

Beat: Politics

UNHCR TUNISIA COVID-19 FLASH UPDATE AS OF APRIL 28

LOCKDOWN EXTENDED TO MAY 3

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USPA NEWS - On 19 April 2020, Tunisian Prime Minister announced the extension of the confinement period until the 3 May 2020, and a re-adjustment of curfew schedule during the month of Ramadan, from 8pm until 6am. UNHCR Tunisia will continue to rely on alternative working arrangements, to adapt and sustain existing activities, and to step up support to refugees and asylum seekers to meet current and emerging challenges. Essential support to persons of concern to UNHCR continued to be provided, such as emergency medical care, protection monitoring, psycho-social support, shelter, cash and food assistance. On 8 April, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister in charge of Human Rights, Relations with Constitutional bodies and Civil Society, issued a statement (ARB) about exceptional measures that will be taken by the Government in favour of foreigners in Tunisia (including refugees and asylum seekers); namely concerning the nonpenalization of foreigners with expired visa and non-applicability of fees related to illegal stay.

Essential support to persons of concern to UNHCR continued to be provided, such as emergency medical care, protection monitoring, psycho-social support, shelter, cash and food assistance, etc. Some activities previously limited to urgent cases resumed in remote modality; namely legal counselling (provided remotely by lawyers from UNHCR's partner the Arab Institute for Human Rights) and the recording of people waiting to be registered, allowing identification of persons with specific needs.

PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE-----

Given the high volume of calls received through helplines established by partner Tunisian Refugee Council (CTR), UNHCR provided a data collection tool (using KoBoToolbox software) to assist CTR frontline staff who receive the calls to process them more efficiently. The tool consist in a digitalized 20-minutes assessment survey, currently in its pilot phase, and aims to facilitate the interaction with refugees and asylum seekers; to document protection and COVID-19 related concerns; to identify persons in need of services and assistance and to collect harmonized data countrywide. Moreover, the survey aims also to collect consent from persons of concern to share their basic biodata with the government in view of including them in the national assistance program. More than 150 refugees and asylum seekers joined the dedicated Facebook groups "We hear you" (run by partner CTR) through which they can raise concerns or get information about COVID-19. The group allows also the dissemination of information material in different languages. Counselling related to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) was reinforced in order to respond to the increasing needs expressed by refugees and asylum seekers (cases of insomnia, acute anxiety, depression) both through phone or videocall and through visits to shelter for individual and group support conducted by psychologists from CTR. UNHCR donated one Refugee Housing Unit to Medenine Regional Hospital, to be used for screening the visitors before entering the hospital. Moreover, 100 blankets were donated to Medenine Governorate for the persons under confinement coming from Djerba island. SOURCE : United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

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