

Tunisia

January 2024

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Tunisia **originate mainly from Sudan, Syria, and countries in Central, Eastern and Western Africa.**

Most reach Tunisia by land after long and perilous journeys from their home countries.

UNHCR and its partners work in close collaboration with national and local authorities to **improve access** of refugees and asylum-seekers **to basic services**, while at the same reinforcing **resilience programs and mechanisms**, including training and self-reliance opportunities.

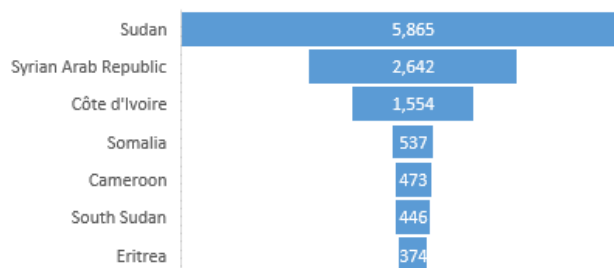
While Tunisia is a state party to the 1951 refugee convention, it has yet to adopt **a national asylum system.**

UNHCR is the sole entity mandated by the Tunisian authorities to register asylum-seekers and conduct Refugee Status Determination (RSD).

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

by main countries of origin

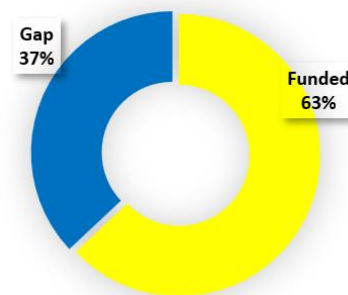
Total: 14,371



As of 31 January 2024

FUNDING REQUIRED FOR 2024

USD 9.2 M



As of 31 January 2024

Operational Context

UNHCR established presence in Tunisia in 1963 and is currently operating through a country office in Tunis and a field office in Zarzis.

At the crossroads of migratory routes between Africa and Europe, Tunisia plays an increasingly significant role as a country of transit and destination along the central Mediterranean route for persons forced to flee. During perilous journeys, individuals are often confronted with detention, expulsions, torture and other forms of exploitation and harm.

In 2023, UNHCR registered an almost ninefold increase in asylum applications compared to 2022, mainly from Sudanese nationals. While recognised refugees might have access to resilience opportunities, asylum-seekers mainly rely on humanitarian assistance due to limited or no opportunities for self-reliance.

UNHCR maintains constructive relations with the Government and local authorities, providing technical assistance and fostering orientation, assistance and resilience of refugees and asylum-seekers.

As a member of the United Nations Country Team in Tunisia, UNHCR contributes to the planning and operationalization of the Cooperation Framework that constitutes the foundation of the UN's collaboration with the Tunisian Government for 2021-2025. UNHCR co-leads the UN Technical Coordination Group on Asylum and Migration together with IOM.

Main Activities and Partners

Core Protection

- In the absence of a formal national asylum system, UNHCR is the sole entity conducting **registration** and **refugee status determination** and issuing refugee and asylum-seeker documentation in Tunisia to lawfully remain in the country while a decision on the application is made, and to have access to basic services. UNHCR partner the [Tunisian Refugees Council](#) (CTR in its French acronym) contributes to profiling new arrivals and providing orientation as well as basic assistance considering specific needs.
- **Capacity-building programmes** on international protection are developed with state agents, civil society, journalists, lawyers, and judges to promote a protection space for refugees and asylum-seekers in Tunisia. In May 2023, UNHCR signed a Letter of Understanding with the Faculty of Law at the University of Tunis to envisage training and internship opportunities for students.
- **Communicating with communities** and building a solid **community outreach** are key priorities to capitalize on community-based protection mechanisms as well as to continue identifying specific needs and, together with UNHCR partner CTR, facilitating access for vulnerable groups such as GBV survivors, unaccompanied children, and LGBTIQ+ individuals to essential services.

Legal aid

- UNHCR and its partner the [Arab Institute for Human Rights \(AIHR\)](#) provide **legal counselling and legal representation** to support refugees and asylum-seekers' claims in a wide-range of administrative and legal matters, as well as to access their rights and obtain redress when applicable. Legal assistance units are present in Tunis, Sousse, Medenine and Gabes. In 2023, 884 asylum seekers and refugees received legal aid and assistance.

Education

- To facilitate refugee children's access to education and sustain their permanence, UNHCR and its partner [CTR](#) coordinate with local authorities the **enrolment of refugee children** in the public system and support parents with a one-time education grant at the beginning of the school year. For the 2023/2024 academic year, 255 refugee children are enrolled in public schools.

Health

- Refugees and asylum-seekers have access to basic **public health facilities and primary healthcare**. UNHCR and its partners [CTR](#) and the [Scouts](#) refer asylum-seekers and refugees with medical needs to the public system and reimburse treatments and medicines for basic healthcare and chronic diseases as well as emergency interventions.

Financial Assistance

- Multi-purpose financial assistance provided to refugees and asylum-seekers contributes to partially **meet their most basic necessities**, giving them flexibility to prioritize their most urgent needs in an unrestricted manner. The level of assistance received is determined on a case-by-case basis and following an individual assessment of the individual or household. Such assistance constitutes a preventative tool against negative coping mechanisms.

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

- UNHCR and its partner [CTR](#) provide **temporary accommodation** through 5 shelters located in Tunis and Medenine to a limited number of refugees and asylum-seekers based on their level of vulnerability and taking into account an Age, Gender and Diversity Approach.
- UNHCR and its partner [CTR](#) also provide asylum-seekers and refugees with **Core Relief Items** (CRIs) such as blankets, clothing, and kitchen sets, to enable them to meet a minimum standard of living.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- UNHCR and its partner the **Tunisian Association for Management and Social Stability (TAMSS)** seek to enhance refugees' self-reliance mechanisms and to expand their access to **economic opportunities**, including access to vocational training, wage-earning activities, and entrepreneurship opportunities. In 2023, 6 projects led by refugees and asylum-seekers received additional support to harness their sustainability.
- Since April 2023, UNHCR established a collaboration framework with the company GoMyCode in Tunis to provide **IT training** to asylum-seekers and refugees due to the labour demands in this field, and with local associations to offer training on beauty-related initiatives. In 2023, 53 refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from training opportunities.

Refugee Resettlement to Third Countries

- UNHCR supports the resettlement of recognized refugees under UNHCR's mandate. Considering the limited number of refugees who can have access to **resettlement programs**, UNHCR prioritizes the most vulnerable cases based on a case-by-case assessment, with only a selected number of refugees for whom resettlement is the most appropriate durable solution.

Priorities for 2024

- **Protect.** Continue core protection activities to ensure access to asylum, including profiling, registration, and refugee status determination. Provide holistic case management to persons at heightened risks namely survivors of torture and sexual violence, LGBTIQ+ people, unaccompanied children, and people with chronic diseases. Strengthen access to social services, including education, health care, child protection, mental health, and psychosocial support.
- **Engage.** Sustain a constructive dialogue with the government of Tunisia on asylum and protection of forcibly displaced persons to facilitate access to territory and services.
- **Empower.** Create stabilizing conditions while transitioning to increased self-reliance and social protection support. Work with resettlement states to increase quotas. Expand access to other forms of safe and legal entry through complementary pathways.

Challenges

- The **steady number of refugees and asylum-seekers arriving to Tunisia** due to the persistence of insecurity in other regions and the continuity of mixed movements flows seeking safety.
- The increased **need for protection due to the intertwined vulnerabilities** given high numbers of victims of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, survivors of gender-based and other forms of violence, and people with serious medical needs who may require assistance and support.
- **Limited self-reliance opportunities** for refugees and asylum-seekers weakens their resilience to shocks and prevents them from providing for themselves and their families.

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