



Refugees and asylum seekers

The recent transfer of refugees and asylum seekers to the South is a source of concern for UNHCR. In February the office received reports of round-ups of irregular migrants including persons in need of international protection. More than 1,000 undocumented foreign nationals were arrested in Tripoli and Benghazi and transported to detention facilities in South Libya. To assess protection needs of persons of concern, UNHCR conducted a mission to South Libya between 10-14 February (*see box on the right*). Regarding risks of refoulement, detention authorities in the South under the Department of Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) assured UNHCR that those from refugee-producing countries such as Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia are not at risk of deportation. In fact, there is no evidence indicating that refugees and asylum-seekers have been deported. UNHCR is planning a follow-up mission to the South to provide further assistance to persons of concern.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

On Tuesday 26 February, Deputy Prime Minister chaired a ministerial meeting to discuss the return to their homes of both IDPs and Libyan sll abroad. Reportedly, recommendations included the activation of a social justice law, national reconciliation, improving IDP living conditions and ensuring their safe return. UNHCR welcomes this positive development. Yet it remains concerned about the protection situation of IDPs who continue to fear revenge attacks and arbitrary arrests. The office has recently started a new mapping exercise of IDPs throughout Libya. This is intended to gather updated information on the size of the IDP population in Libya and document protection needs including eviction threats. As part of this mapping, on 20 February, UNHCR conducted a monitoring visit to the Marine Academy, Tripoli. At the time of the visit, 430 Tawergha families were in the site, 2,450 individuals overall. Community leaders expressed concern about the ongoing eviction threats. Moreover, UNHCR was informed that on 19 February at around 7:30am a civilian car with four armed entered the Fella site in Tripoli hosting IDPs from Tawergha. Reportedly, the unidentified men tried to arrest IDPs randomly and opened fire. No injuries were reported. Finally, despite the fluid security situation, UNHCR continues to provide regular assistance to IDPs in Eastern Libya. In collaboration with LibAid, UNHCR Benghazi delivers health care and facilitates access to education in order to improve living conditions of IDPs.

Donors of UNHCR Libya

European Commission, Japan, Spain, Switzerland and the United States

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Mission to South Libya

Between 10-14 February, UNHCR conducted a mission to South Libya. The objective was to assess protection needs of persons who had been recently arrested in Tripoli and Benghazi and transferred to the South. UNHCR visited over 600 potential asylum-seekers from Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan detained in Birak Shati, Qatroun and Sabha detention centres (*photo above*). Among them there were 43 minors in Sabha and two in Birak Shati. Detainees also included 8 women in Sabha and 30 in Birak Shati, 5 of them pregnant. Detention conditions are poor. The centres are overcrowded and access to health is limited. UNHCR met with representatives of the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) and was informed that refugees and asylum seekers are not liable to deportation. However, irregular migrants from Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Chad have been deported, mainly by bus. Authorities have requested UNHCR to provide assistance to refugees and asylum seekers detained in the South. UNHCR is now liaising with relevant partners on possible solutions, including alternatives to detention. During the mission to the South, UNHCR provided core relief items to all the detention centres, including more than 600 sets of blankets, mattresses, winterization clothing and hygiene kits.

Syrian displacement

UNHCR is expanding its capacity to register and assist persons fleeing Syria. As of 21 February 2013, UNHCR registered 6,697 individuals from Syrian (1,002 cases). In particular, in Benghazi, as of 24 February, 1,483 individuals (360 cases) registered with the office. Alongside registration, UNHCR Benghazi is also delivering winterization items. In February, UNHCR Benghazi distributed 3,279 items including mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets, hygiene kits, shoes, and cloths.