

## **The last 2020 evacuation flight from Libya takes 130 vulnerable asylum seekers to Rwanda**

Press release. Tripoli, 30 December 2020

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency has successfully evacuated a group of 130 vulnerable asylum seekers out of Libya to safety in Rwanda in the fourth and last evacuation flight in 2020. Next flights will resume in 2021.

The flight carrying the asylum seekers departed on Tuesday afternoon, from Tripoli to Kigali International Airport, where UNHCR staff members and Rwandan authorities welcomed them.

The group includes men, women, and children from Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. Most were living in urban areas in Tripoli, and many had previously been held in detention centres across the country.

“The evacuations through the ETM have proven to be a crucial lifeline for vulnerable refugees in Libya and more efforts must be put in place by the international community to provide greater support to these populations”, said Jean-Paul Cavalieri, UNHCR Chief of Mission in Libya.

“For refugees in Libya, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only imposed restrictions that resulted in loss of livelihoods, food insecurity and lack of access to healthcare, but it also impacted access to legal pathways and solutions out of Libya, increasing despair among the most vulnerable. We urge receiving countries to provide further resettlement opportunities in order to help us move vulnerable asylum seekers out of harm’s way in Libya.”

Asylum seekers evacuated from Libya have been taken to the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Gashora, where steps have been put in place in compliance with health measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, providing the group with a safe environment. They will join another group of 184 asylum-seekers previously evacuated from Libya, who are awaiting durable solutions out of Rwanda.

At the centre, UNHCR is providing them with assistance including shelter, food, water, medical care, psycho-social support, and several courses and activities.

UNHCR is grateful to the support received from Rwanda and the African Union through the Emergency Transit Mechanism. We also wish to extend our gratitude to the Libyan authorities for their close coordination with our teams and for facilitating procedures and logistics.

With this latest evacuation, 811 vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers have been taken out of Libya this year, including 321 via resettlement.

44,725 refugees and asylum seekers are registered with UNHCR in Libya, of whom 329 are held in detention.