Refugee Influx Hodh Chargui - Mauritania

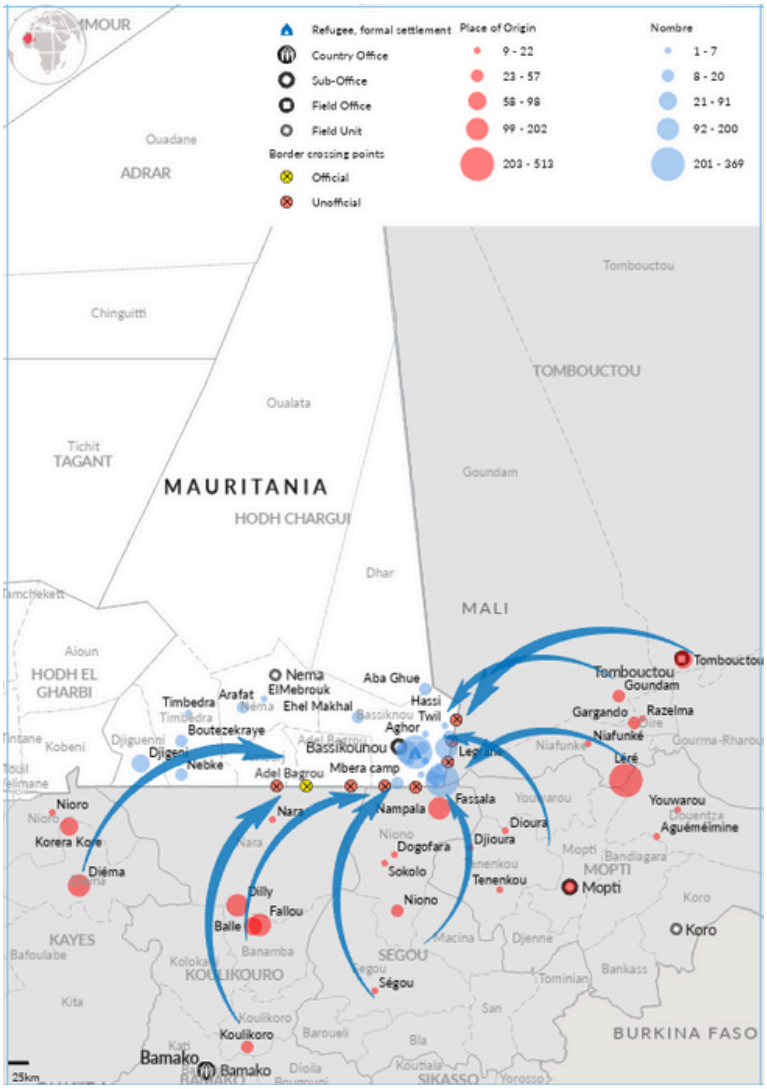
As of 13 January 2026

Overview

The security situation in northern and central Mali continues to deteriorate, driving sustained cross-border displacement into southeastern Mauritania. Since 24 October 2025, UNHCR and partners have identified 7,931 Malian refugees (1,276 families) in Hodh Chargui.

Children and women continue to represent the majority of those arriving, accounting for approximately 68 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. Recent movements are primarily linked to escalating insecurity in the Timbuktu region, where newly arrived refugees report killings, intimidation, torture and conflict-related sexual violence, leading families to flee in search of safety. Arrivals are dispersed across multiple villages.

While UNHCR and partners are providing urgent protection services and life-saving assistance, the scale, geographic spread and continued pace of arrivals are stretching existing response capacities and require additional funding.



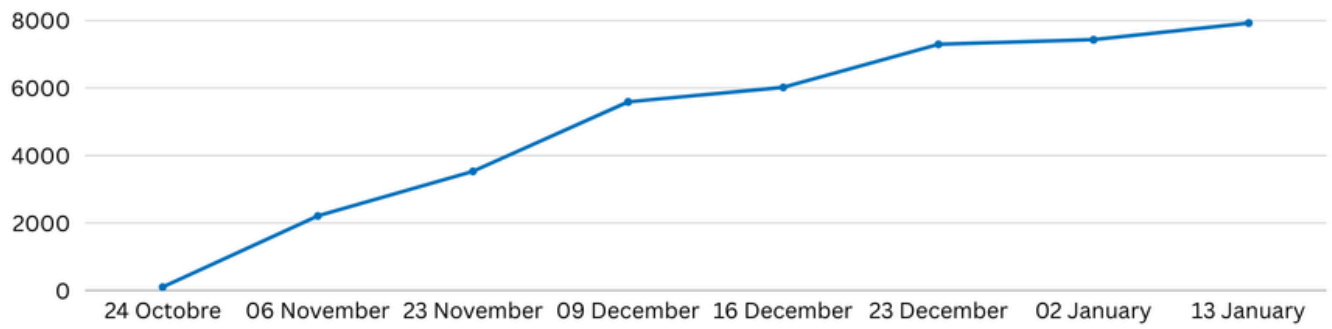
Key figures

7,931
Refugees arrived since 24th October

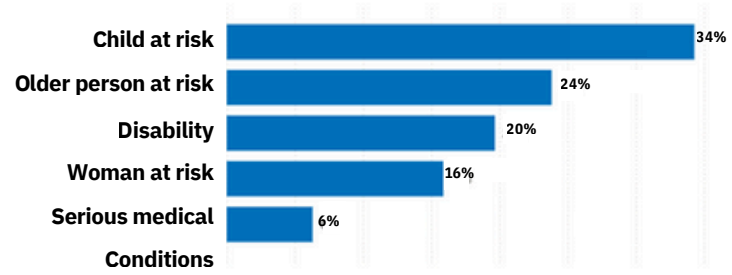
19%
Adult women

68%
Children

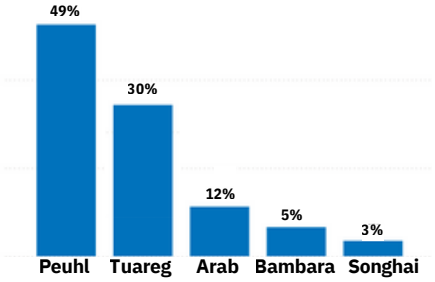
Estimated daily refugee arrivals



Vulnerabilities



Ethnicity



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© UNHCR/OMAR DOUKALI – © UNHCR — Hawa Amadou (name changed), who fled conflict in Mali with her two children, arrived in south-eastern Mauritania within the past three weeks and recently received emergency assistance after a difficult three-day journey.

Hawa Amadou (name changed) arrived in Mauritania within the past three weeks with her two sons after fleeing Telé, in Goundam cercle. After three days of travel under extremely difficult conditions, they found refuge in south-eastern Mauritania.

The 100-kilometre journey took three days. Fearing drones, they were forced to stop repeatedly and hide along the way. Her son cried throughout the journey and now suffers panic attacks whenever he sees someone outside the family. *"I never thought I would have to leave my village"* she says. "This is the first time in my life that I have found myself in such a situation."

Coming from a family living in very precarious conditions, Hawa used to make traditional clothing, while her husband worked as a herder. Their lives were abruptly upended by the conflict in Mali.

"Despite everything we went through, we are now in a place of peace. Here, my children can finally sleep without fear, and that gives me the strength to move forward."

The security situation in northern Mali, particularly in the Timbuktu region, continues to deteriorate, driving cross-border displacement toward Mauritania.

For the third consecutive week, new arrivals have been identified from localities located east of the Mauritanian border including Razelma, Gargando and Koigma. Newly arrived refugees consistently report a sharp decline in safety following the arrival and expanding presence of Africa Corps and other armed actors in their areas. Refugees describe killings of young men, widespread intimidation, torture and incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, causing to continued displacement toward Mauritania.

Additional information received during the reporting period indicates further escalation in Gargando. On 12 January, a patrol composed of Malian armed forces and Africa Corps elements allegedly destroyed and burned civilian homes, water sources and household assets, food stocks and livestock, causing significant damage to livelihoods and essential infrastructure.

As one newly arrived woman, now residing in M'bera camp, recounted:

"They came to our home at night. They beat us and took people away. My brother was killed in front of me, and I was badly injured. After that, I had no choice but to flee. I left everything behind to protect my children and find safety."

© RFI – From a Radio France International evening news report featuring insights from UNHCR in Mauritania Deputy Representative on the humanitarian response following the refugee influx in south-eastern Mauritania.

Humanitarian actors now fear a larger influx should an improvement in security conditions allow more civilians to leave areas that are currently hard to access. Carole Lalève, Deputy Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Mauritania, explains.

"UNHCR, together with the government and partners, is preparing a contingency plan"

At the same time, insecurity continues to affect border areas in central Mali. A drone strike reportedly targeted a weekly market in Dogofry in Mali close to the Mauritanian border. The incident resulted in injuries among civilians, further exacerbating fear among affected populations. Movements have also been reported in areas near Adel Bagro.
While not all population movements are linked to a single triggering event, patterns observed over recent weeks indicate increases in cross-border arrivals following major security incidents and the expansion of armed actor presence. Given the proximity of affected areas to the border, further movements may occur in the coming days or weeks, with important humanitarian and protection implications, particularly for women, children and other vulnerable groups.

During the reporting period, UNHCR and partners identified 493 newly arrived refugees (83 families) in Lagdaf, Sondage Arafatte, Tinwaguitime and Abagua in Hodh Chargui region, bringing the total number of Malian refugees who have arrived since 24 October 2025 to 7,931 individuals (1,276 families). Children continue to constitute the majority of new arrivals, accounting for approximately 68 per cent, while women represent around 19 per cent, reflecting displacement patterns observed over previous weeks.Overall, and since the start of the influx on 24 October 2025, only 26 per cent of identified arrivals have crossed through Doueinkara, while the remaining 74 per cent entered through informal border crossings. Among these, the Hassi Twil area accounts for an estimated 53 per cent of all arrivals, making it the primary entry location, followed by Tinwaguitime, which represents approximately 13 per cent.

UNHCR and partners are providing urgent protection services and life-saving assistance to newly arrived refugees across Hodh Chargui, including protection interventions and the distribution of core relief items and emergency shelter materials. Joint registration activities with government counterparts have been temporarily paused as of 27 December due to the planned rotation of ANRPTS teams. UNHCR and partners continued identifying and supporting new arrivals.

The response started facing operational challenges. The geographic dispersion of arrivals across multiple villages, and limited telecommunications coverage constrain the ability to conduct systematic follow-up, particularly for individuals requiring longer-term protection support. Service availability in remote areas remains limited, with few functioning service delivery points accessible to newly arrived refugees. Health services are increasingly stretched, and access to education for newly arrived children has not yet been secured.

The scale of needs exceeds current response capacities, highlighting the importance of additional support so that protection-sensitive assistance can be maintained for refugees and host communities.