



ALGERIA – Sahrawi Refugees ECHO FACTSHEET

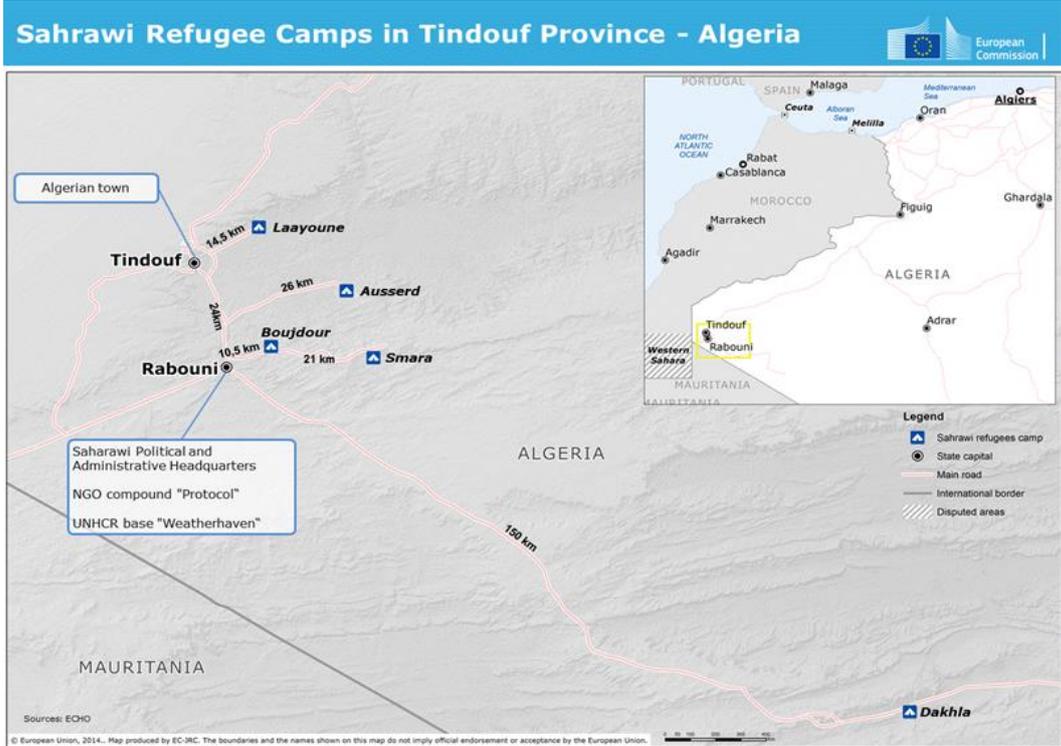
Facts & Figures

Around 90,000 vulnerable refugees

5 camps in the south-west of the Algerian desert

Total European Commission Funding in 2015: € 10 million

Total European Commission funding since 1993: € 213 million



Key messages

- The Sahrawi refugees are the result of an unresolved political conflict with humanitarian consequences, which have to be addressed in line with the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.
 - The Sahrawi refugee situation is defined as a forgotten crisis by the European Commission, meaning that it receives little funding from the international community.
 - Refugees living in five camps have little access to outside resources and international aid continues to be necessary to their survival.
- When Spain withdrew from its colony of Western Sahara in 1975, it handed over control of two-thirds of the territory to Morocco and one-third to

Background

Mauritania. The division of the territory triggered armed conflict with the Polisario Front, founded in 1973 by opponents of Spanish colonization, who proclaimed the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1976 and established a government-in-exile. To escape the worsening violence, Sahrawis began to move to the Tindouf region of Algeria. Mauritania pulled out of the Western Sahara in 1979. Morocco and SADR eventually agreed to a ceasefire and mediation from the United Nations in 1991. But today, the conflict remains unresolved and

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refugees live in five refugee camps named after cities of Western Sahara - Laâyoune, Ausserd, Smara, Boujdour and Dakhla.

The climate in this region is extremely harsh. Access to basic resources such as food, water, healthcare, housing and education is very limited. The largely isolated camps offer almost no employment opportunities, creating a dependency of the refugees on remittances and international aid. In such a remote location, logistics also play a key role to ensure regular distributions of relief items to the refugee population. Another important factor is the safety and security of humanitarian workers, which has improved over the past years but still remains a daily challenge.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

Funding

Since 1993, the European Commission has provided €213 million in humanitarian aid, and is one of the leading donors among a handful of other donors. In 2015, the Commission gave €10 million to improve the living conditions of the Sahrawi refugees. Food aid is a major component of this funding: €6.4 million has been allocated to supply basic food items through WFP, and Oxfam.

Water is one of the major concerns for the refugees and the Commission helps to ensure the availability of safe drinking water in sufficient quantities. Projects have been implemented to connect the camps directly to water sources through piped networks and water trucking. Two water treatment plants have also been installed to provide clean water, implemented by UNHCR.

The European Commission is also funding hygiene awareness campaigns and sanitation through the Spanish Red Cross, particularly in schools and hospitals, to reduce the risk of diseases. Provision of essential medicines and the training of local health personnel by Medico International are also funded by the Commission.

In 2015, Commission's humanitarian funds will provide support to people with disabilities through our partner Triangle GH. This includes providing people with specialised equipment, physiotherapy services, and training of social workers to improve support at home to these vulnerable individuals.

The Commission will also continue funding the maintenance of the vehicle fleet by UNHCR and Triangle GH in order to ensure that hygiene and household items as well as water distributions are carried out without interruptions throughout the year. The construction of a new central mechanical workshop is also in progress.

Outreach and coordination with humanitarian partners

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil protection department (ECHO) is actively involved in the co-ordination bodies for the food, water and health sectors that meet regularly in Tindouf and Algiers. Such mechanisms are an opportunity to discuss core issues with all interested parties.

The EU is also engaging with the Algerian and Sahrawi authorities respectively, to improve the quality of aid delivered to refugees and make sure that aid is delivered in the most cost-efficient way.