

MAURITANIA

23 March 2020

The High Commissioner's visit to Mauritania

Key figures:

58,990 Malian refugees in the Bassikounou area¹

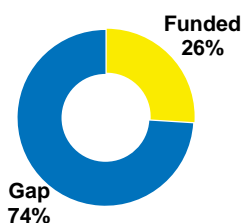
6,043 Malian refugees with specific needs identified¹

4,131 refugees and asylum-seekers registered in urban areas¹

1,025 newly registered in Mbera refugee camp since 1 January 2020 (4,557 in 2019)¹

Funding

USD **24.6** M for 2020



Received as of 10 March 2020

As a part of his tour to the countries affected by the Sahel crisis, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi visited Mauritania for the first time in this capacity.

In Nouakchott, the High Commissioner met with the Prime Minister, as well as the ministers of health, interior and defence. During the meetings, he congratulated Mauritania for its welcoming stance towards refugees, and for its pledges at the Global Refugee Forum to include refugees into its national health system, despite its own challenges. He also met with the UN partners and donors to discuss the cooperation regarding the provision of support to refugees in Mauritania. The High Commissioner also went to Mbera refugee camp, fifty km from the border with Mali, where he was warmly welcomed by the local authorities and refugees. He exchanged with them on their needs, while visiting the registration centre, a vocational training centre run by the ILO in collaboration with UNHCR, and the health centre in Bassikounou.



UNHCR High Commissioner meets with Malian refugees in Mbera camp

Highlights

In February, a sudden increase of asylum-seekers was observed at Fassala, a commune in south-east Mauritania at the border with Mali. Due to the deteriorating security situation in Central Mali, **around 1,000 Malians sought safety in Mauritania within a period of two weeks**, a steep increase in comparison to the weekly average arrivals in 2019. Most of them were of Fulani origin, Tuaregs and Arabs having been the main ethnicities since the start of recent Mali crisis in 2012. Around sixty per cent were women, including few pregnant, and children.

Protection

In February, UNHCR and IOM inaugurated a new joint office in Nouadhibou, on the northern shore of Mauritania. The government and several consular delegations and international actors attended the inauguration. Last year, UNHCR had conducted **a study on migrants and refugees in the city of Nouadhibou** which made it possible to better estimate the refugee population (about 10,000) and offered the basis for designing UNHCR's additional protection interventions. In 2020, UNHCR will begin registering Malian asylum seekers in Nouadhibou.



The Waly (Governor) of Nouadhibou, IOM and UNHCR Representatives cut the ribbon of the new joint office ©UNHCR/Viola Bruttomesso/2020

¹ Data as of 28 February 2019

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