

PLACE

Tunis, Tunisia

DATE

11 April 2023

UNHCR is deeply disturbed by the violent protests that occurred at its Tunis premises and urges for dialogue and de-escalation

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is deeply disturbed by the violent incidents that took place on Monday and Tuesday morning in Tunis, when some refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants forcibly entered its premises, causing some material damage, and leading to tense interactions with local police forces.

Due to protesters blocking the entrances to UNHCR offices, our staff was not present on site but have received reports that some of the protestors were later arrested, with several people injured among protestors and police officers and damage done to cars belonging to people present in the area. We are seeking additional information.

“While UNHCR understands the fears and frustrations of those protesting and respects their right to peacefully protest in line with national laws, we denounce the recent incidents at our premises by a small group of protestors and urge all to engage with us in the search for meaningful and peaceful solutions, as repeatedly proposed since the start of the demonstration, and let other people in need access our premises and services,” said Monica Noro, UNHCR representative in Tunis.

Some 200 refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants in Tunisia started a sit-in outside UNHCR offices three weeks ago, requesting a way out of the country and humanitarian evacuation. The situation became more tense on 30 March, when some protestors blocked access to our main entrance and prevented other refugees and asylum seekers from accessing the services they need inside the premises.

Since the start of the protest, members of our personnel have been holding regular discussions with protestors to listen to their concerns and identify appropriate solutions. We provided information about the available options for refugees and asylum-seekers in the country, as well as the limitations, particularly regarding humanitarian evacuations and resettlement from Tunisia.

UNHCR is collaborating closely with the Tunisian government and various partners, including IOM, other UN agencies and NGOs to address the ongoing challenges and grievances faced by the protestors, with a particular focus on the wellbeing of women and children.

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Tel. +41 22 739 85 02

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UNHCR calls for an immediate end to all forms of violence and urges for a de-escalation of tensions so the situation for all including refugees and asylum seekers is not aggravated further.

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We ask for the humanitarian nature of our work to be respected. It is critical that the entrances to our premises in Tunis remain accessible and safe to ensure the continuation of our operations and to preserve our ability to assist those in need.

SUBJECT

UNHCR is deeply disturbed by the violent protests that occurred at its Tunis premises and urges for dialogue and de-escalation

UNHCR reaffirms its commitment to continue providing protection and life-saving assistance to displaced people in Tunisia, and we call on all parties to engage in constructive dialogue and work towards addressing the acute needs and find a peaceful resolution of the situation as soon as possible.

[FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:]

[Ikram Houimli]

[Tunis, Tunisia]

[+216 58 941 076]

[houimli@unhcr.org]

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Tel. +41 22 739 85 02

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