TUNISIA

December 2021

Key Figures:

9,374 total people of concern to UNHCR registered in Tunisia (refugees and asylum-seekers).

3,920 people of concern to UNHCR registered in Tunisia in 2021.

854 individuals profiled within mixed movements in 2021.

83% of individuals profiled expressed an intention to seek asylum in Tunisia.

633 refugee and asylum-seeking households received cash assistance during December 2021.

76 refugees departed Tunisia for resettlement to third countries in 2021.

Funding:

$ 9.9 M requested for 2021.

$ 9.0 M received as of 29 December 2021

Operational Context

As of end-December 2021, COVID-19 infections increased significantly throughout Tunisia, with an average of 997 reported daily cases, equal to 13% of the peak on 12 July 2021, according to WHO. Additionally, infections of the Omicron variant increased by more than 40%. As of 22 December, national vaccine passes became mandatory to access public venues. So far, 344 refugees and asylum-seekers have been fully vaccinated*. Meanwhile, UNHCR’s partner the Tunisian Refugee Council (CTR) continued to provide information sessions on preventive measures and vaccinations to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Operational Response

In December, UNHCR provided emergency assistance to 290 individuals after being rescued off Tunisia’s coast from boats in distress departed from Libya. Assistance included profiling, distribution of non-food items and counselling. Those rescued were mainly from Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan. In 2021, UNHCR provided emergency assistance to a total of 3,727 individuals rescued at sea by Tunisian authorities in over 40 operations.

As part of national efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19, UNHCR donated and installed seven Refugee Housing Units (RHU) to local health facilities during December to serve as screening units for people seeking treatment, as well as for administering vaccinations. Moreover, 5,000 FFP2 facemasks, 12,300 mosquito nets and 4,000 articles of clothing were donated to health authorities, social centres and local NGOs.

On 2 December, the one-stop-shop baptized “Shamel office” opened its doors in the renovated Citizen Space of El Ghazela in Raoued, one of the municipalities of the Greater Tunis. The office will serve as a dedicated space ensuring the reception, provision of information and referral of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and Tunisian migrants towards the relevant available services existing within the municipality, whether at municipal level or through other actors such as regional directorates, international and civil society organizations. For further information, please see here.

On 13 December, UNHCR partner AIHR launched an online platform on asylum and forced displacement issues, the first of its kind entirely in Arabic language. The platform is part of a pilot project that provides scientific and editorial references on displacement and asylum for researchers, journalists, legal experts and civil society actors. The platform is further designed to host the first Arabic language journal on displacement in the MENA region, which was introduced by AIHR as a pledge to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in 2021, to promote local research on issues of displacement within MENA, and highlight the critical role academic analysis plays in finding innovative solutions to protracted displacement.

On 20 December, UNHCR in coordination with AIHR and Tunisia’s Ministry of Interior organized a training session, attended by 21 participants from the Tunisian Directorate for Frontiers and Foreigners (DFE), the Human Rights Directorate, and the Directorate of International Cooperation. The training aimed to familiarize local authorities with UNHCR processes for registration, refugee status determination (RSD), protection activities for refugees and asylum seekers, as well as to strengthen coordination and referral pathways to ensure access to asylum procedures.

During the month, the women club of Ibn Khaldun shelter in Medenine organized three workshops (jewellery making, stitching and knitting) for the women hosted in the shelter, and five sessions with a beautician to train them to take care of themselves with a limited budget. All activities were highly appreciated and helped the participants to better know each other and solidarize despite the different cultural backgrounds.
**16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in Tunisia**

Between 25 November - 10 December 2021, UNHCR and partners marked the “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” campaign with a diverse programme of activities across Tunisia. Group discussions, film screenings and recreational / artistic activities were conducted in Greater Tunis, Gabes, Gafsa, Medenine, Sfax, Kebili and Tataouine governorates, with the aim of sensitizing refugees, asylum-seekers and host community members on prevention of gender-based violence (GBV), as well as informing on children and women’s rights and sexual / reproductive health.

Starting on 25 November, the “International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women”, a series of awareness-raising sessions around sexual abuse, consent and gender equality, saw designation of an orange garden in Medenine as a safe space for women hosted at Ibn Khaldun shelter. UNDP and the Ministry of Interior in Medenine also organized two public events with wide participation from local associations and members of civil society. The events included workshops, focus group discussions and artistic activities to sensitize against GBV.

Other activities were organized to mark World AIDS Day on 1 December. In Sfax, a public awareness-raising session titled “Health for All” provided information on HIV-prevention and testing for refugees, asylum-seekers and host community members of all ages.

The campaign continued on 3 December with three awareness-raising workshops titled “My Childhood, My Right” held in Ibn Khaldoun Youth Center in Tunis, led by specialized educators from SAWN Association for the Protection of Children and Adolescents Against Violence and Sexual Abuse.

In Tataouine Governorate, UNHCR and its partners CTR and TAMSS, together with the Delegation of women, family, childhood and the elderly, the Children Club of Tataouine and the Tunisian Association for Reproductive Health (ATSR) organized a “cultural trip” across the different needs of men and women, the gender roles, the measures to combat domestic violence.

In Djerba and Gafsa, children from four to fifth teen years old were involved in games and artistic activities aimed at deconstructing traditional gender roles starting from the colour dichotomy pink-blue.

In Tunis, a multi-sectoral activity titled “Let's Act Together, Let's End Violence” was organized jointly with UNHCR, CTR and NGO Médecins du Monde (MDM). Three days of awareness sessions and capacity-building training for refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants and members of the host community culminated in a public awareness campaign conducted by participants themselves in some neighbourhoods of La Marsa, Tunis. The campaign aimed to inform residents of these diverse neighbourhoods on complaint mechanisms, existing support services and relevant national legislation against GBV, as well as promote social cohesion.

The final day marked “Human Rights Day” and was commemorated by the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, with IOM and UNHCR, with an exhibition of portraits in the Goulette harbour in Tunis with titled “All migrants, all equals” and with live artistic performances of migrants.