

Tunisia

January-March
2024

Key figures

16,374 forcibly displaced people currently in Tunisia (12,697 asylum-seekers, 3,677 refugees)

600% increase in newly registered individuals in the reporting period in 2024 compared to the same period in 2023

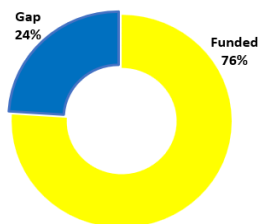
8,223 cases assisted with cash-based interventions, including 4,065 with food vouchers; 3,450 with exceptional cash assistance; 280 under the Multipurpose Cash Assistance Program; 428 with cash for food

Supported **6** refugees to obtain a formal labor contract

105 refugees resettled

Funding

USD **9.5 M** required in 2024



USD **7.2 M** received as of 31 March 2024

Operational Context

Thousands of new arrivals continue to approach UNHCR to seek asylum. Between January and March, almost 4,000 individuals, mostly arriving by land, approached UNHCR and its partners, mainly in Tunis, seeking orientation and assistance.

UNHCR registered and issued asylum cards to 3,539 individuals, including both new arrivals and backlog cases. Over 8% were unaccompanied and separated children. The majority of newly registered cases come from Sudan (1,827), followed by Somalia (332), Nigeria (212), Syria (203), and Cameroon (200). Sudan stands as the main country of origin of most asylum-seekers, particularly since September 2023, following the unfolding of the war in the country in April 2023. Most asylum-seekers and refugees registered with UNHCR live in urban areas (Medenine, Tunis, and Sfax).

Enhanced operations against irregular migration. The National Guard reinforced operations against smuggling networks to thwart irregular crossings to Italy; according to media sources during the reporting period, more than 200 persons were detained, and over 50 boats and trucks were seized. In addition to this, maritime guards carried out around 170 interception operations.

Within this framework, UNHCR continued providing orientation to persons seeking international protection in mixed movements and liaising with authorities to offer counselling and assistance to such profiles. In this line, border authorities referred 20 cases seeking international protection to UNHCR. Further, following six search and rescue operations, maritime guards referred 31 individuals to UNHCR.

Limited shelter capacities and lack of self-reliance opportunities remain a key challenge for asylum-seekers and refugees. Due to the requirement of residency permits to access rental contracts and the stretched financial resources to afford living expenses, private accommodation options remain out of reach for most of asylum-seekers. Without any prospects of expanding current shelters or setting up new facilities, nor resilience opportunities, a rising number of individuals live in dire conditions in the open, relying on humanitarian assistance.

Highlights of UNHCR and Partners' Response

Following a **verification exercise** carried out on asylum claims lodged between 2022 and 2023, UNHCR **deactivated in January 2024 some 1,600 cases** no longer reachable.

Between January and February 2024, UNHCR carried out **two rescheduling exercises** to **reduce the waiting period of prioritized cases** for obtaining an asylum-seeker card. UNHCR took into consideration vulnerability, pre-registration date and country of origin.

Since February 28, over 100 **asylum-seekers peacefully demonstrate around UNHCR premises** in Tunis requesting humanitarian evacuation, blocking access to both staff and refugees and asylum-seekers. As a result, UNHCR teams are teleworking and registration activities and referrals to healthcare services have been suspended.

During the reporting period, **4,065 new arrivals received food vouchers** and **3,450 asylum-seekers received exceptional cash assistance.** However, due to budget constraints, since early March 2024, UNHCR has had to discontinue the delivery of food vouchers and exceptional cash assistance. UNHCR maintains its regular multipurpose cash-based assistance (MPCA) program with a much-limited number of beneficiaries; out of the 300 targeted beneficiaries for 2024, 280 cases have been granted such support as of 31 March.

The **five safe shelters** run by UNHCR partner Conseil Tunisien pour les Réfugiés (CTR) in Tunis and Medenine **remain at full capacity**. UNHCR continues facilitating through its partner the Scouts accompaniment to asylum-seekers and refugees looking for private accommodation options.

CTR offered **medical consultations to 107 persons and referred 365 cases to public health services**, reimbursing incurred medical expenses. Scouts' volunteers deployed at main public healthcare premises in Tunis, Medenine and Zarzis accompanied referred cases to have effective access to primary assistance.

Sustained outreach activities to identify key priorities for fostering resilience at the community level. UNHCR partners CTR and the Arab Institute for Human Rights facilitated a training for outreach volunteers on prevention and response to gender-based violence. Further, CTR, in collaboration with the Youth House in Medenine, organized two football matches with 11 youngsters, to foster sport activities and contribute to coexistence efforts at the community level.

Supported self-reliance prospects for refugees and asylum-seekers, including training and labour opportunities and micro-project initiatives. UNHCR partner the Tunisian Association for Management and Social Stabilization (TAMSS) carried out 289 profiling interviews and supported six refugees in obtaining work contracts. The formalization of further 29 work contracts has been delayed though due to additional administrative requirements. TAMSS supports contact with enterprises who may have open vacancies. TAMSS has also identified entrepreneurial initiatives led by refugees and asylum-seekers: during the reporting period, 3 have been selected for obtaining possible financial support to enhance their capacities and build on their resilience. Last, TAMSS signed a collaboration agreement with the company LEONI to facilitate access of refugees and asylum-seekers to traineeship programs.

Coordination with stakeholders to strengthen refugees' and asylum-seekers' access to basic services. In Tunis, UNHCR and IOM co-led monthly meetings of the United Nations Technical Coordination Working Group on Asylum and Migration to assess gaps and needs and explore possible support to local authorities. In February, the Resident Coordinator, together with UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF, gathered with the National Observatory for Migration to assess the UN Response Plan complementing institutional efforts and explore next steps ahead. In March, WHO convened a meeting to foster coordination between the Ministry of Health and UN Agencies considering existing programs supporting the access of refugees and migrants to healthcare services and identified challenges.

In Medenine, local authorities set up a task force for enhancing coordination of assistance to refugees and migrants. Between January and February, over 700 homeless asylum-seekers and migrants in Medenine were transferred to the Tejra transit center, managed by the Governorship. Subsequently, 500 homeless asylum-seekers in Zarzis were transferred to the Zeitoun temporary shelter and later to the Jdaria site rented by UNHCR for a period of three months. In both centers, interagency support was provided to undertake adaptations, offer medical assistance and provide water, food, and hygiene kits.

In February, the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection and the Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa undertook a [3-day mission](#) to Tunis meeting with Ministries, UN agencies, donors, and refugees to assess challenges and opportunities for enhancing protection.

Special thanks to earmarked donors for UNHCR operations in Tunisia: Austria | Italy | Monaco | Netherlands | EU | Switzerland.

Thanks to the major donors of softly earmarked and unearmarked funds in 2024: Belgium | Denmark | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | Other Private Donors

CONTACT | Alba Marcellan, Interagency Coordination Officer, marcella@unhcr.org

[UNHCR TUNISIA GLOBAL FOCUS](#) | [UNHCR TUNISIA HELP PAGE](#) | [UNHCR TUNISIA OPERATIONAL DATA PORTAL](#) | [UNHCR TUNISIA FACEBOOK](#)