to resume departures as soon as possible for the already approved cases.

UNHCR and its partner Tunisian Refugee Council (CTR) completed the second round of the country-wide verification and assessment exercise (using KoBoToolbox software). The verification exercise aimed to confirm the presence of all persons of concern to UNHCR on Tunisian territory; to collect information on their current socio-economic and protection situation and to seek consent in sharing basic information with the Tunisian Government for inclusion in national assistance programmes. In total, UNHCR pre-identified 1,670 refugee and asylum seeker households currently not enrolled in any of UNHCR assistance programmes. From this list, 967 households were reached and their needs assessed (60 per cent contact rate). Among the assessed households, 434 declared themselves to be at risk of eviction for lack of rent payment; more than 70 per cent declared not being able to pay for rent, food, medicines and utilities while only 4.4 per cent had regular income. 97 per cent expressed their consent to share basic biodata with the Government.

Based on the verification, UNHCR reinforced its regular cash assistance programme, so to increase social protection of refugees and asylum seekers most affected by the COVID-19 situation. Some 389 single refugees and asylum seekers already enrolled in the assistance programme received a top-up and 170 individuals temporarily enrolled in the assistance programme were extended until the end of the year. Moreover, 1,008 refugees and asylum seekers whose cases are followed by UNHCR but who are not enrolled in the assistance programme, received cash assistance.

To mark World Refugee Day, several activities involving refugees and asylum seekers were organized in all major cities of the country from 18 to 27 June, such as football matches, recreational activities for children, movie shows, painting workshops, but also awareness sessions to sensitize Tunisian citizens to refugee issues. More information on 2020 World Refugee Day activities in Tunisia is available [here](#).

Protection of LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia

Since 2019, UNHCR Tunisia has seen a steady increase in the number of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI) individuals seeking international protection in the country, with a more than seven-fold increase of asylum claimants — from 11 to 85 — since the beginning of 2019.

Of the 85 LGBTI individuals currently registered with UNHCR Tunisia, 20 per cent have been recognised as refugees, while the remaining 80 per cent are currently awaiting refugee status determination. Given the lack of local integration opportunities for them, resettlement remains a preferred solution for many, with nine vulnerable LGBTI cases submitted to resettlement countries in 2019 and four so far submitted in 2020. The main resettlement countries for Tunisia are the Netherlands, France, Sweden, and Norway.

The intersection of their legal status and sexual orientation or gender identity exposes the LGBTI refugee community to discrimination, isolation, and exploitation, making them one of the most vulnerable categories of persons registered with UNHCR – compounded by the racial discrimination experienced by many sub-Saharan refugees.

UNHCR Tunisia's protection response aims to mitigate and address the protection risks experienced by the refugee LGBTI community through appropriate identification mechanisms based on the Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach; safe and confidential signposting as well as tailored community-based activities:

- **Outreach, identification and Registration:** UNHCR has built the capacity of its partner Tunisian Refugee Council (CTR) to identify and respond to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers of all Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities (SOGI). UNHCR and CTR are able to identify LGBTI asylum seekers across the country and ensure safe access to different services.
- **Community-based activities:** LGBTI refugee groups are present in Tunis, Sousse, Sfax and Medenine. The groups meet monthly and aim to provide a safe space and opportunities for recreation to its users; and also facilitate information sharing with UNHCR and its partner on protection responses. Through this engagement, participants have been able to mitigate the effect of their isolation by reaching out and finding peer support to address the difficulties and challenges of life in Tunisia.
- **Cooperation with local organisations:** Through cooperation with Tunisian organisations advocating for LGBTI rights, such as Mawjoudin and Association Tunisienne de Prévention Positive, UNHCR has been able to expand its community-based protection activities for the LGBTI community across Tunisia and to ensure free and safe access to healthcare services.
- **Mental health and psychosocial support:** LGBTI persons are regularly receiving individual and group psychosocial counselling.
- **Case Management:** CTR provides SOGI sensitive case management respectful of LGBTI gender identities and preferred use of pronouns. They also conduct the referrals of LGBTI people who are presenting with acute protection needs to the appropriate legal and health service providers. CTR ensures that the care provided is safe, effective, and LGBTI-friendly.



UNHCR Tunisia is grateful for the support of [European Union](#) | [Italy](#) | [Luxembourg](#) | [Monaco](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [RDPP NA – EU](#) | [Switzerland](#) | [World Food Programme](#) and to those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and softly earmarked funds.