Refugee Influx Hodh Chargui - Mauritania

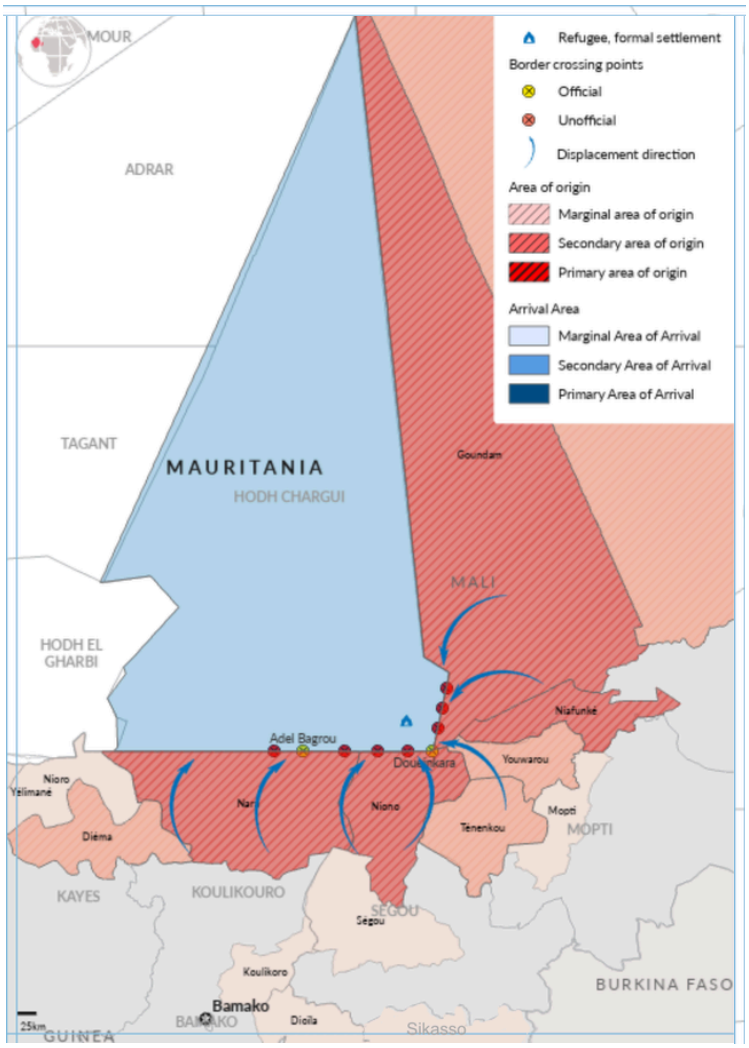
As of 11 March 2026

Overview

Cross-border movements from Mali into south-eastern Mauritania have continued during the reporting period, with 2,873 new refugees (470 families) identified between mid-February and early March in the Hodh Chargui region.

This brings the total number of refugees recorded since the beginning of the influx on 24 October 2025 to 13,302 individuals (2,196 families). Refugees report fleeing escalating insecurity and violence across several localities in northern and central Mali, particularly in the Timbuktu and Ségou regions.

Upon arrival, most families settle in villages across the Bassikounou and Fassala areas, often joining relatives or gravitating towards locations where markets, water points and humanitarian services are available. As movements continue and settlement patterns evolve, the response in Hodh Chargui is adapting to a rapidly changing operational environment, with continued efforts to identify, register and support newly arrived refugees while assisting host communities.



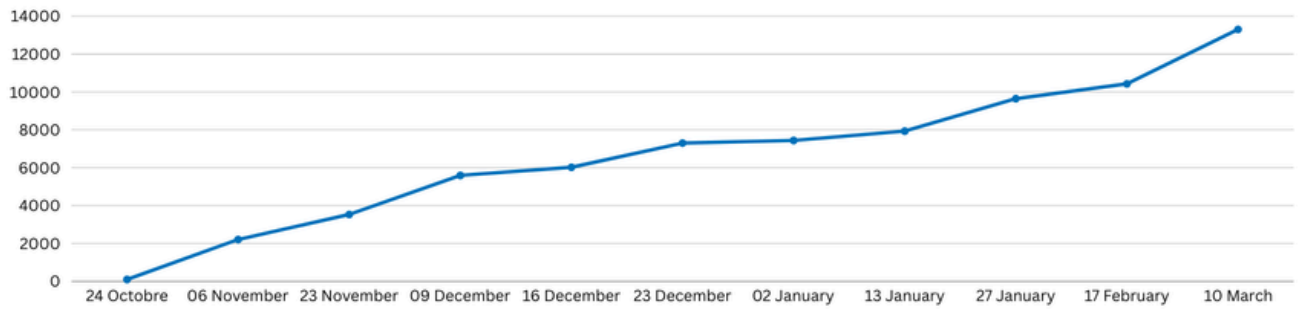
Key figures

13,302
Refugees arrived since 24th October

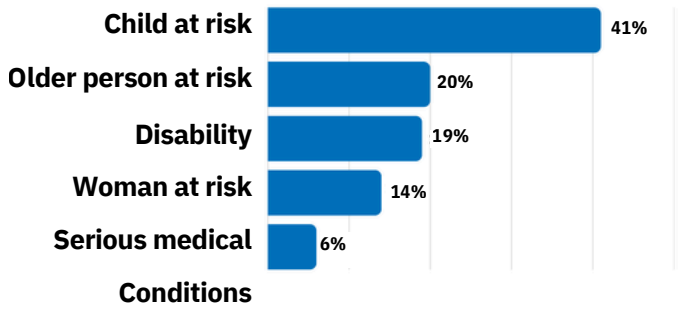
21%
Adult women

68%
Children

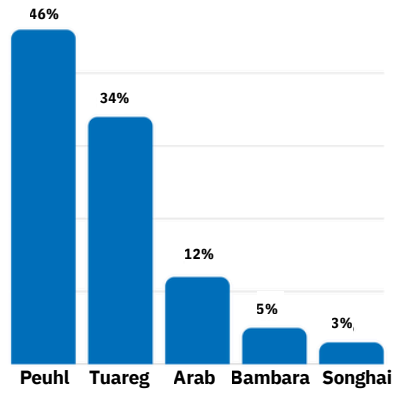
Estimated daily refugee arrivals



Vulnerabilities



Ethnicity



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© UNHCR/OMAR DOUKALI. Amadou Bary Ba, a Malian refugee, sits with his wife inside their shelter in Mbera refugee camp, south-eastern Mauritania, after fleeing violence in Mali.

Amadou Bary Ba fled violence in Mali after his hometown of Léré came under siege in late 2025. "*Staying was no longer possible*," he says, as daily life became marked by gunfire, explosions, and fear.
Together with his wife, he undertook a seven-day journey toward Mauritania, moving cautiously,sometimes on foot, sometimes with a small cart, hiding when needed and advancing only when it felt safe. "*We had no other choice*," he explains.
Mauritania was their destination, where their daughter had already found refuge. Upon arrival, exhausted and shaken, they were reunited with her and found shelter. "*I had nothing left*," Amadou recalls. "*But my family was there*."

The security situation in Mali continues to deteriorate, marked by recurring violent incidents affecting civilians, livelihoods and critical infrastructure across several regions.
In northern Mali, particularly in areas located close to the Mauritania–Mali border, tensions have been reported in several localities. According to local sources, elements of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) conducted operations in two villages situated approximately 3 to 13 kilometres from the Mauritanian border town of Fassala. These operations reportedly involved house searches among local communities. No casualties were reported and material damage appears to have been limited. However, the presence of armed forces in these localities has contributed to heightened tensions among communities.
Further north, in the Timbuktu region, protection risks for civilians remain significant. In the locality of Moula, a civilian was reportedly abducted on 1 March. In addition, an armed incursion targeting pastoral communities was reported in the Léré area, where herders were attacked and livestock stolen. Malian armed forces reportedly intervened and recovered the stolen animals, neutralizing several attackers. Nevertheless, these recurring incidents contribute to a climate of chronic insecurity affecting rural and pastoral communities.

© 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.

The documentary offers a snapshot of the situation of Malian refugees in south-eastern Mauritania, blending humanitarian, security, and socio-economic perspectives. It highlights the drivers of displacement, current living conditions, and the continued influx since late 2025, supported by testimonies from refugees, host communities, and UNHCR personnel.

In western Mali, particularly in the Kayes region, insecurity has expanded geographically with attacks targeting infrastructure and economic activities. On 28 February, an armed attack against a road construction site disrupted works and highlighted the growing presence of non-state armed groups in the area. The incident also affected key logistical corridors, including fuel supply routes originating from Senegal and destined for urban centres in Mali, raising concerns about the broader economic and humanitarian implications of such disruptions.

Overall, the persistence of military operations, the continued activity of non-state armed groups and the targeting of civilian livelihoods contribute to an increasingly fragile security environment across northern, central and western Mali.

Since February 16th, cross-border movements from Mali into south-eastern Mauritania have intensified. Between mid-February and early March, protection monitoring teams recorded the arrival of approximately 2,873 new refugees (470 families). This brings the total number of refugees identified since the beginning of the influx on 24 October 2025 to 13,302 individuals (2,196 families).

The scale of recent arrivals marks an acceleration compared with previous weeks. Since the start of the influx, an average of roughly 650 refugees per week had been recorded. By contrast, nearly 960 individuals per week arrived during the last three weeks, representing an increase of 47 per cent. This rise appears closely linked to the deterioration of the security environment across northern and central Mali.

Newly arrived refugees reported fleeing from several localities across northern and central Mali, particularly in the Timbuktu and Ségou regions, including Léré, Goundam, Gargando, Sirinka, Nampala and surrounding rural villages. Many families indicated that worsening insecurity, combined with growing restrictions affecting pastoral livelihoods and access to markets, forced them to leave their homes. The demographic profile of arrivals remains consistent with previously observed trends, confirming that the influx continues to be strongly family-based. Children represent approximately 68 per cent of arrivals, while women account for about 21 per cent.

"*For months we tried to continue living in our village," said a refugee woman who recently arrived in the Bassikounou area with her children after fleeing a village near Léré. "But the insecurity kept getting closer. We heard about attacks in nearby villages and people started leaving one after another. When we began seeing it with our own eyes, we knew we could not stay any longer. We travelled for several days before reaching the border.*"

Some 191 individuals (30 families) decided to relocate between villages in the Bassikounou and Fassala areas. The majority of these relocations were driven by family reunification, as well as the search for assistance, water and livelihood opportunities. Among the refugees who arrived during the last three weeks, approximately 71 per cent are reaching Mauritania for the first time, having fled escalating insecurity in northern and central Mali, while for the remaining 29 per cent, this is the second time that they seek security in Mauritania. These newly arrived families crossed the border after difficult journeys, often with few belongings and limited information about available support.

In coordination with the Mauritanian authorities, UNHCR and partners continue to support newly arrived refugees through registration, protection and the provision of essential assistance and services. Since the beginning of the influx, assistance has been extended to refugees settling across affected villages. However, as arrivals continue and needs increase, priority will increasingly be given to families with urgent protection concerns or limited support networks, while partners continue working with local authorities and host communities to ensure a coordinated and sustainable response.

While displacement in Hodh Chargui is not new, recent movements across the Mauritania–Mali border show that the situation remains dynamic and evolving, with families continuing to cross the border in search of safety. Many of these arrivals take place in remote border areas where humanitarian presence is limited, meaning that some refugees may remain unidentified and without access to assistance for extended periods. As the situation develops, the capacity to reach, identify and support newly arrived refugees remains stretched, even as host communities continue to demonstrate solidarity despite their own limited resources. Ensuring that families seeking safety receive timely protection and assistance will require continued engagement and support as this situation continues to unfold along the Mauritania–Mali border.