Refugee Influx Hodh Chargui - Mauritania

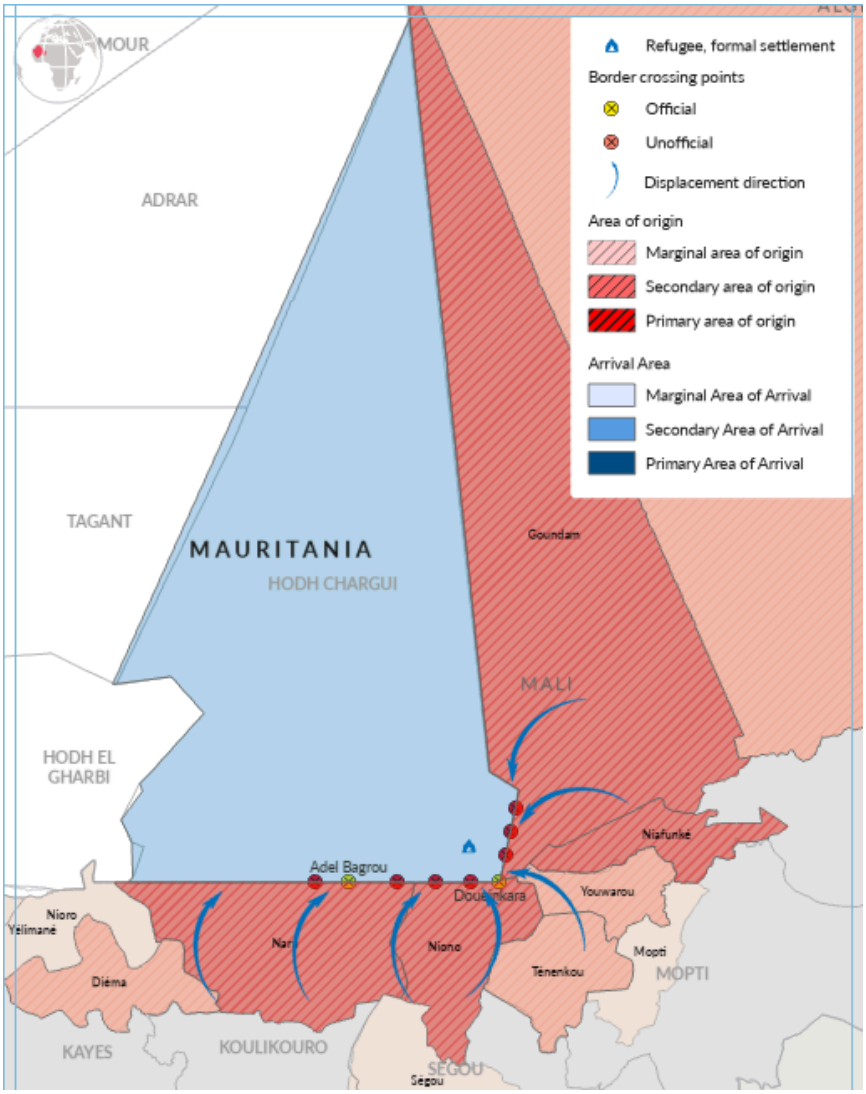
As of 17 February 2026

Overview

More than 10,000 refugees have now been identified in south-eastern Mauritania following steady cross-border movements from Mali since 24 October 2025.

Refugees are free to choose where they wish to settle and retain the option to relocate to a camp if they decide to do so. In practice, however, most prefer to remain in larger villages such as Kleive, Fassala and Aghor, while a smaller proportion settle in more remote localities closer to the border.

In these localities, putting an increasing pressure on access to protection and the capacity of services within host communities.



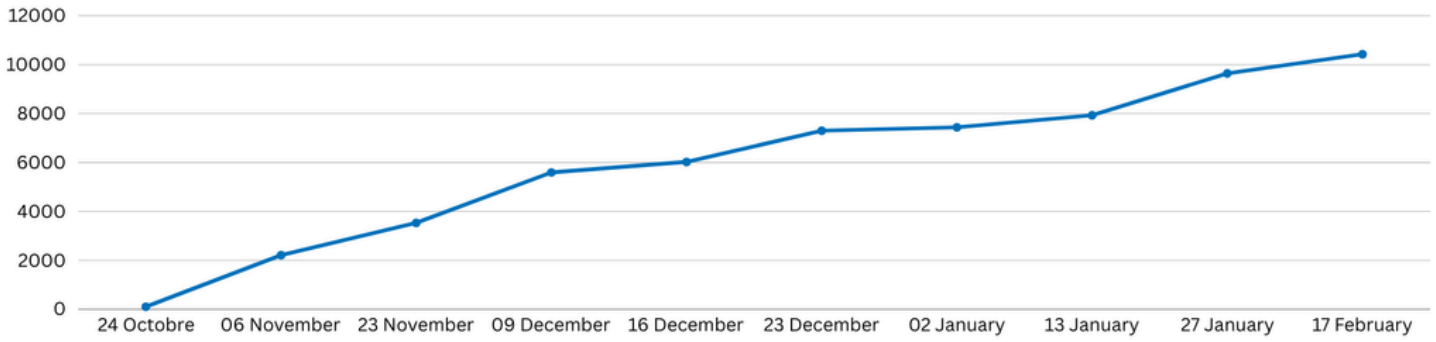
Key figures

10,429
Refugees arrived since 24th October

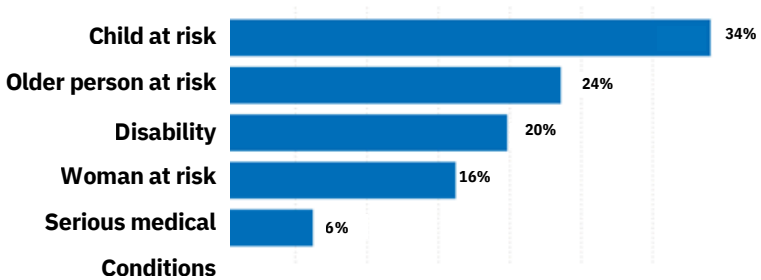
19%
Adult women

68%
Children

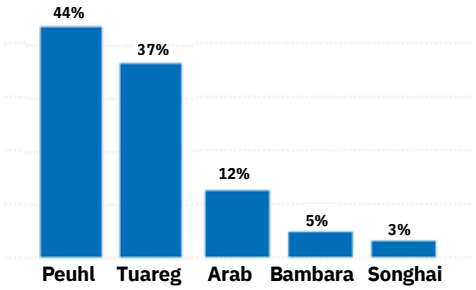
Estimated daily refugee arrivals



Vulnerabilities



Ethnicity



© UNHCR/Omar Doukali Fatimetou, a Malian refugee and mother, outside her shelter in south-eastern Mauritania, where she found safety after fleeing violence in Mali.

Fadimeta fled violence in Mali with her family after armed groups attacked her village in Lemghas. *"By the grace of God, my husband was released"* she says, recalling the day armed men took villagers, three were killed. Fear spread quickly. Accusations followed. Staying was no longer possible. Fadimeta and her family moved from one town to another inside Mali, but insecurity and restrictions continued. *"We were like hostages,"* she explains. Survival became the only priority. After ten days of travel, partly on foot, they arrived in Mauritania.

In the first weeks after their arrival, essential assistance helped the family stabilize. Access to shelter, water, and essential items offered a foundation to begin again. Today, Fadimeta cultivates small millet. Her husband produces charcoal from collected wood. The work is difficult and the income modest, but it allows the family to stand on their own. *"These things matter,"* she says. *"They give us strength."*

The security situation in northern and central Mali continues to deteriorate, marked by violent incidents affecting civilians and livelihoods across several regions. In northern Mali, particularly in areas close to the Mauritania–Mali border, civilians have been directly affected by military operations. In the Ziggni area, a drone strike reportedly attributed to the Malian armed forces struck a civilian vehicle transporting livestock traders returning from the weekly market in Fassala towards Sassada, while the vehicle had stopped for prayer. One civilian was reportedly killed and four others injured.

In Mali, a military operation targeting a suspected fuel storage site several kilometres east of Fassala triggered a large fire, generating fear among nearby communities and reinforcing perceptions of insecurity along border areas.

Further north, in the Timbuktu region, the security environment remains highly unstable. Armed men abducted the Prefect of Diowla in the Kilikoro area, while in the Razelma area three men from the Tuareg community were reportedly executed by armed elements identified by multiple witnesses as Africa Corps.

These incidents were followed by the looting of property, causing an atmosphere of intimidation and lawlessness affecting rural and pastoral communities.

© Radio Mauritanie – Excerpt from a Radio Mauritanie – Bassiknou Station programme, Peaceful Coexistence in Focus: Building Stronger Ties Between Refugees and Host Communities.

The programme shone a light on the European Union's continued support to Mauritania, including the recent high-level visit by the European Union – Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), part of the EU's broader partnership and continued support to UNHCR Mauritania. It also focused on efforts to strengthen ties between refugees and host communities, as the October 2025 influx has now surpassed 10,000 displaced people.

"Unfortunately, the crisis in Mali continues to push refugees to flee across the border... The recent influx has once again demonstrated the strong solidarity of Mauritania and the Mauritanian people. Peaceful coexistence remains the cornerstone of social cohesion and stability in the region.
"

In central Mali, insecurity continues to affect villages and pastoral areas, particularly in parts of the Mopti region. In the village of Gnobokou, in the Ténenkou cercle, three civilian herders were reportedly killed by an unidentified armed group. Violence against herders and pastoral communities remains a recurrent incident.

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© UNHCR/Omar Doukali Fatimetou, a Malian refugee, outside her shelter in south-eastern Mauritania, where she arrived after fleeing insecurity in Mali. She now works to rebuild her life step by step.

Movements recorded during the reporting period point to widespread insecurity across northern and central Mali. Newly arrived refugees in Hodh Chargui reported fleeing from multiple locations. Reported villages of origin include Tindiabene, Zoueira, Tangata, Diabaté, Adjardahane, Sirinka, Benanji, Sondage, Léré and Ligass in the north, as well as and Ténenkou in central Mali. Several of these localities lie along key transit, pastoral and market routes, while others are rural villages increasingly affected by violence, military operations and limited civilian protection.

Between 27 January and 13 February, an additional 786 refugees (160 families) were identified in Hodh Chargui, bringing the total number of refugees recorded since the onset of the influx to 10,429 individuals (1,726 families). Overall, the influx remains clearly child- and family-based, with children comprising an estimated 68 per cent of the total refugee population and women approximately 19 per cent.

As arrivals continue, a clear pattern of settlement is emerging. While refugees have been identified across multiple locations in Hodh Chargui, Aghor, Fassala and Kleive are consolidating as the primary areas of settlement. Many newly arrived families are joining relatives who settled earlier in these locations, while others are gravitating towards these larger villages, which offer functioning markets, pastoral resources and comparatively better access to essential services.

These areas also host Government and UNHCR registration points and benefit from the presence of UNHCR and partners providing protection and other life-saving services. At the same time, a proportion of families continue to settle in smaller and more remote villages, where access to services remains limited and protection risks are often higher.

As movements continue and settlement patterns become more defined, the response in Hodh Chargui is adapting to a more dispersed and evolving operational environment. Current priorities focus on maintaining access to asylum and registration, reinforcing protection monitoring, and ensuring the continuity of essential services for newly arrived and host populations, particularly children and women. Ongoing coordination with Government authorities and partners remains central to sustaining a timely, protection-centred response across affected areas.