

# NORTH AFRICA

Algeria

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya  
TunisiaMauritania  
Western Sahara

Morocco

## Recent Developments

The refugee situation remained stable throughout North Africa. The overall security situation in Algeria continued to improve during the first half of the year, although the UN maintained its security alert at Phase 3. The assistance programme for Western Saharan refugees in Algeria continued, as did the Office's active participation in the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. (See separate chapter on Algeria and the section on the Western Sahara Operation below.) After the lifting of UN sanctions, the situation in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya continued to show slow but steady improvement, particularly the economy. In addition to a more positive attitude towards refugees and asylum-seekers in general, the improvement facilitated access to employment and social services. The situation in Morocco and Tunisia remained stable. The situation at the border between Mauritania and Mali, however, remained of concern. During the last week of February, several clashes were reported between neighbouring communities. Nevertheless, no significant population movements occurred.

## Strategic Objectives: Progress and Constraints

Pending the identification of long-term solutions, such as voluntary repatriation, UNHCR continued to provide protection and limited material and financial assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. In regular contacts at national level, the Office encouraged Governments to adopt national refugee legislation to improve the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees. Workshops and seminars are used by UNHCR to increase awareness of the Office's mandate among officials working with refugees. A major concern is that available funding for the provision of basic humanitarian assistance in all countries in the region barely covers the basic needs of the refu-

gees and asylum-seekers. Financial constraints also obliged UNHCR to defer the appointment of international staff in several countries until later in the year.

## Activities until 30 June

According to government sources, the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya** continued to host some 30,000 Palestinian refugees, close to 3,000 Somali refugees and nearly 100 refugees of other nationalities. The number of refugees registered by UNHCR remained at just over 10,600 people, including 7,600 Palestinians, 2,900 Somalis and 100 of other countries. UNHCR provides care and maintenance assistance to some 750 vulnerable Palestinian refugees, particularly to help them cover their health and education needs. In addition, a monthly financial subsistence allowance has been granted to 60 families, 52 widows, 470 children and 14 single persons. As part of the vocational training programme, the Office distributed 15 sewing machines to 15 vulnerable women heads of family. Regarding the 2,900 registered Somali refugees, 850 of them were accommodated in a building provided by the government for this purpose, while UNHCR provided financial assistance to 421 of the most needy amongst them, particularly women heads of family, the handicapped and the elderly. The remaining refugees in the country originated from Iraq, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Health services were made available to these refugees. In addition, financial aid was granted on a monthly basis to the most vulnerable of amongst these refugee groups, including 41 single persons and 10 families.

In **Mauritania**, just over 26,000 Western Saharan refugees whom UNHCR pre-registered for repatriation during 1999 in the context of the UN settlement Plan are of concern to the Office. No assistance is provided to these refugees since they are well integrated in Mauritania. In addition, UNHCR has registered some 300 refugees from West Africa, mostly from Sierra

Leone. A monthly average of five asylum-seekers from Sierra Leone entered the country and registered with UNHCR during the first six months of the year. Pending the identification of durable solutions, UNHCR has provided shelter, health and education services to some 150 of these refugees through an international implementing partner. In addition, some 4,000 Malian refugees are hosted in the country and are of concern to UNHCR but do not receive assistance. UNHCR stands ready to support the repatriation of these refugees should they so wish.

UNHCR provided protection and assistance to 61 refugee families (160 persons) of various nationalities in **Morocco**. Assistance consisted of food and shelter allowances, health care coverage, French language training, primary and secondary education for refugee children, and transport related to health and/or education needs. In March 2000, UNHCR initiated a refugee status determination project aimed at eliminating the backlog of applications for refugee status. Over 90 cases had been treated by end June, reducing the backlog by 58 per cent. A workshop was also conducted on the rights of refugees, mainly for government officials dealing directly with refugee issues. The Office established relations with several universities with the aim of exploring how to cooperate in the promotion and dissemination of refugee law. UNHCR Headquarters is respon-

sible for liaison with the Moroccan authorities on questions relating to the Western Sahara operation.

In **Tunisia**, UNHCR has registered 190 refugees (30 per cent women, 25 per cent children under 18). The majority originated from Africa and the Middle East. Over half of these refugees receive financial assistance to cover their basic food, shelter, health and education needs. According to the authorities, the country hosts another 262 Palestinian refugees, who are not registered or assisted by UNHCR. Planned training on refugee law and refugee status determination for Government officials will take place in the second half of the year, as part of UNHCR's continued effort to encourage the adoption of national refugee legislation.

Under the UN Settlement Plan for **Western Sahara**, UNHCR is responsible for implementing the voluntary repatriation of Western Saharan refugees (and their families) from Algeria, Mauritania and other countries to the Territory, to enable them to participate in the referendum for independence or integration with Morocco. No refugees returned to the Western Sahara Territory during the first half of the year. The main obstacles to implementation of the UN Settlement Plan and repatriation continue to be political in nature and revolve principally around the disagreement between the



parties over the process of voter identification, which is considered crucial for the results of the referendum. Notwithstanding the political difficulties, UNHCR completed the pre-registration of refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria and Mauritania. From the beginning of the pre-registration exercise in August 1997 until 31 May 2000, a total of 126,197 refugees were registered in the Tindouf camps and 26,416 in Mauritania. UNHCR has also been involved in processing data on all the pre-registered refugees, to consolidate the information and ascertain the breakdown by gender, age, and profession, while analysing the special needs of vulnerable groups. The pre-registration of refugees who were away from the camps during the registration phase continues on a regular basis.

Planning of logistics and infrastructure needs for repatriation has been completed in Tindouf and the eastern part of the territory. Similar studies have been undertaken in the west, but have not yet been finalised. Two additional technical missions were undertaken to the western part of the Territory at the beginning of 2000, with the objective of completing earlier assessments of existing social and technical infrastructure for receiving the refugees, including housing, schools, health centres and other infrastructure. Potential sites for reception camps and facilities have already been identified for Laayoune and Smara, but have yet to be identified in Boujdour and Dakhla. To complete the studies in the west and facilitate continuous relations with the authorities, UNHCR appointed a Senior Liaison Officer based in Laayoune. As soon as repatriation becomes imminent, UNHCR will establish offices

in other locations in the territory such as Smara, Dakhla and Boujdour. UNHCR continued consulting with the parties on its proposed draft Plan of Action for Confidence-building Measures. The Plan of Action includes organised visits by refugees to the Territory, the establishment of mail and telephone links, and a mass information campaign. The parties have not yet agreed on modalities to implement the Plan. Pending a resolution of the outstanding issues, there was no progress on a draft Refugee Repatriation Protocol.

## Outlook for July – December

The North Africa region will undoubtedly remain a strategic crossroads for population movements. In addition to a steady flow of economic migrants heading mostly to Europe, the influx of refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly of urban origin, can be expected to continue in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the region continues to face the unresolved situation in the Western Sahara Territory and Algeria, coupled with potential difficulties at the Mauritania/Mali border. UNHCR's overall objectives and priorities in the Western Sahara operation remain unchanged. A high level of preparedness will be maintained in the event that a political breakthrough would allow repatriation to begin in 2000. UNHCR will take measures in the second half of 2000 to strengthen its presence in the region with international personnel, and to reinforce the capacity of governments to deal with refugee issues, meet the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees, and strengthen awareness of and respect for refugee rights.

## FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

Countries	Initial Budget		Revised Budget		Total Funds Available*		Total Funds Obligated	
	AB and TF	SP	AB and TF	SP	AB and TF	SP	AB and TF	SP
Algeria	5'015'304	0	4'715'893	0	2'355'906	0	2'249'600	0
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1'689'473	0	1'153'124	0	522'361	0	322'300	0
Mauritania	162'192	0	236'851	0	479'918	0	74'200	0
Morocco	546'205	0	590'293	0	246'600	0	246'600	0
Tunisia	278'609	0	324'839	0	125'100	0	125'100	0
Western Sahara	972'072	0	491'546	0	727'491	0	212'900	0
Regional Projects	0	0	0	0	28'045	0	0	0
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>8'663'855</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7'512'546</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4'485'420</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3'230'700</b>	<b>0</b>
Bureau at Headquarters	303'200	0	302'826	0	137'146	0	137'146	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8'967'055</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7'815'372</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4'622'566</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3'367'846</b>	<b>0</b>

\*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region and countries within the region, opening balance and adjustments.