

PLACE

Tunis

DATE

20 April 2022

UNHCR calls for dialogue with protesters camping outside of its office in Tunis and for restraint on all sides.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, called today for dialogue with a group of 150 protesters that started camping outside of its office in Tunis on 15 April 2022. The group, which is made of 132 males, 10 women and 8 children, has been requesting evacuation and resettlement outside Tunisia.

Since the start of the protests – first in front of UNHCR office in Zarzis and now in front of its office in Tunis – UNHCR has continued its efforts to engage with protestors in order to find peaceful solutions and offer practical support.

While we understand the challenges many of the protestors face, we regret that all our offers have been rejected so far. Unfortunately, resettlement options remain extremely limited given the number of slots allocated by resettlement countries and are only available for the most vulnerable refugees.

In 2021, 76 refugees departed from Tunisia to be resettled in third countries. No nationality is given priority over the others, eligibility for resettlement is determined based on a non-discriminatory approach that assesses vulnerability and protection risks on a case-by-case basis. Decisions on resettlement applications are made by the resettlement countries concerned. Less than one per cent of refugees worldwide are resettled each year.

UNHCR remains ready to continue its dialogue with this group to ensure a peaceful resolution and to offer its support, based on relevant protection and vulnerability criteria and international protection needs.

UNHCR takes this opportunity to clarify that the humanitarian evacuation mechanism is exceptionally in place in Libya only due to the deteriorated security situation in the country. The humanitarian evacuation program is a measure of last resort that usually takes place in extreme situations where refugees and asylum seekers face grave violations of their Human Rights and where the provision of assistance and protection is rendered impossible. This is not the case in Tunisia, which is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and where the basic rights of refugees are respected, they have access to essential services, and where they generally do not risk arbitrary detention, inhuman treatment, or forced return (*refoulement*).

UNHCR News

Tel. +41 22 739 85 02

www.unhcr.org

[@RefugeesMedia](https://twitter.com/RefugeesMedia)

[@Refugees](https://twitter.com/Refugees)

Global Media Contacts

PLACE

Tunis

DATE

20 April 2022

SUBJECT**UNHCR calls for dialogue with protesters camping outside of its office in Tunis and for restraint on all sides.**

UNHCR works together with humanitarian partners to provide assistance including for shelter, education, livelihoods/employment, and health care. A funding shortfall has obliged us to scale down some programs, including our cash assistance program, targeted at the most vulnerable within the refugee population. UNHCR is deeply concerned about the impact of these cuts and continue to provide individual counselling to those affected.

UNHCR wishes to clarify that, contrary to some reports, UNHCR does not intend to close its shelters in Tunisia. UNHCR was requested to close one shelter in 2021 due to operational reasons, but UNHCR still has three shelters operating, with a total capacity of 400 places. UNHCR continues to provide accommodation to vulnerable individuals, including those rescued at sea, for limited periods.

UNHCR fully supports the right of refugees and asylum seekers to demonstrate in a peaceful way and in line with national law and remains committed to supporting all refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia, including those protesting.

UNHCR urges restraint and for a peaceful resolution of this challenging situation. We stand ready to collaborate with the authorities, partners, refugees and all concerned parties to find alternative and suitable solutions to meet the protester's demands and prevent violence or harm against anyone, including staff, demonstrators, or other members of the general public.

[FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:]**CHIARA MARIA CAVALCANTI**

Associate Reporting Officer:

Phone : +216 50504373

Email: cavalcac@unhcr.org**IKRAM HOUIMLI**

Report /Public Information Associate, Tunis, Tunisia

Phone : +216 58 941 076

Email: houimli@unhcr.org**UNHCR News**

Tel. +41 22 739 85 02

www.unhcr.org[@RefugeesMedia](#)[@Refugees](#)

Global Media Contacts