

Emergency Transit Mechanism

February 2020

Background

In November 2017, UNHCR established for the first time an Emergency Evacuation Transit Mechanism (ETM) for the evacuation of vulnerable refugees from detention in Libya to Niger. The programme was established in order to facilitate the processing of refugees trapped in detention, to enable access to protection and to durable solutions.

UNHCR and the Government of Niger signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in December 2017, temporarily expanding the Niger asylum space to these refugees. This MoU has been extended in December 2019 for two years.

On 9 February 2020, UNHCR has evacuated 3,080 persons from Libya to Niger. 2,344 persons have found solutions in third countries, mostly in the framework of resettlement.

Context

Evacuations

In detention centers in Libya, where UNHCR has access, vulnerable refugees in need of international protection are identified by UNHCR Libya staff. They are screened and their information is shared with UNHCR Niger. Lists for evacuation are established based on vulnerability.

The first evacuation flight took place on the 11th of November 2017. Since then, 25 more evacuation flights have arrived from Libya to Niger, carrying a total of **3,080** refugees and asylum seekers.

Process in Niger

Once the refugees and asylum seekers arrive in Niger, UNHCR conducts a verification interview with them, including recording of biometrics and provides them with accommodation and protection. This is followed by refugee status determination (RSD) procedures by the government and UNHCR. Finally, interviews to prepare resettlement files are completed by UNHCR. These files are then submitted to third countries for consideration. For unaccompanied children, a Best Interests Determination (BID) is completed, to seek the most appropriate solution. UNHCR and partners provide accommodation, where food, medical care, education, psychosocial support etc. are readily available. On the 4th of March 2019, a first group of 120 evacuees were transferred to the ETM transit facility in the commune of Hamdallaye, in the Tillaberi region (40km from Niamey), constructed with a maximum capacity of 1,500 persons. Other transfers followed from the guesthouses in Niamey to the new facility, bringing the total maximum population to date to around 1,100. The most vulnerable refugees remain in guesthouses in the capital city. Construction and development of the transit facility is ongoing.

Resettlement Missions

Following screening of the files in resettlement countries, the responsible parties of the governments of third countries undertake a mission to Niger to interview those under consideration for resettlement. The results of the interviews are communicated to UNHCR Niger following the resettlement mission. Some resettlement countries may decide based solely on the file shared with them by UNHCR, and do not necessarily undertake a resettlement mission to Niger.

Resettlement & other durable solutions

If accepted, the transport of the refugees to the resettlement country is organized by the logistical partner IOM. Amongst other durable solutions which are being examined, are humanitarian and/or study visas, as well as family reunification.

The resettlement of refugees evacuated from Libya to Niger is part of UNHCR's overall resettlement programme. Refugees who were already present in Niger and deemed to require resettlement as a solution, are also included in the programme. Globally, resettlement is one of 3 solutions pursued by UNHCR, the others are voluntary return or local integration.

Resettlement Pledges & Departures

UNHCR has received a total of **6,351** resettlement pledges for the Libya-Niger situation from the following countries, including 4,411 places specifically for evacuees from Libya and refugees registered in Niger. Countries who have provided pledges include: Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

As of 9 February 2020, 2,344 **evacuated** refugees have departed from Niger to resettlement countries and for complementary pathways.

Funding

- **EUR 30 million EUTF** funding received since December 2017
Initially it was foreseen that EUR 8 million will be used for setting up an ETM in Burkina Faso, however with the official notification received by the Government of Burkina Faso in March 2019, the EUR 8 million were allocated to the ETM Niger by the EU.
- **EUR 15 million EUTF** top-up have been approved by the EUTF to continue until June 2021, contracting is currently on-going.

For additional information, please see the Libya-Niger situation factsheet available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/asmwa>.

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LINKS

Regional portal - UNHCR operation page - Twitter