

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria,
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya,
Mauritania,

Morocco,
Tunisia,
Western Sahara.

NORTH AFRICA REGIONAL OVERVIEW

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Recent Developments

The situation of refugees in North Africa remained relatively stable during 1999. About 1,000 Malians entered Mauritania from Mali in search of asylum, bringing the total number of refugees from Mali in the country to 4,000.

Strategic Objectives

UNHCR intends to complete preparations for the voluntary repatriation to the Western Sahara Territory, under the UN Settlement Plan, of some 120,000 Western Saharan refugees, mainly in Algeria and Mauritania, as well as individual refugees from other countries, as soon as such an operation becomes feasible. UNHCR will also provide humanitarian assistance for refugees, pending voluntary repatriation and other long-term solutions.

Although the countries in the region have acceded to the international refugee instruments (the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has acceded to the 1969 OAU Convention), the adoption of national refugee legislation and the establishment of national asylum procedures remain a major challenge for UNHCR in the region. UNHCR will continue to work closely with governments to help national institutions respond effectively to the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers. A series of workshops and seminars aim at increasing awareness of UNHCR's mandate among officials in contact with refugees.

Operations

In addition to the country programme in **Algeria**, which is presented in a separate chapter, UNHCR has operations in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya,

Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and Western Sahara. UNHCR will continue to protect and assist some 2,000 refugees in the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**, the majority from Somalia and the rest from neighbouring countries. UNHCR will continue to hold a watching brief over the estimated 30,000 Palestinian refugees living in the country.

UNHCR will continue to assist a small group of refugees from Sierra Leone in **Mauritania**. The situation of Malians, both newly arrived and the residual group, will be monitored closely in view of possible larger movements. The pre-registration of Western Saharan refugees willing to return to the Territory under the UN Settlement Plan was completed in September 1999.

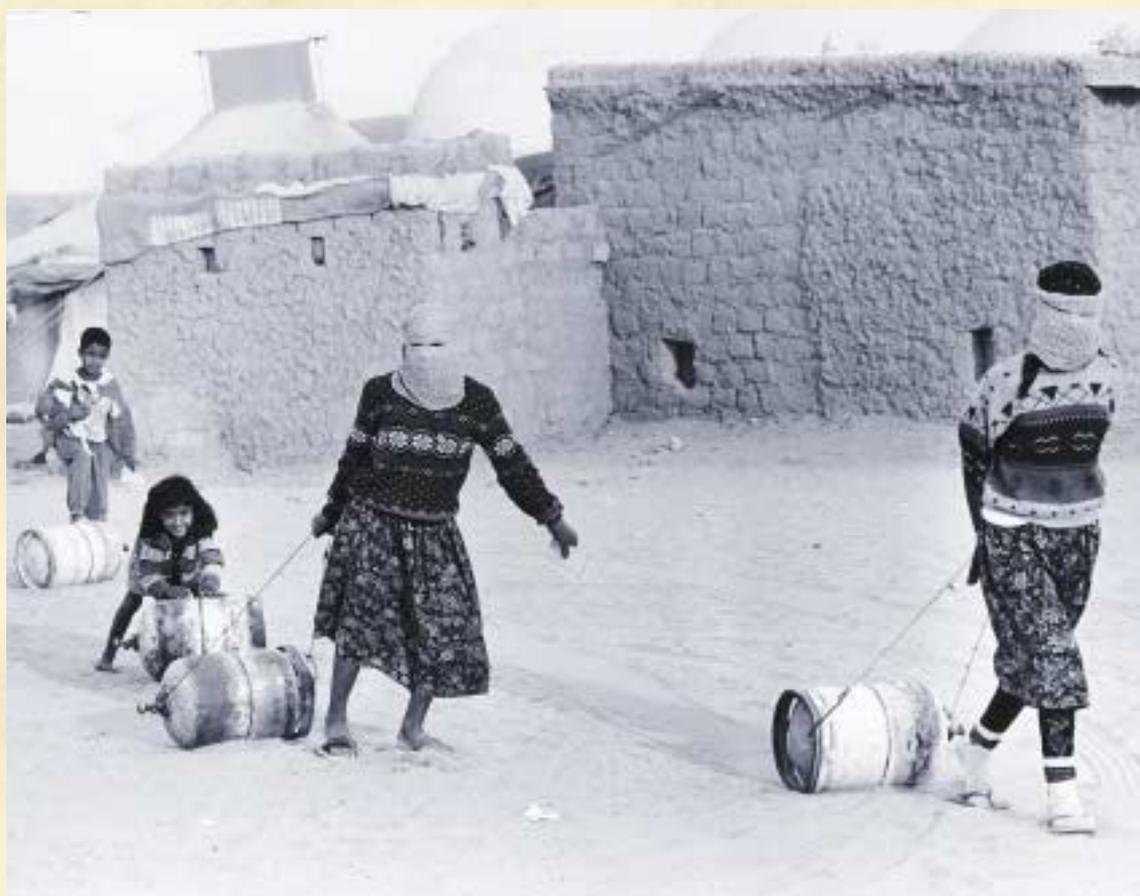
UNHCR will support and protect a small group of urban refugees and asylum-seekers in **Morocco** originating from neighbouring countries. UNHCR will raise awareness of its mandate and protection issues. Furthermore, UNHCR will liaise with Moroccan authorities on the Western Sahara operation from its office in Casablanca.

UNHCR will assist the most vulnerable urban refugees in **Tunisia**. National institutions will be

given support and guidance in their efforts to assist and protect refugees and asylum-seekers. That means training on refugee law and information campaigns to raise awareness of the problems.

The allocation for operations in **Western Sahara** covers administrative costs for the UNHCR office in Laayoune, feasibility studies, technical missions and other measures to prepare for the repatriation programme.

NORTH AFRICA	
BUDGET (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Algeria	5,015,304
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1,689,473
Mauritania	162,192
Morocco	546,205
Tunisia	278,609
Western Sahara	972,072
Sub-total	8,663,855
Bureau at Headquarters	303,200
Total	8,967,055



Western Sahara Operation

The objective of the UN Settlement Plan for Western Sahara is to hold a referendum to determine the future of the Territory (independence or integration with Morocco). In this Plan, UNHCR is entrusted with the safe voluntary repatriation to the Western Sahara Territory of an estimated 120,000 Western Saharan refugees from Algeria, Mauritania and other countries to enable them to participate in the referendum.

UNHCR will work with other UN agencies, particularly the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and with the authorities, both in the Territory and neighbouring countries, to provide transport for the refugees, establish reception centres and develop infrastructure which will permit the rapid reintegration of the Western Saharan returnees.

Before UNHCR can implement its Plan of Action and appeal for funds, MINURSO will have to complete a series of tasks to pave the way for the referendum. Several outstanding political constraints continue to delay progress of the UN Settlement Plan, and the voter identification process has yet to be completed.

Due to the slow implementation of the UN Settlement Plan during the first half of 1999, UNHCR's preparatory activities in the region likewise could not be completed. It is expected that pre-registration in the camps in Tindouf, Algeria, will be completed by the end of Decem-

ber 1999. Planning for logistics and infrastructure in the Tindouf camps and in the eastern part of the Territory has been completed. UNHCR was granted official status in Laayoune (the capital of the Territory) and preparatory activities in the western part of the Territory for the repatriation have begun. Joint reconnaissance missions with the local authorities have been supplemented by discussion of how best to apply UNHCR principles and procedures during the (eventual) repatriation. Planning is also under-way for reintegration.

Pending completion of the implementation of the UN Settlement Plan and the final voter list, UNHCR and the local authorities will assess what infrastructure will be needed for the reintegration of the refugees. UNHCR has proposed to the parties and the UN Security Council a number of cross-border confidence-building measures. These include exchange visits by refugees, mail and telephone links and a mass-information campaign. A draft Refugee Repatriation Protocol, regulating the standards and procedures for repatriation, will also be finalised.

Requirements for the Western Sahara Operation during 2000 (up to the start of the repatriation) amount to **USD 5,700,300**. Should repatriation proceed (preparations should be completed by April 2000) UNHCR will submit a Supplementary Programme, and the budget for assistance to the refugees in Algeria will be revised accordingly.

