

# North Africa

## Recent Developments

The refugee situation remained stable throughout North Africa. In particular, the situation has improved along Mauritania's borders (with Mali and Senegal), and there have been no recent reports of large population movements. UNHCR continues to provide humanitarian assistance to approximately 165,000 (Government estimate) refugees from Western Sahara residing in four camps in Tindouf, Algeria, pending a durable solution. Preparations are still underway for the repatriation of the Western Saharan refugees; logistics preparations have been finalised and pre-registration of voters in Tindouf has been completed.

The economy of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (Libya) has improved considerably since the lifting of international sanctions. The resulting increase in employment has attracted into Libya thousands of nationals from neighbouring countries seeking work. The refugee situation remained stable in Tunisia and Morocco: the two countries continue to be popular cross-roads for economic migrants from African countries hoping to settle in Europe.

Following a mission in February 2000 to review the operation in North Africa, UNHCR has decided to reinforce its protection presence. In order to enhance general awareness of UNHCR's mandate and of refugee issues, three senior liaison officer posts have been created in Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia respectively. UNHCR's presence in Libya was also upgraded. This enhanced presence has been warmly welcomed by the relevant authorities as it is an important step towards national refugee legislation.

Algeria  
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya  
Mauritania  
Morocco  
Tunisia  
Western Sahara Territory



## Strategic Objectives

UNHCR will continue to protect and assist refugees in the region until more lasting solutions are realised, such as voluntary repatriation. UNHCR will continue to prepare for the voluntary repatriation of the Western Saharan refugees as foreseen under the UN Settlement Plan, but the operation is feasible only if a number of political differences between the parties involved in the conflict are resolved. UNHCR will facilitate the repatriation of Somali refugees from Libya if the security situation in Somalia improves. With its enhanced presence in North Africa, UNHCR will work closely with the relevant authorities to adopt national legislation and national asylum procedures to respond to increasing needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in the region. In close co-ordination with the authorities, a number of workshops and seminars will be held to increase awareness of UNHCR's protection mandate among officials dealing with refugee issues. To assist with capacity building, UNHCR will work closely with several local non-governmental organisations.

## Operations

UNHCR's office in **Algeria** will continue to provide basic humanitarian assistance to approximately 165,000 Western Saharan refugees (Government estimate) residing in the Tindouf area in the south-west of the country. The beneficiaries of UNHCR's programme are mainly women and children,

who represent the majority of the refugee population in the camps. To better understand the needs of women refugees, UNHCR organised a People Oriented Planning workshop in Tindouf with the participation of refugees and several implementing partners. UNHCR also conducted a comprehensive and detailed needs assessment while interviewing the Western Saharan refugees during the pre-registration exercise. The information obtained will help UNHCR respond more effectively to the needs of the most vulnerable refugees in the



camps. Assistance in the camps will consist of food (donated by WFP), health and education services, sanitation, shelter (tents), domestic items, clothing and vocational training. Water points will be maintained and water trucked to locations without wells or water supply systems. To diversify the diet, the refugees will be encouraged to grow vegetables where feasible. Refugee women will be targeted in education and health, especially nutrition for nursing mothers and extra-curricular activities will benefit some 15,000 children and adolescents.

In the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to the most vulnerable among the 30,000 Palestinian and 3,000 Somali refugees, particularly women and children. A special programme has been designed to generate income for Somali and Palestinian refugee women heads of families with the objective of improving their living conditions and increasing their economic independence. When security conditions permit, UNHCR will resume its programme to help Somali refugees voluntarily repatriate to safe places of origin. UNHCR will organise a seminar for government officials in Tripoli responsible for refugee issues to increase awareness of UNHCR's mandate.

In **Mauritania**, UNHCR will continue to provide humanitarian assistance for a limited number of refugees, mainly from Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries. Population movement between Mali and Mauritania will be closely monitored, although the number of Malian nationals crossing into Mauritania has not increased significantly. In close co-ordination with the Government, UNHCR intends to organise workshops and seminars to raise awareness of its mandate among Mauritanian officials. UNHCR will also provide assistance to the relevant authorities to develop national legislation responsive to the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in the country.

UNHCR's office in **Morocco** will continue to support and protect a small group of urban refugees and asylum-seekers from neighbouring countries. Targeting government officials, UNHCR will organise workshops and seminars to promote awareness of interna-

tional protection and to assist in the establishment of national legislation dealing with refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR will reinforce its co-operation with a number of national partner NGOs to improve programme implementation while also helping them build up their own expertise in dealing with refugee issues.

In **Tunisia**, UNHCR will focus on finding lasting solutions for a small number of refugees and asylum-seekers. In close collaboration with a national NGO, UNHCR will provide humanitarian assistance to the most needy refugees. With its enhanced presence, UNHCR hopes to more effectively promote its international protection mandate among government authorities, and to increase awareness of refugee issues. A number of workshops and seminars will be organised with the



active involvement of the authorities and several national NGOs.

In **Western Sahara Territory**, under the auspices of the UN Settlement Plan, UNHCR is responsible for implementing the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Tindouf, Algeria, and Mauritania to the Territory. A thorough assessment of the existing infrastructure in the Territory was undertaken to determine whether key facilities in sectors like housing, water, and health are sufficient for the Western Saharan refugees upon their return. UNHCR in Laayoune will continue to liaise with the relevant authorities, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and the office of the Secretary-General's Special Representative in regard to repatriation preparations, but progress remains contingent upon satisfactorily resolving outstanding political differences by the parties involved.

BUDGET (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Algeria	4,710,978
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1,334,486
Mauritania	290,759
Morocco	517,672
Tunisia	368,643
Western Sahara Territory	578,669
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,801,207</b>

