

TUNISIA

June 2021

Key figures

8,465 total persons of concern to UNHCR registered in Tunisia (refugees and asylum-seekers).

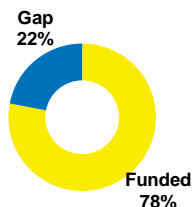
2,631 persons of concern to UNHCR registered so far in Tunisia in 2021.

357 individuals profiled within mixed movements.

76% of individuals profiled expressed an intention to seek asylum in Tunisia.

633 refugee and asylum-seeking households received cash assistance during June.

Funding



USD **9.3 M** received as of 2 July 2021

Operational Context

As of 30 June, Tunisia recorded some 420,000 cases of COVID-19, including over 50,000 active cases and 14,959 deaths; so far, some 643,509 individuals have been vaccinated. As the situation across the country is declining, a complete lockdown was declared in four governorates starting 26 June, with further stringent measures announced starting from 1 July. UNHCR continues to comply with national measures while maintaining the delivery of essential services to persons of concern.

According to local sources, over 2,000 individuals were intercepted or rescued along Tunisia's coast in June while attempting to reach Europe, confirming the upward trend observed in recent months. On 24 June, Tunisian maritime authorities rescued a boat with 267 individuals off Ben Guerdane, Medenine Governorate who had departed from Zuwara, Libya. This marks the biggest rescue operation by Tunisian authorities this year. UNHCR and partner CTR assisted 248 individuals rescued during the month, arranging temporary accommodation for 158 persons; joining IOM and Tunisian Red Crescent in the efforts to provide emergency assistance.

Operational Response

As part of national efforts to combat COVID-19, UNHCR donated ten Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) to health facilities in Tunis, Sousse, Kairouan and Gabes to serve as screening units for persons seeking treatment. In total, 36 RHUs were donated by UNHCR to public health units since the start of the pandemic. Additionally, UNHCR provided 600 rapid antigenic tests to the regional hospital in Gabes.

Information sessions on asylum procedures were conducted for 189 new arrivals in Zarzis and Sfax all along the month. Additionally, UNHCR provided information on the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers in Tunisia, as well as assistance services available.

On 26 June, the University of Lifelong Learning (ULV) of Tunis launched the first Arabic language class as part of a programme dedicated to refugees and asylum-seekers. So far, some 36 students have been enrolled in the learning programme, which also includes French language, information technology, music and crafts. The program is the result of a Partnership Agreement between UNHCR and ULV signed on 7 June 2021 under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs (further information below).

During the first six months of 2021, 67 highly vulnerable refugees departed Tunisia through resettlement. So far this year, UNHCR has submitted an additional 26 persons for resettlement with decisions still pending for 35 individuals.

On 29 - 30 June, UNHCR and partner the Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR) organized a workshop titled "*Access of refugees and asylum-seekers to the social security system: from model to institutionalization*", in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Some 25 members of the National Social Security System (CNSS) and the National Funds of Health Insurance (CNAM) took part, with the aim of facilitating access for refugees and asylum-seekers to national social security services by creating a reference document to divulgate the procedures to undertake for their enrollment.

To mark World Refugee Day, several activities were organized across major cities in Tunisia throughout June, including sporting events, photo exhibitions, movie viewings, art workshops, as well as awareness sessions on COVID-19. Further information can be found [here](#).

UNHCR Tunisia is grateful for the support of: [Austria](#) | [European Union](#) | [Japan](#) | [Monaco](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [RDPP NA – EU](#) | [Switzerland](#) and to those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and softly earmarked funds.

Visit of UNHCR's Regional Director for MENA to Tunisia

UNHCR's Regional Director for MENA, Mr Ayman Gharaibeh visited Tunisia from 7 - 9 June 2021. The visit included several important meetings with high-level officials, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Women, Family, Childhood and Elderly. Discussion also took place with the UN Resident Coordinator, key donors and members of the diplomatic community, partners, UN Agencies, as well as UNHCR staff from Tunisia, Libya and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean Situation.

During the visit, the Director participated in the signature of two important Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) and attended the inauguration of UNHCR's new premises in Tunis:

- On 7 June, the Minister of Social Affairs and UNHCR signed an MoU to expand education opportunities for refugees and asylum-seekers. The MoU was complemented through a partnership agreement with the University of Lifelong Learning, who recently launched a learning program for vulnerable persons including refugees and asylum-seekers, with language classes (Arabic, French), music and practical skills. The first Arabic class kicked off on 26 June.
- On 8 June, the International Organization for Migrations (IOM) and UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen protections for persons under their individual mandates. The aim of this MoU is to establish a framework for collaboration and coordination between the two agencies in Tunisia.
- On 9 June, UNHCR's new premises in Tunis was inaugurated in the presence of the Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Othman Jarandi. UNHCR has enjoyed a long physical presence in Tunisia, dating back to 1957. The new building houses UNHCR's Tunisia and Libya Operations as well as the Office of the Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean Situation, and is equipped with a reception area for refugees and asylum-seekers visiting the office for registration, Refugee Status Determination (RSD), Resettlement (RST), counselling and other services.



UNHCR Regional Director and Representative in Tunisia greet Minister of Foreign Affairs Othman Jarandi at new UNHCR premises in Tunis. ©UNHCR/M.A. Hallouli



Signature of MoU with IOM in the presence of UN Resident Coordinator ©UNHCR/C.Cavalcanti