

# TUNISIA

31 March 2021

## Key figures

**7,693**

Persons of concern to UNHCR (asylum-seekers & refugees)

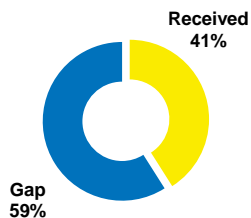
**9**

Persons departed on resettlement.

**601**

Refugees and asylum-seeker households received cash assistance

## Funding



USD **9.0 M** received as of 30 March 2021

## Operational Context

**Rescue at sea operations and interceptions at land/sea continued at a high rate during the month of March.** Two [shipwrecks](#) occurred on 10 March along Sfax governorate. In the first shipwreck off Kerkennah island, 39 people drowned while 134 survivors were brought to shore by the Tunisian marine guards. The second shipwreck took place off the coast of Jebeniana city with 70 persons onboard, including four children, who were all taken to shore. The rescued were placed in shelters and provided with the necessary assistance. UNHCR and its partner the Tunisian Council for Refugees continue to be present at disembarkation points to provide urgent relief.

**This year, the number of persons departing from Tunisia to Europe through mixed movement as substantially increased when compared to last year, with more than 1,400 people having departed from Tunisia since the start of 2021 for a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea** – a route that has claimed the lives of countless men, women and children. The latest figures suggest a 180 per cent increase in such crossings this year, when compared to the same period in 2020, UNHCR advocates for the importance of ensuring adequate responses to mixed movements and to coordinate accordingly between the relevant entities.

## Operational Response

In March, UNHCR [partnered](#) with Japanese retailer UNIQLO to provide winter and summer clothing to some **9,000 individuals in Tunisia** including nearly 6,700 refugees and asylum-seekers under UNHCR's protection and some 2,400 disadvantaged members of the host community. This clothing distribution was aimed at assisting people in vulnerable situations, especially those deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The distribution also sought to address the needs of children and adolescents hosted in the SOS Children's Village of Sfax as well as those under the mandate of the Tunisian National Body Against Human Trafficking.



Credit: UNHCR-Hallouli

**As part of UNHCR's continued engagement with the local authorities in Tunisia, on 24 March, UNHCR and its partner the Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR) organized a focus group discussion with the municipalities of Tunis, Raouad, Ariana, Marsa and Sousse.** The workshop was aimed at reviewing the outcomes of the Mayors' Forum on Inclusive Cities in North Africa, held in November 2020, that explored

areas of collaboration to strengthen the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national services and beyond.

**Four persons detained at the El Wardia reception centre were able to access asylum procedures,** and were subsequently released and registered, thanks to collaboration with the Directorate of Borders and Foreigners.

**UNHCR partners the Tunisian Refugee Council and the Arab Institute for Human Rights, together with the National Union of Tunisian Women, celebrated the leadership role of women as part of International Women's Day on 15 March.** Refugee and asylum-seeker women were invited to present their handicrafts and artworks, sharing their stories, and participating in several workshops.

**As part of UNHCR's ongoing efforts to promote the socio-cultural inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers, a Cinema Club was launched in the Bhar Lazreg shelter in Tunis on 9 March.** The club will feature films and documentaries that capture the multifaceted experiences of accessing asylum, with the goal of informing, entertaining, educating, and provoking debate in Tunisia.

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.