



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Libya

Operational Update

31 January 2026



UNHCR/ Ziyad Alhamadi

Noor, a Syrian refugee, carries his younger brother Karam as they prepare to board a voluntary return flight at Mitiga Airport in Tripoli, Libya. Karam will see Syria for the first time. They are among 110 Syrian refugees returning home on the last of three flights facilitated by UNHCR in January 2026.



108,966

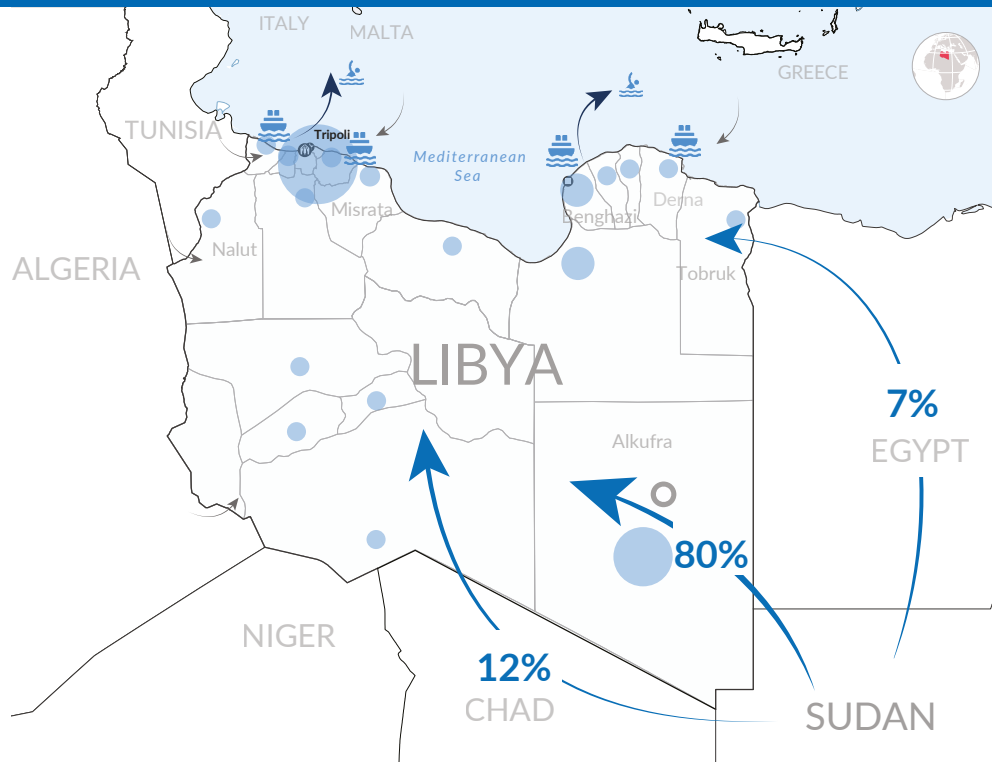
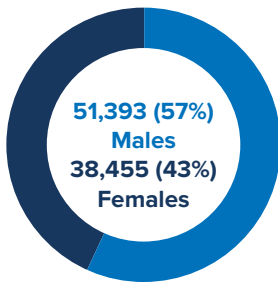
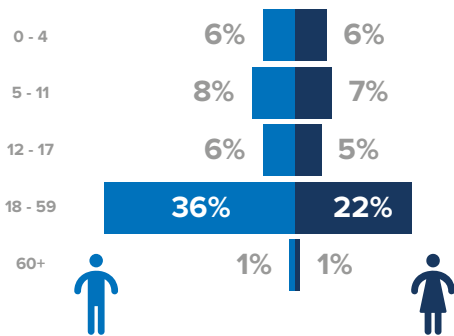
registered with UNHCR in Tripoli.

82% are Sudanese refugees
8% are Eritrean refugees
4% are Syrian refugees
6% other refugees²

Sudanese Refugees

89,848

Sudanese registered with UNHCR Libya, including those who arrived before the onset of the crisis.



Country office	Mantika Boundary	Onward movement of Sudanese
Field Office	Sudanese Population	Rescue at sea / Interception
National Capital	Arrival of Sudanese	Expulsion
UNHCR Presence		

1. The arrival trends of Sudanese refugees are based on surveys conducted with Sudanese refugee households in 2025, registration data, protection monitoring and outreach findings.
2. UNHCR registers refugees from 9 nationalities: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Yemen.

HIGHLIGHTS

Key numbers¹

Overall	Sudanese refugees	Assistance
108,966	89,848	Refugees registered at UNHCR's registration centre in Tripoli
1,763	1,445	Refugees who received protection services
50	-	Refugees relocated from detention centres to the urban setting following UNHCR's advocacy
537	81	People rescued at sea
349	13	Refugees who departed Libya safely on durable solutions
5,740	2,581	Refugees and host communities who received core relief/non-food items and hygiene kits
891	730	Medical consultations provided (including in primary health in urban settings, detention centres and disembarkation points) and cases assisted through the medical hotline
-	-	Refugees who received cash or vouchers

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

[The Sudanese Embassy in Tripoli announced it would resume civil registry services on 11 January to support Sudanese in Libya.](#) The embassy also confirmed that final exit procedures for the return trip to Sudan were nearly complete as part of a broader repatriation plan.

Sudanese returns continue to be prioritized by the government. On 7 January, the Sudanese Ambassador called on those who wish to return to Sudan to [register](#) with the Embassy by 15 January and submit documents to enable departure formalities. The Ambassador highlighted the costs would be covered by the Libyan government. Specific timelines for departures have yet to be finalized. UNHCR continues to reiterate its [non-advisory on returns to Sudan](#).

In January, UNHCR published the results of a phone survey undertaken between October and November 2025 by national partner Moomken, in cooperation with UNHCR, with 2,503 Sudanese refugee households, representing approximately 10,750 individuals, to assess intentions related to return, onward movement, or remaining in Libya. The findings show that only 4% plan to return to Sudan within the next six months, while the majority (80%) wish to move onward and 13% wish to remain in Libya for the moment. Onward destinations are primarily North America (notably Canada) and Europe reflecting the search for safety, legal protection, and access to essential services. Security in Sudan is the dominant constraint for return, alongside the lack of basic services and fears about safety along return routes.

¹ Numbers may change following verification



PROTECTION

- As the situation for refugees in Libya becomes harder, people continue to risk the perilous journey across the Mediterranean. In 2025, 27,116 people were intercepted or rescued at sea compared to 21,762 in 2024. Additionally, by the end of 2025, 183 dead bodies had been recovered from Libyan waters.
- At the end of January, 4,637 individuals were held in DCIM-run detention centres across Libya, including 1,920 in need of international protection. At three of these facilities, UNHCR carried out a series of distributions at Ajdabiya, Al-Shati and Sebha detention centres, reaching nearly 1,400 individuals with items such as mattresses, blankets, and hygiene kits to help cope with the conditions in detention.
- Earlier in the month, the horrors faced by refugees and migrants in Libya were exposed by two discoveries. [On 13 January in Ajdabiya, the Internal Security Agency uncovered mass graves containing the remains of 21 migrants](#), a finding later [confirmed by the Attorney General's Office](#). In total, 195 victims were freed including 27 females – 18 Eritreans, 6 Ethiopians, 2 Somalis, and 1 Sudanese, including five girls, some of whom were pregnant as a result of sexual assault. The graves were discovered on a private farm linked to a criminal human trafficking network operating between Ajdabiya and Alkufra and a Libyan with a prior criminal record was arrested. Judicial authorities pledged to dismantle the network and pursue further arrests.
- Days later, [on 18 January, security forces in Alkufra uncovered an underground secret detention site](#) operated by a Libyan human trafficker. The raid resulted in the release of 221 individuals, including women, children, and a one-month-old infant. Preliminary information indicates that the detainees had been held for more than two years in severe conditions.



Al-Shati, Libya. A detainee receives essential items during a UNHCR distribution at a DCIM-run detention centre.

 UNHCR/ Elham Alkindi



REGISTRATION

- By the end of January 2026, UNHCR had registered 108,966 refugees at its registration centre in Tripoli, including 89,848 Sudanese nationals, representing 82% of all refugees registered with UNHCR. Registration remains a life-saving intervention, as it enables access to essential services such as tailored protection support and humanitarian assistance. It also facilitates the identification of individuals with heightened vulnerabilities, allowing for psychosocial assistance, temporary care arrangements, and, in some cases, the pursuit of durable solutions, as well as reuniting families who have been separated due to the war.
- Registration at the newly established facility in Alkufra, managed by the Security Registration Committee, remains costly and complex. While the official fee is 500 LYD, additional legal and notary fees raise the total cost of the Security Registration Card (SRC) to 580–650 LYD. Applicants must provide extensive documentation, including a work contract, housing attestation/proof of residency, valid ID/passport, and employer contact details, along with other documents such as proof of identity from community leaders and four personal photos. The SRC is currently the only legal document that allows Sudanese refugees to avoid detention and move freely in the East of Libya. Most new registrants are employed and can afford the cost. However, the majority of refugees and large families remain unable to obtain the card due to the high expense and the additional requirement of securing a sponsor. Similar requirements have been introduced in the south in Sebha.
- In the absence of the SRC, many refugees continue relying on health cards issued by the Libyan Red Crescent (LRC) to travel to northern cities.



PROTECTION OUTREACH

- Throughout the month, UNHCR conducted community engagement and protection monitoring activities across Tripoli and surrounding areas, with a focus on school environments, community consultations, and Community Support Projects (CSPs).
- To strengthen communication and accountability, the team held five awareness sessions, reaching 69 refugees, providing information about UNHCR's official communication channels, available services, and procedures for reporting misconduct. To further support these efforts, the team enhanced complaints and feedback mechanisms at UNHCR's Registration Centre, including the installation of four TV screens in waiting areas to reinforce ongoing awareness-raising activities.
- UNHCR conducted targeted assessments of two Sudanese schools to evaluate conditions and identify support needs. At the school in Al-Krimiya, which hosts 600 students, desks and chairs are needed as well as arrangements for students with disabilities. At the Al-Okhwa school, which serves 1,320 students—including 730 refugees—the team documented inclusive practices, such as the enrollment of undocumented children and those with disabilities.
- In coordination with the Tajoura Municipality, the team assessed four public schools in Al-Karama, Al-Shaabiya Tajoura, Al-Rasheed, and Al-Nasr, which together accommodate approximately 4,400 students. While the majority of students are Libyan, the schools also enroll refugee children, including an estimated 110 Sudanese students. Al-Rasheed school reported the highest number, with around 64 Sudanese children enrolled. These visits ensure that refugee children can go to school and the communities hosting refugees are supported.



CALL CENTRE

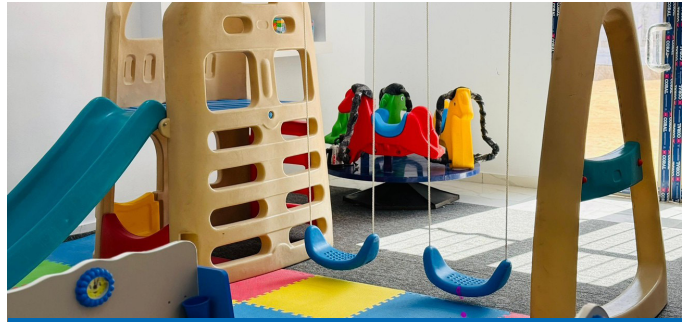
- The Call Centre continues to serve as a critical lifeline for refugees, providing trusted information on available services and guidance on how to access them. During the month, the Centre handled over 36,000 through its interactive voice response (IVR) system, with operators responding to nearly 10,000 calls and addressing a wide range of protection and assistance needs, including issues related to documentation and a demand for mental health and psychosocial support. With UNHCR support, the Call Centre team also facilitated the reunification of a family who had contacted the hotline.
- UNHCR trained national partner Moomken case workers on Protection Needs Assessments (PNA) to strengthen their ability to identify vulnerable refugees and make the relevant referral. The session covered assessment procedures, data management, and protection service standards. This initiative will enable the completion of approximately 1,800 assessments in 2026, in addition to those conducted directly by UNHCR, ensuring timely and effective support for refugees. Each PNA identifies the most at-risk individuals—such as survivors of violence or unaccompanied children—and determines what urgent protection actions or services they need, ensuring that vulnerabilities are not just identified but also addressed through timely referrals.



CHILD PROTECTION

- During the month, UNHCR conducted 63 Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) for vulnerable refugee children. Based on their specific needs, children were referred to specialized services such as temporary care, while families caring for them received non-food items or cash assistance. UNHCR continues to work with 43 caregivers who collectively host 121 vulnerable refugees under alternative care arrangements, including 98 unaccompanied children, 17 single females, and 5 medical cases.
- At the same time, child-friendly activities continued at UNHCR's Registration Centre, where refugee children rely on the Child-Friendly Space (CFS) for recreation and a sense of normalcy amid displacement. Through both structured and unstructured psychosocial sessions, the CFS provides a safe and supportive environment that helps mitigate the effects of trauma and stress. In January, the CFS welcomed 988 children (440 girls and 548 boys), engaging in activities focused on unstructured play, social interaction, and emotional expression.

- In Alkufra, UNHCR and partner, the Libyan Red Crescent, inaugurated a child friendly space, with representatives from Alkufra Municipality and the Local Council in attendance. The space will have recreational and psychosocial support activities for Sudanese and host community children addressing psychological and social needs. The initiative was warmly recognized and appreciated by both the municipality and the local community, highlighting its value in promoting inclusion and resilience among children.
- Also, in Alkufra, two Libyan public schools – Shuhada Alkufra and Shuhada Al-Ajhar in Alkufra – agreed to accept Sudanese pupils following the suspension of the decree issued in September by authorities in the East requiring non-Libyan students to have resident documents to be able to attend school.
- A new Sudanese school, accredited by the Sudanese Consulate, opened in Awjalah, accommodating 182 students and 22 staff members. In the south, in Sebha, authorities met with the Sudanese community to discuss establishing special classes within Libyan public schools that would follow the Sudanese curriculum.



A newly opened child friendly space in Alkufra provides a safe space for recreational and psychosocial support activities for Sudanese and host community children.

UNHCR/ LRC



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- The voluntary return of Syrian refugees continued in January with three flights carrying 336 returnees. On 15 January, the first voluntary repatriation flight of 2026 took place, **enabling 102 Syrian refugees to return to Syria**. This was followed by a second flight on 22 January, **which supported the voluntary return of an additional 124 individuals**, allowing them to return home safely and with dignity after years of displacement. The third and final flight of the month, **on 29 January, facilitated the return of another 110 Syrian refugees**.
- With these flights, 775 Syrian refugees have now been supported to return home since the flights began in November 2025.
- Looking ahead to the resumption of evacuations, pre-departure procedures are currently ongoing for the first Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) flight to Rwanda in 2026, which is planned for February.
- Together, these voluntary returns and upcoming evacuations underscore UNHCR's continued commitment to providing durable solutions and protection-sensitive pathways for refugees in Libya, ensuring their safety, dignity, and hope for the future.



PROTECTION HAS SAVED LIVES

As UNHCR marks 75 years of protecting people forced to flee, stories like Hinwa's remind us why this mandate matters and why durable solutions remain essential.

Humanitarian corridors, like Italy's, offer a real alternative to dangerous journeys. They save lives. They give families a chance to heal. And they uphold the core principles that have guided UNHCR for seven decades: protection, dignity, and hope. "I had a good life once," she says. "In one moment, everything disappeared. But now... now there is hope again."

#UNHCR75

Read her journey to safety: [here](#)

FIELD OPERATIONS



Basic Needs

- Many refugees arrive in Libya with little more than what they can carry. In January, UNHCR and partners, LibAid and the Libyan Red Crescent, provided vital winter assistance to 5,740 Sudanese refugees across eight locations in Libya—Alkufra, Azzawiya, Misrata, Sabha, Tobruk, Tripoli, Western Mountain (Nafousa Mountain), and Wadi Alshati. The distributions, aimed at addressing urgent seasonal needs, included winter clothing, tarpaulins, footwear, baby kits, solar lamps, clothing kits, and sleeping mats. To further support daily living conditions, essential household items such as mattresses, blankets, hygiene kits, kitchen sets, and jerrycans were also supplied, enabling families to sleep, cook, and maintain personal hygiene. This comprehensive aid is crucial for restoring dignity and improving the wellbeing of the affected communities during the winter season.
- During the month, 224 referrals of vulnerable refugees were made by UNHCR's protection desk at the Registration Centre, as well as from UNHCR's Community Based Protection team for multi-purpose cash assistance for disbursement in February through UNHCR's national partner.



Health Assistance

- In the east of Libya, UNHCR, in coordination with the Ministry of Health (MoH), delivered eight generators to health facilities benefitting both host communities and refugees at Taknis Hospital, the Tobruk Diabetes and Renal Centres, the Al Qubah Diabetes Centre, Um Al Rizam General Hospital, the Al Butnan Reference Laboratory, the Health Services Administration in Al Zueitina, and the Qasr Al Jaddi Diabetes Centre.
- This support follows discussions held on 26 January, where UNHCR Public Health and Field Officers met with the Deputy Minister of Health and heads of the MoH's project and emergencies departments. The meeting focused on assessing health sector needs and planning future interventions in the east and south, including rehabilitation of clinics, the provision of medical equipment, and capacity-building activities.
- In parallel to supporting health facilities, UNHCR also handed over eight transformers to the Alkufra branch of GECOL (Libyan General Electric Company) on 25 January. The handover, which took place in the presence of the Alkufra Municipality, aims to strengthen the local power grid and ensure the continued operation of essential services in the area.

In the West, in coordination with the Tajoura Municipality health services, UNHCR delivered essential medical supplies and diagnostic equipment to primary healthcare centres across Tajoura, one of Tripoli's most densely populated areas. This support will enable an estimated 80,000 consultations and procedures, strengthening frontline care for patients, improving diagnostics, and ensuring the continued delivery of essential health services for those who need them most.





On 28 January, **UNHCR Libya Chief of Mission Karmen Sakhr met with Javier Quintana, Ambassador of Spain to Libya.** The Ambassador visited the UNHCR registration area where he engaged with refugees and heard their stories. Discussions with the UNHCR team focused on shared priorities for supporting refugees in the region and globally, underscoring the importance of international cooperation, responsibility-sharing, and solutions for people forced to flee.

📷 UNHCR/ Ziyad Alhamadi

Coordination

- In Libya, UNHCR leads the Inter-agency coordination for the Sudan Refugee Response Plan (RRP) through a dedicated task force structure. This framework includes seven thematic task forces, focusing on Protection, Basic Needs, Food Security, WASH, Public Health & Nutrition, Education, and Livelihoods & Economic Inclusion, supported by an Information Management (IM) Task Force for data collection and management. The 2026 Sudan Refugee Response Plan for Libya aims to target 596,000 Sudanese refugees, 1,000 third country nationals, and 70,000 Libyan host communities with multi-sectoral services. The plan has 14 RRP partners (7 UN agencies and 7 international NGOs) and total financial requirements are US\$115.5 million. Government consultations on the RRP will take place in February in Tripoli and the plan will be launched in March.

UNHCR PARTNERS



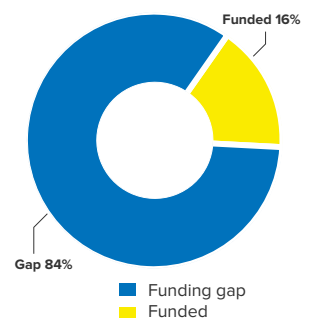
FUNDING INFORMATION

UNHCR is grateful for the crucial and generous contributions from its donors, who have provided both earmarked and flexible funding to support its operations in Libya, including in response to the Sudan situation.



US\$ 51.1 million

UNHCR requested for the operation in Libya, including the Sudan refugee response



CONTACT: UNHCR External Relations and Public Information Unit: lbytr@unhcr.org

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