

March-April 2023

## Key Figures

**160**

refugees and asylum-seekers from over **15 countries** are under UNHCR's mandate in Cuba.

**50 per cent**

lack legal status in the country, and **31 per cent** are women and children.

**75**

people in Cuba need resettlement. Most are from Western Sahara, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, and Yemen.

## Context

Cuba is not a state party to international refugee instruments. UNHCR ensures refugees and asylum-seekers are protected against refoulement and granted access to essential services.

The country's ongoing socio-economic crisis limits local integration opportunities for refugees and asylum-seekers. Resettlement is the only durable solution for most refugees. Prolonged electricity cuts and petrol shortages continue, affecting the living conditions of refugees and other vulnerable groups.

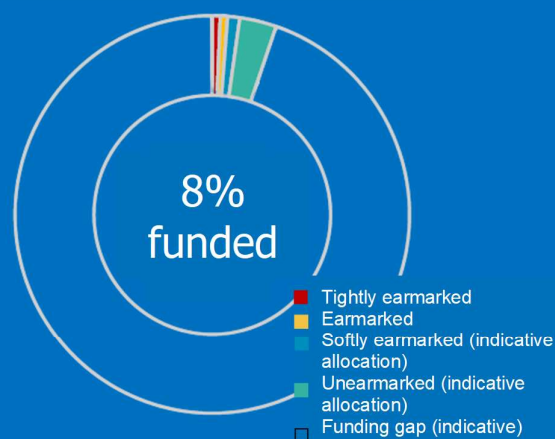
Thousands of Cubans have applied for the parole programme to enter the US legally. Based on bilateral agreements with the US, Mexico, Cayman Islands, and the Bahamas, authorities have conducted 64 operations to return undocumented Cubans. In 2023, over 3,400 people have been forcibly returned to the island.

On 26 March, over six million Cubans voted to elect the 470 deputies to the National Assembly for five years. Of these, 226 are women.

UNHCR distributed 35 solar lamps and over 40 food kits to refugees and asylum-seekers, helping them cover their basic needs.

## Regional funding Overview

as of 27 April 2023



**\$55.4 million**  
 UNHCR's financial requirements 2023

<sup>1</sup> Financial requirement for the Panama MCO in 2023 including requirements for the operations and activities in Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>2</sup> The percentage funded is indicative.

## UNHCR RESPONSE

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the official counterpart of UNHCR in Cuba. UNHCR collaborates with the Ministry of Education, Public Health, Foreign Trade and International Collaboration, and the Cuban Red Cross. Several academic institutions, such as the University of Havana and the Group of International Humanitarian Law Studies collaborate to disseminate information related to International Refugee Law.

**Advocacy** | UNHCR promotes Cuba's accession to international refugee protection and statelessness instruments, as well as the adoption of measures to improve access to rights and services. UNHCR raises awareness of refugee issues by disseminating International Refugee Law and its principles among government institutions, NGOs, and academia, seeking to promote a refugee-sensitive culture.

**Protection** | UNHCR provides international protection to persons of concern, including refugee status determination (RSD) under UNHCR mandate and the search for durable solutions. UNHCR has assisted with over 270 counselling sessions for refugees and asylum-seekers on RSD procedures, national regulations pertinent to their status and protection, and durable solutions assessments and procedures, including resettlement.

**Cash-based Interventions and Assistance** | Due to a lack of defined status, many refugees and asylum-seekers cannot access employment and secure livelihoods and have limited income-generating alternatives. Thus, UNHCR conducts activities to ensure their safety and access to basic needs. In March and April, UNHCR supported over 150 people with cash-based interventions to cover basic needs and shelter.

**Education and Training Opportunities** | Thanks to verbal agreements with the Cuban government, refugees and asylum-seekers have access to free primary and secondary education. Approximately 89 young refugees, most of them from Western Sahara, have access to different study levels, including university. UNHCR provides small complementary assistance to the government scholarships for Sahrawi refugee students to cover their basic needs.



### UNHCR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

During March and April, UNHCR assisted nearly 80 refugees and asylum-seekers with multipurpose and shelter cash-based assistance to cover basic needs.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: the European Union, the United States of America, and the UN Programme on HIV/AIDS. We also thank the fundamental support provided by donors who have contributed to UNHCR with unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Belgium | Canada | Denmark | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Spain | Switzerland | private donors in Australia

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# UNHCR's presence in Cuba

