



EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

Télécoms Sans Frontières

Mission Libya/Tunisia

Situation Report

25 February – 13 April



1. General Situation Overview

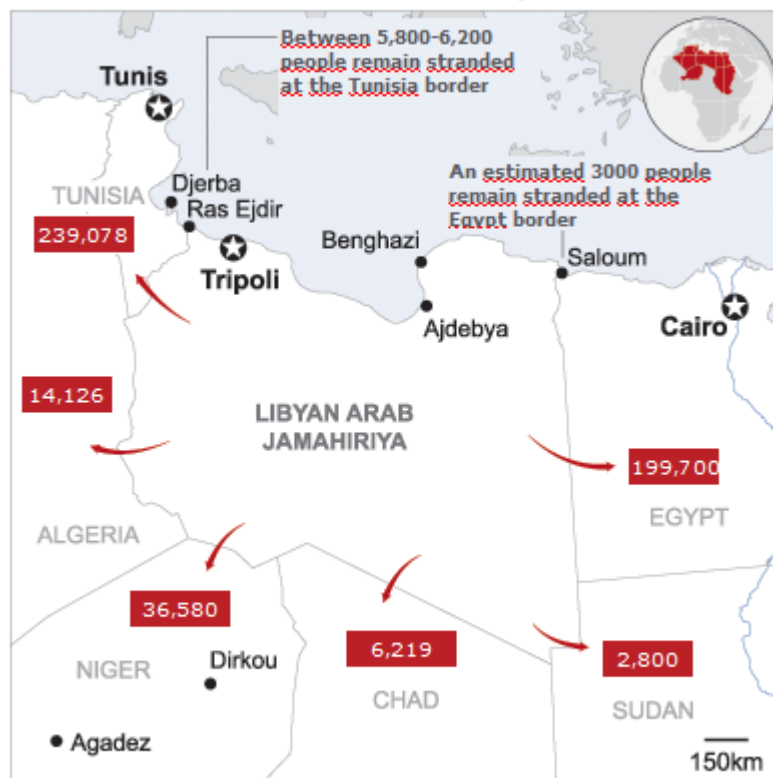
Fighting between government and opposition forces continues in Libya.

The crisis began in earnest on 15 February 2011. Within a week, this uprising had spread across the country. The situation then escalated into armed conflict.

Affected population

For 2 months, since the start of the unrest, fighting in Libya has driven hundreds of thousands of people to flee to neighboring countries. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), **501,240 people** have left Libya as of 12 April 2011. They include 239,078 to Tunisia; 199,700 to Egypt; 36,580 to Niger; 14,126 to Algeria; 6,219 to Chad and 2,800 to Sudan. More than 100,000 people within Libya have been internally displaced.

Number of people who left Libya 501,240



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

With a migrant population of about two million, states that border Libya, especially Egypt and Tunisia, have been receiving a flow of migrants and nationals escaping the violence. Migrant workers as well as Libyan nationals have been finding their way to the border cities of Sallum in Egypt and **Ras Ejdir in Tunisia** creating a humanitarian crisis.

Source: OCHA

2. Refugee Situation at the Tunisian-Libyan border

In response to this dramatic humanitarian situation – thousands crossing the border every day from protest-hit Libya into Tunisia and settling in temporary camps – TSF deployed on Libya-Tunisia border. As soon as they hit the ground on February 24th, the TSF team conducted a mission at the Ras Ejdir border post near to Ben Guerdane (the first Tunisian town after the Libyan border) and at the refugee camp of Chucha.

In the initial part of the crisis, humanitarian agencies on site, working alongside Tunisian authorities to organize the refugee reception and support, have been overwhelmed by a massive and continuous inflow of refugees from Libya and native to Egypt, Tunisia, Somalia, Vietnam, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Korea, Morocco and Libya... Fleeing the violence by road, thousands of people were crossing the Libya-Tunisia border daily during the first days of the uprising. Following a peak in the arrivals between February 23 and March 2 (an average of 10,000 arrivals per day over a period of 7 days), the pace of arrivals has then remained steady with 3,000 to 4,000 per day crossing, the majority of which were third-country nationals. This trend has changed as the vast majority of those crossing the border to escape the violence in the recent period are Libyans.

By 3 March, the situation was described as a logistical nightmare, with the World Health Organization warning of the risk of epidemics and many tens of thousands trapped on the Libyan side of the frontier.

Progressively the refugee reception and support, as well as evacuation operations, was organized. As soon as they cross the border and return to their native country of Tunisia, the Tunisian refugees are supported by Tunisian civilians who organize solidarity networks for their fellow-countrymen. As for Libyan families, they find shelters in Tunisian towns south of Ras Ejdir.

Refugee border camps were set up to house the growing number of other foreign nationals before they can be repatriated.

- **Local authorities along with UNHCR have set up a camp 6kms far from the border, called Chucha camp.** This transit camp is an obligatory stop for all the migrants coming from Libya before a longer term solution is given to them. It has a housing capacity of 20,000 persons. Capacity was nearly reached on certain days in the beginning of March. Since 31 March, Chucha camp has housed an average of 8,500 people per day, with a peak of 10,124 on 5 April.

There has been a constant increase in the proportion of Sub-Saharan African migrant arrivals. On the other hand, the Egyptian and Bangladeshi population has decreased dramatically due to many departures. Their arrivals were massive the first month following the beginning of the crisis.

It has been more than one month and a half since TSF was deployed in Chucha transit camp. TSF has been actively responding to the telecoms needs of the refugees since 25 February by conducting *humanitarian calling operations* at the entrance to Chucha camp.

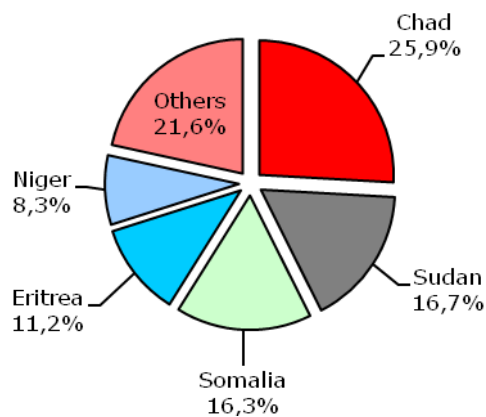
- Displaced people have also taken refuge in three other camps at the Tunisian-Libyan border in the vicinity of Chucha camp. Families have been progressively re-located in the UAE (United Arab Emirates) camp, which recently doubled its capacity to shelter 2,000 people. The IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) camp was also constructed and another camp “Attawan” has increased its capacity to 2,000. These camps are used for people with short transits.

In cooperation with TSF, the telecoms needs in those camps have been covered by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). TSF focused on the major camp of Chucha where most of the refugees are staying.

The camps’ population has decreased significantly with the acceleration of evacuation operations. However the number of refugees remains high.

As of April 12th, UNHCR estimates that approximately 8,275 people remain stranded at those camps on the Libyan-Tunisian border, **of which 5,444 people in Chucha camp.**

**Camp Population - 12 April 2011
Main Nationalities**



In view of this situation, participating States were requested to offer transport possibilities from Djerba, Tunisia, to the destination airports of N’Djamena (Chad), Khartoum (Sudan), Bamako (Mali) and Cairo (Egypt). As of 13 April between 7,000 and 7,400 persons are in need of evacuation assistance.

More people are crossing into Tunisia every day as fighting continues and the frontline shifts. On 12 April over 3,000 people crossed the border from Libya to Tunisia. New arrivals are registered every day at Chucha transitional camp. **TSF had to adapt the response provided to the displaced populations, as their needs have been evolving with the uncertainty surrounding the date of their evacuation. TSF’s humanitarian calling operations continue.**

3. TSF's Humanitarian Calling Operations (HCO)

3.1. Telecom Needs

In this complex humanitarian context, an urgent need for communication was identified in Chucha camp, people willing to inform their relatives that they were alive, to receive personalized assistance, to obtain mental support or to share important information about the situation.

Many in Chucha camp can't afford international calls, or they no longer have their mobile phones. It's a priority for TSF to improve communication and information flow between the refugee population and their loved ones. Victims of emergencies need quick and reliable telecommunications services to reconnect with separated family members and arrange for support. Re-establishing communication links is vital.

TSF's telecom assessments revealed that during the first days, the GSM network was totally saturated and calls dropped often. 3 GSM providers cover Chucha camp: Tunisie Telecom, Tunisiana and Orange.

A GSM BTS has been installed in the camp to cope with the growing number of connections, doubling the capacity. However, the network remains unreliable.

3.2. TSF's response

As soon as they arrived on site, TSF experts coordinated with the Red Crescent, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNHCR, IOM, the Tunisian Civil Defense and the European Commission.

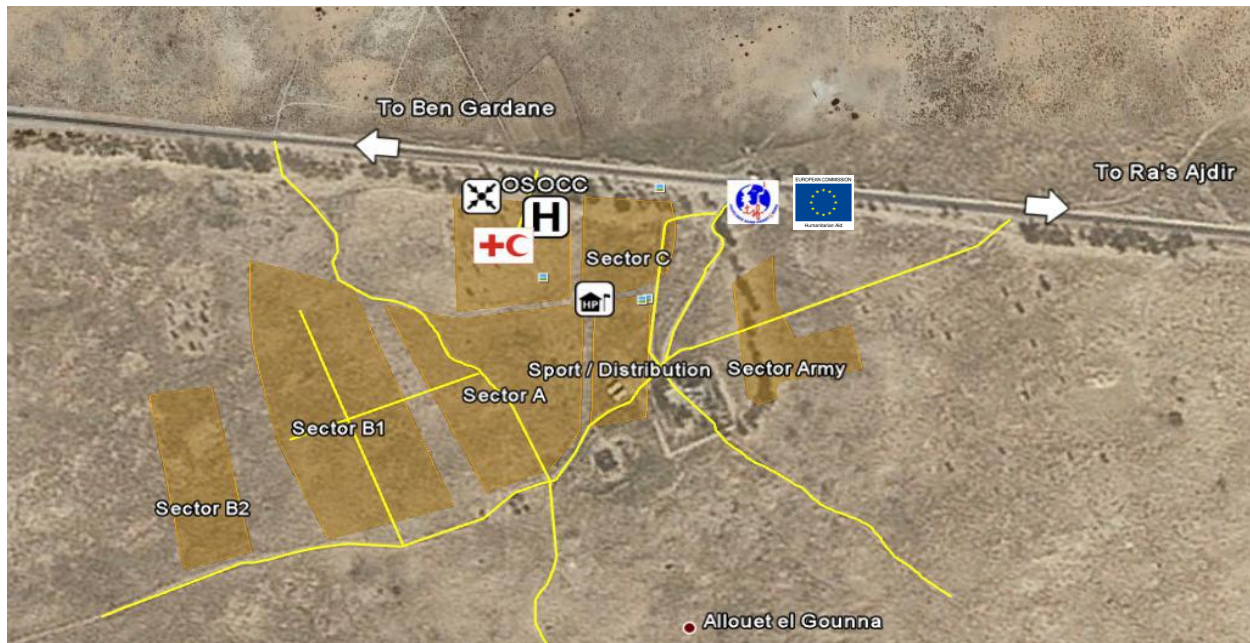
Since February 25th, TSF has been conducting humanitarian calling operations at the entrance to Chucha camp to provide the refugees who are in urgent need of means of telecommunications with free international 3-minute calls.

TSF staff use satellite phones (10 IsatPhones Pro and 1 miniM) and terminals (3 BGANs).



TSF's satellite-based calling operations were first conducted in collaboration with the Tunisian Red Crescent and the ICRC. After March 6th, TSF, the Red Crescent and the ICRC conducted their operations on their own in different locations of Chucha camp to reinforce the response and meet the needs of as many people as possible.

TSF's phoning center has a strategic location; it is located at the entrance to the Chucha camp and is close to the IOM area, where refugees come to obtain the information concerning repatriation.



Location of TSF's phoning center

As of 13 April 2011, after less than two months, more than 34,000 phone calls (+70,000 minutes of voice communications) have been offered to over 25,000 refugees.

3.3. Why a simple call can make the difference



TSF phoning center is open every day at Chucha camp. Since operations started, TSF has offered hundreds of calls per day. In one day on March 9th, more than 1,000 calls were provided. Day after day the need is just as great for those people in distress. They wait in long lines to make a TSF priority call.

In case of massive population displacements, communications are the lifelines enabling exiles to regain an identity at the heart of the crisis. We have witnessed despair and anxiety begin to give way to relief when isolated people are able to use telecommunications to be closer to their families. A phone call can be a psychological and emotional relief as well

as a material one. Indeed, TSF calling operations are a great opportunity for the affected populations to ask for financial aid or personalized assistance from their relatives and countries' authorities.

Through the free international phone calls offered, TSF is helping reconnecting families – children and parents, cousins, brothers and sisters. These calls continue to remind us how something as simple as a phone call can offer help and hope amid the suffering of people native to countries experiencing very complex situations (Ivory Coast, Somalia, Eritrea, etc.).

The TSF team witnesses events...

"We enabled a group of refugees from Ghana to call their families to tell them that they were still alive. But every day, we saw them near to the TSF's sat phones. There is no immediate solution for them. There isn't a Ghanaian Consulate in Tunis. We thus decided to contact the Consulate in Algeria. Following that phone call, the Consulate reassured the Ghanaian refugees that they would receive official assistance. Which they did. Indeed on March 1st, the Representative of the Consul himself came to the transit camp to repatriate his fellow-countrymen."



"Masi and Mohamed are from Bamako in Mali; they arrived on 25 February evening at the border post. Thanks to TSF, they were able to call the Malian Embassy in Tunis who reassured them that they would receive official assistance."



"Almost one hundred inhabitants of Niger, some without documents, had no news from their government and no information on when they would be able to get back to Niger. They designated spoke persons who came to talk to us, to try to reach a Nigerian embassy, somewhere. We called the Niger embassy of France and we finally managed to get the personal number of the Niger ambassador in Algeria, who got in contact with IOM to organize the repatriation of his fellow countrymen. A few days later, before they got in the bus that would take them to the airport, some of them came to tell us good-bye, along with warm thanks."

"Right now, we can't be in Bangladesh," said Nienn. "But talking to my parents by phone eases the wait." When violence broke out in the western Libyan town of Zawiyah, Bangladeshi migrant worker Mohammed Nienn, 28, was doing a shift as a steelworker. In a hurry to leave, he jumped into a taxi with four other Bangladeshis and headed for the Tunisian border, where a bus eventually took him to Chucha transit camp, 6km from the frontier town of Ras Ejdir. Ten days later, he was still there, waiting for a flight to Dhaka. "My family tells me to get home as quickly as possible," he told IRIN. "But it's not as simple as that. There are so many Bangladeshis here. The wait to go to the airport is quite long."

Source of this last testimony: www.irinnews.org - 14 March 2011

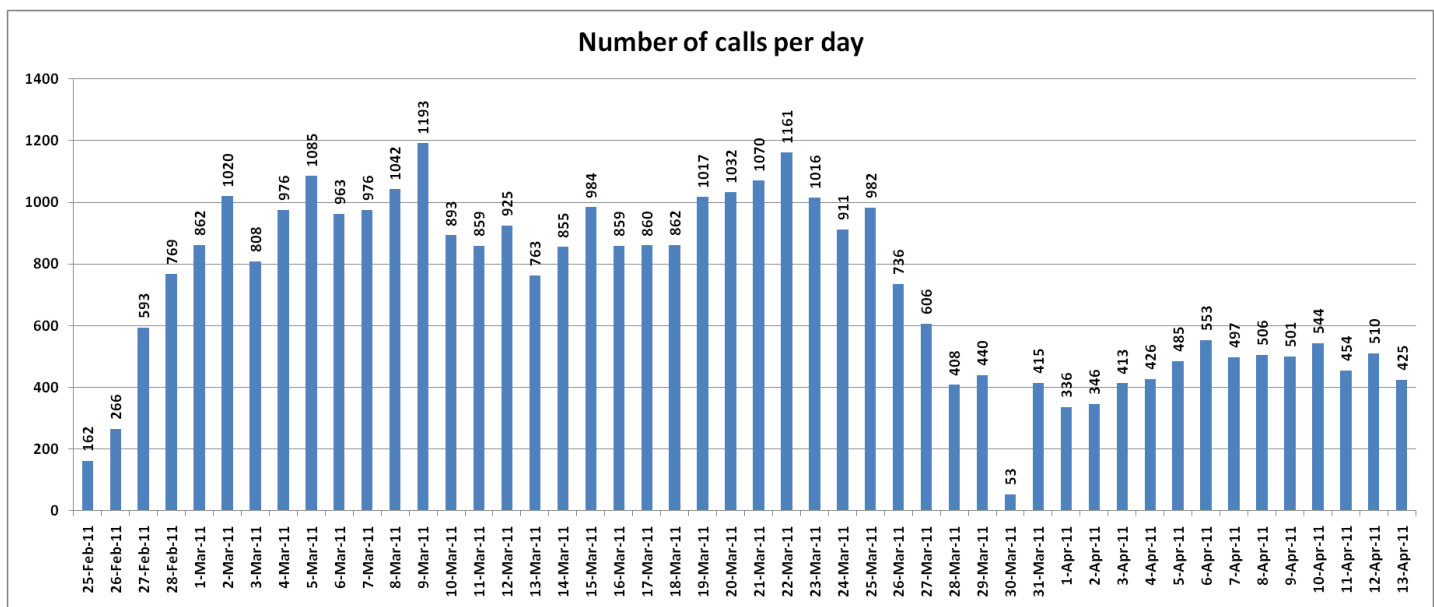
In the midst of the tragedy, TSF is giving people a voice. Beyond the psychological support provided, TSF's role is also to find concrete solutions for those in need. These calls are vital, even almost 2 months after the outbreak of unrest in Libya. Many of them are the first ones people are making since they fled the country.

Our team estimates that:

- From February 25th to March 20th, most of the calls (>90%) are the first that beneficiaries have been able to make since they arrived in Tunisia.
- From March 20th to April 8th, for 70% of the refugees who benefited from the calling service, the call was the first contact they've had with their relatives outside the country since the beginning of the uprising.
- From April 8th to present day, 50% approx. of the calls offered by TSF are first calls.

3.4. Statistics

- **Total number of calls made so far (February 25th – April 13th): 34,418 (25,341 beneficiaries)**

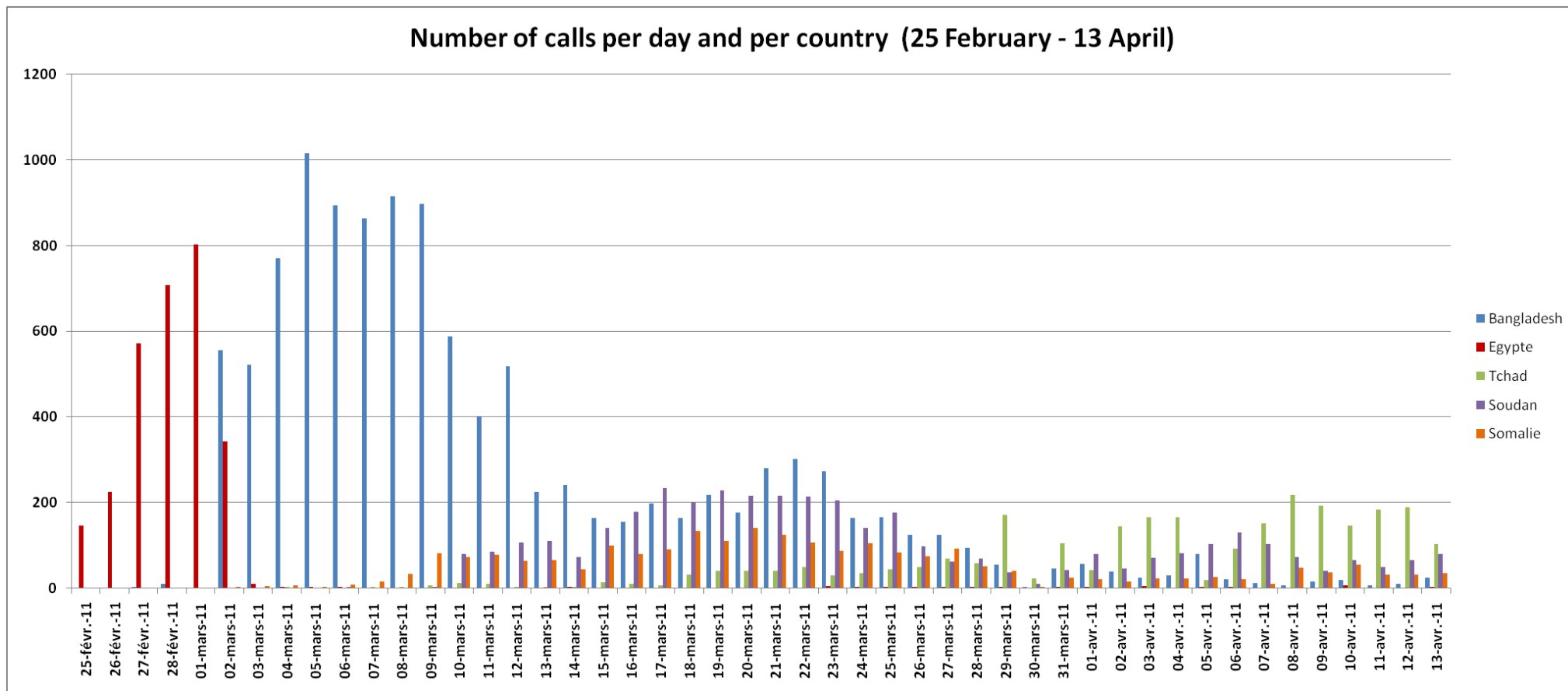


- **Total duration of communications: 70,108 minutes and 29 seconds**
- **Population catchment: 15.8% of the displaced people who arrived in the camps have used TSF's free phoning service.**
10.6% of the displaced people who arrived in Tunisia have used TSF's free phoning service.
- **An average of 888 calls offered every day from 25 February to 25 March, and 455 calls from 26 March to 13 April.**

- **Total number of calling destinations as of the April 13th: 115**

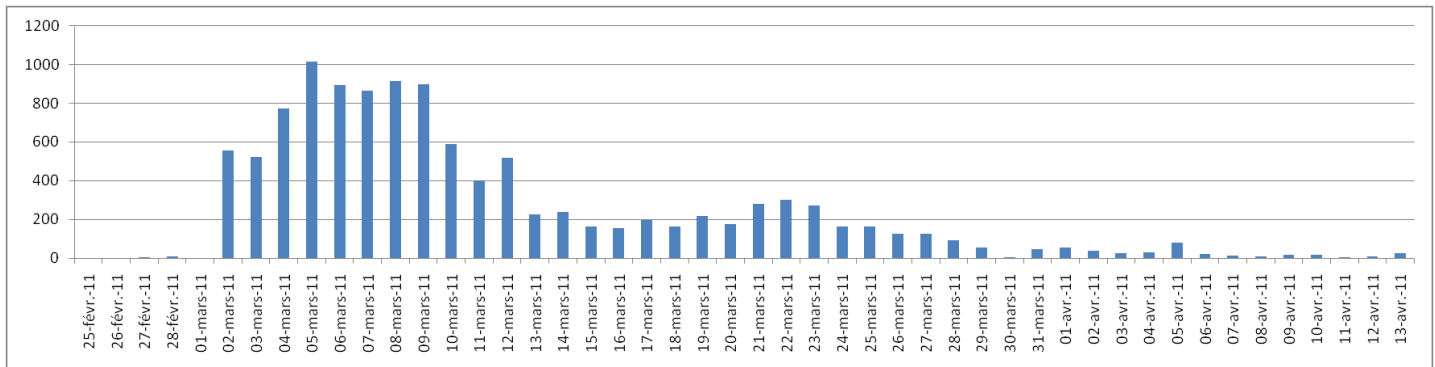
In the first days, the vast majority of these calls were for Egypt. Then since March 2nd, 90% of these calls went to Bangladesh. Most of the calls then go to Sub-Saharan countries.

The trends are shown on the bar charts below.



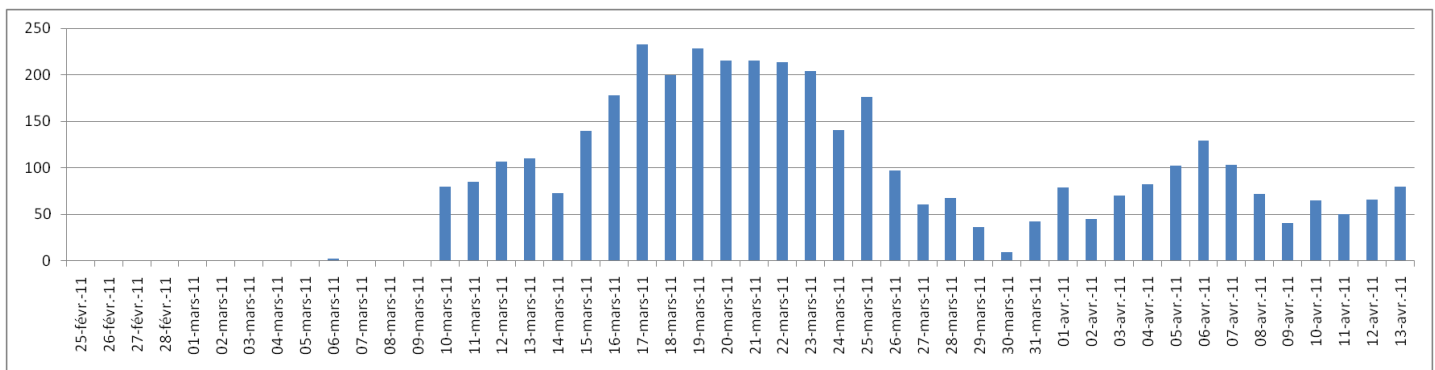
Number of calls for Bangladesh from February 25th to April 13th

Total: 11,454



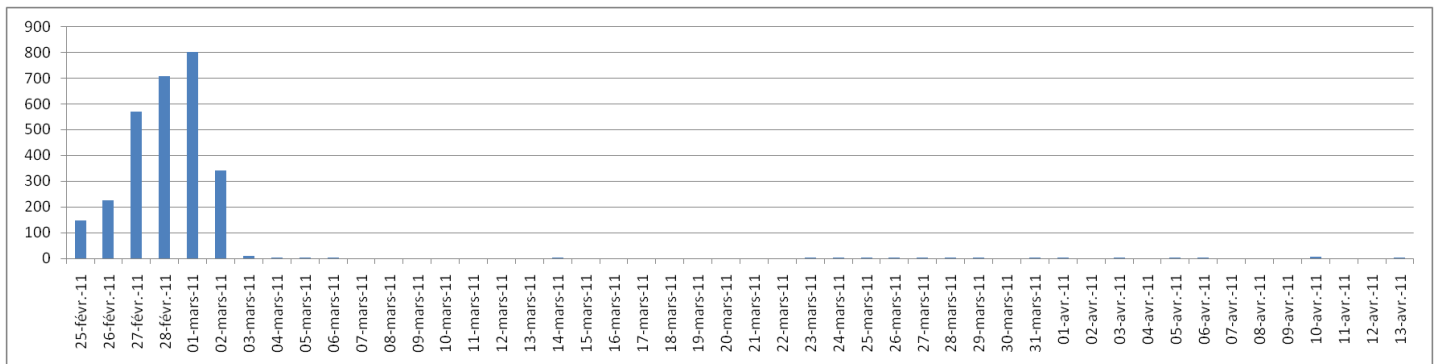
Number of calls for Sudan from February 25th to April 13th

Total: 3,899



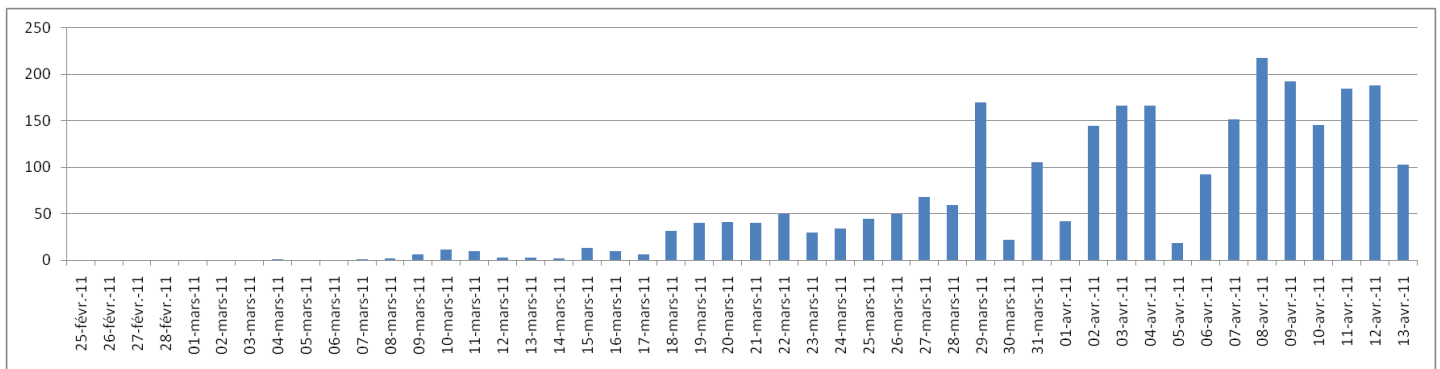
Number of calls for Egypt from February 25th to April 12th

Total: 2,842



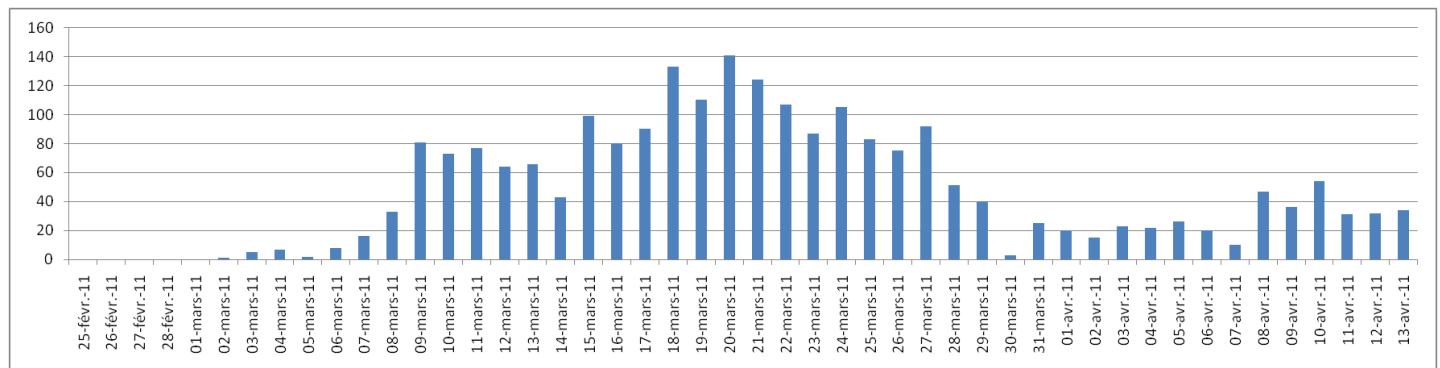
Number of calls for Chad from February 25th to April 13th

Total : 2,660



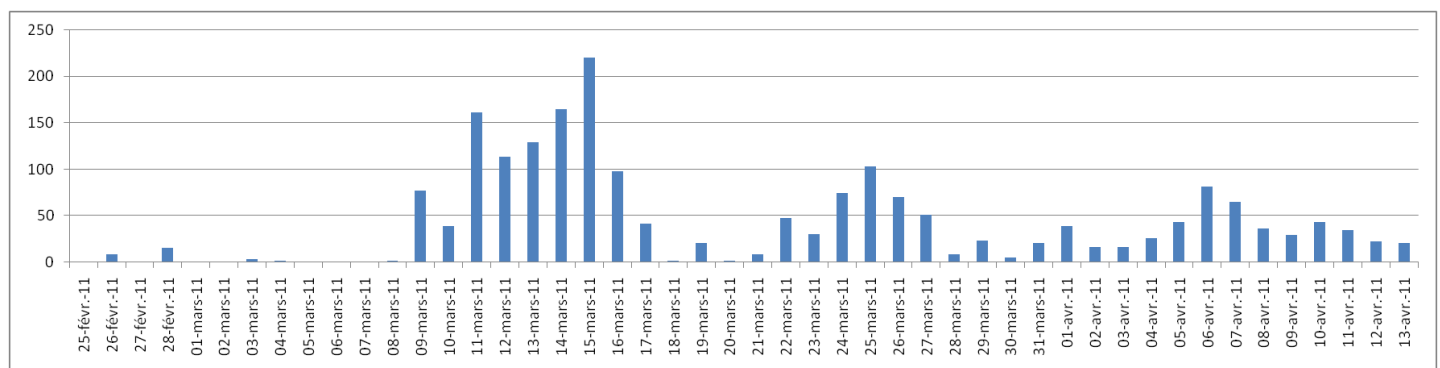
Number of calls for Somalia from February 25th to April 13th

Total : 2,291



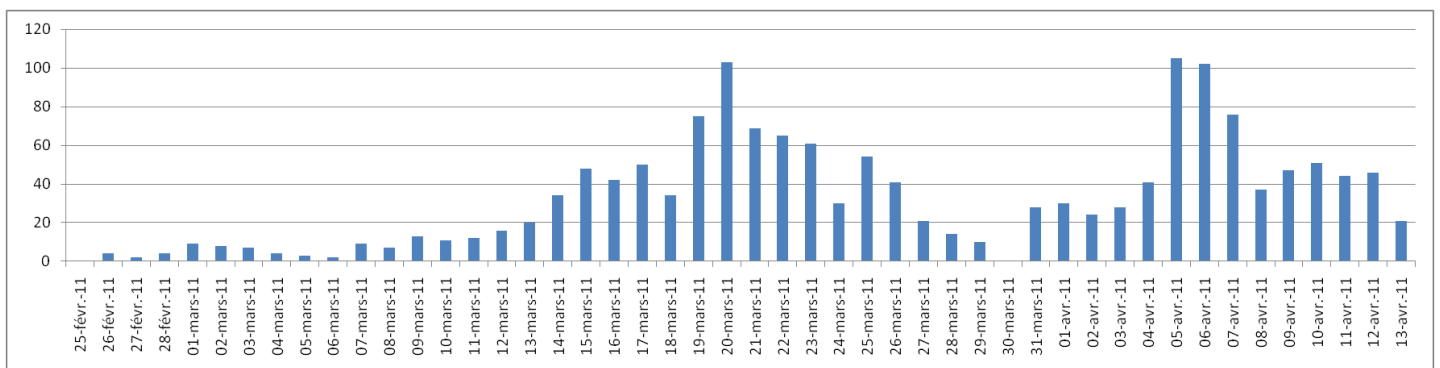
Number of calls for Mali from February 25th to April 13th

Total : 2,002

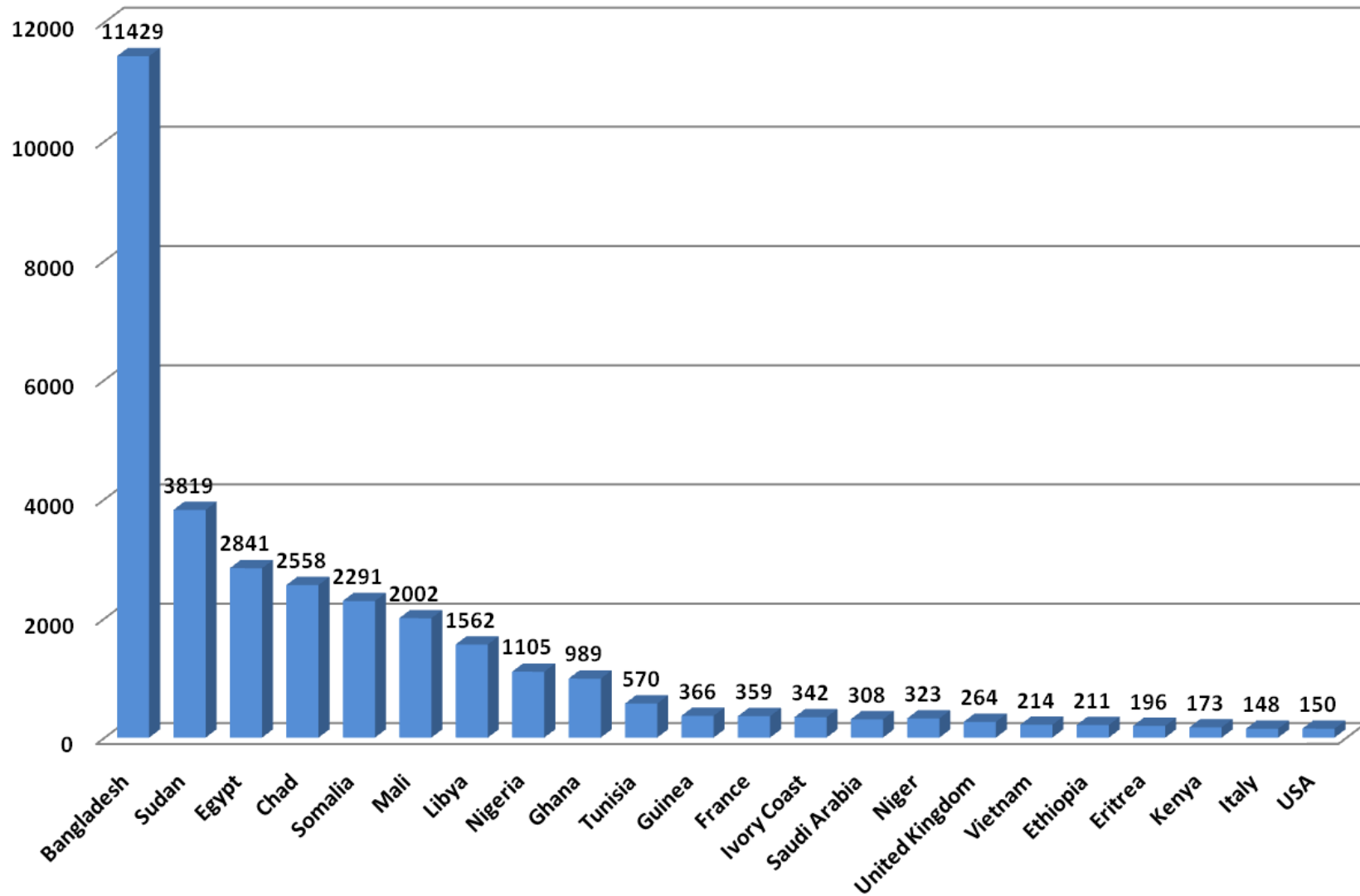


Number of calls for Libya from February 25th to April 13th

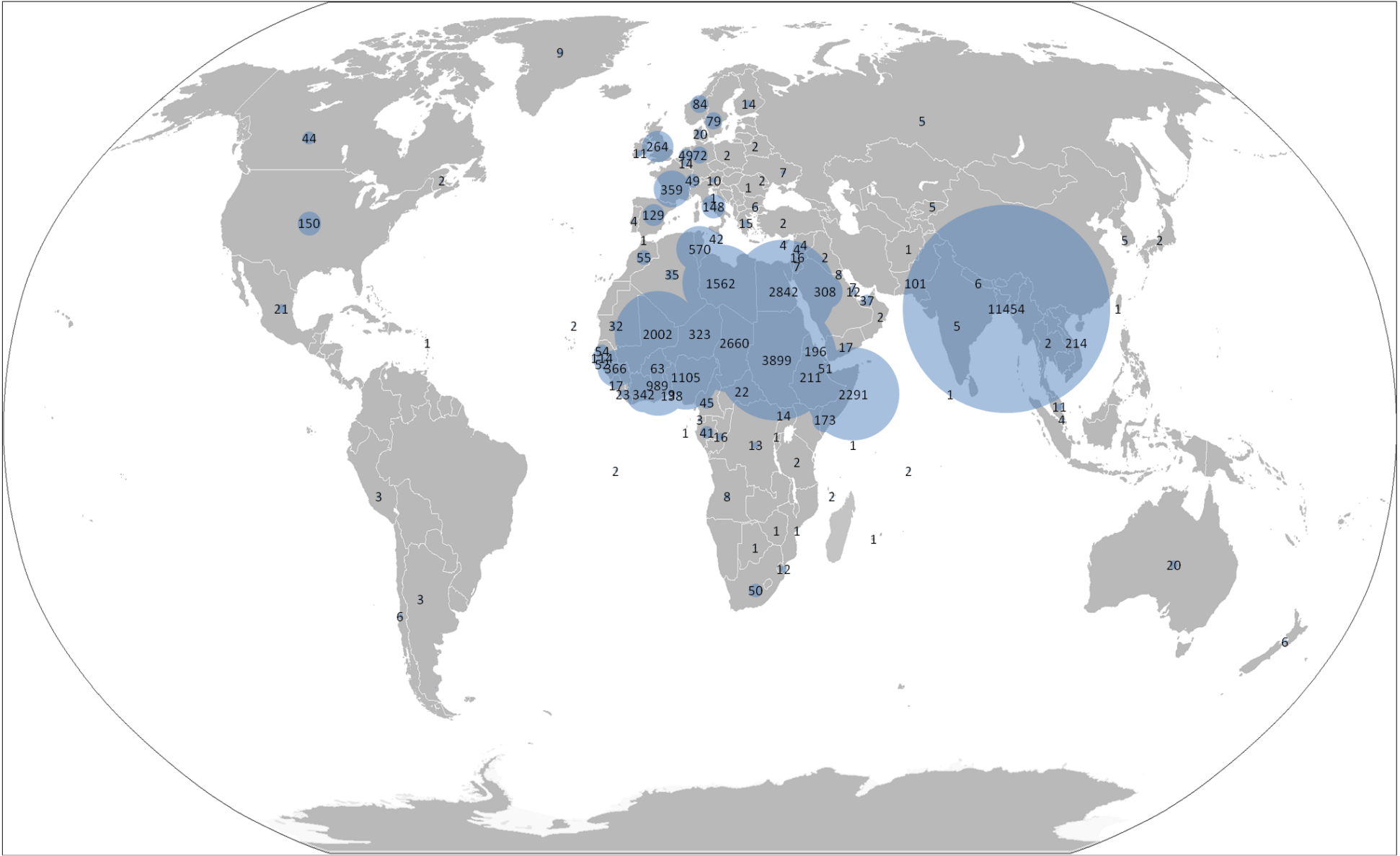
Total : 1,562



Number of calls by destination as for 13 April 2011



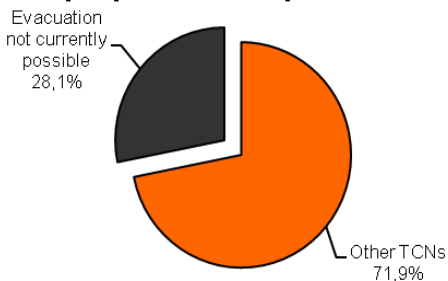
A world map illustrating the global distribution of 1000 species of the genus *Echinops*. The map uses blue circles of varying sizes to represent the number of species recorded in each country. The largest circles are found in India (11454), China (2842), and the United States (150). Other countries with significant numbers include Mexico (44), Argentina (3), and Australia (20). The map also shows the distribution of 1000 species of the genus *Echinops* in other parts of the world, including Europe, Africa, and Asia.



3.5. Main challenges

Chucha camp was at first a transit camp, a short-term solution for migrants coming from Libya before they get on buses to the airport of Djerba, a two-hour drive away. Day by day Chucha camp has become for many refugees a longer stop – for a few days, a few weeks, sometimes for one or two months...

Camp Population - 12 April 2011



As of April 12th, evacuation flights are not possible for some countries such as Eritrea, Iraq, Libya, Palestine and Somalia according to UNHCR.

TCNs: Third Country Nationals

In that situation, humanitarian actors are facing huge humanitarian challenges. TSF also has to tackle real challenges in terms of telecommunications and to translate them into solutions. TSF's objective is to provide the most appropriate answer in order to meet the needs of refugees in an efficient and coordinated manner.

One of the main challenges for TSF was to identify the priority calls, our objective being to respond to the migrants' priority needs. There is no official registration of the refugees at the entrance to the camp that would enable the identification of new arrivals. It has therefore been difficult to implement a system to identify new migrants who come to TSF's center for the first time. The refugees who have been in the camp for a certain period of time return spontaneously to our phoning center a few days later and ask to make additional phone calls.

TSF is alerted on those particular requests and tries to respond to them in the best possible way with flexibility and indulgence. Our team has set up several solutions, such as a system of control of phone numbers during each TSF registration so that priority calls can be better identified.

3.6. Other calling operations

Other calling operations have been conducted by several organizations or companies. Telecom operators mobilized to offer a service to the displaced populations. To offer an efficient aid response to those people in need, TSF successfully coordinated its activities with these organizations to avoid overlap.

- ICRC provides free 2-minute communications to families in Chucha, UAE and IFRC camps.
- Tunisie Telecom provided the same service for few days, which ended on 4 March.
- Omnicom has been offering calls to the refugees for a few weeks using GSM lines.

4. ICT Support to the Humanitarian Community

TSF also helps support relief efforts on the border. In emergency situations, Internet is a priority for relief workers. Humanitarian actors must be able to communicate with beneficiaries about humanitarian assistance and for the communication of reliable information on the crisis and overall situation.

TSF has assisted the humanitarian community by setting up internet connections using broadband satellite equipment (BGANs) and networking equipment at Ras Ejdir border post and at Chucha camp, and by providing IT support for relief workers who needed help.

4.1. Ras Ejdir border post

- Internet connection requested by ICRC, Red Crescent and UNHCR
- Date of setup: 26 of February 2011
- Location : ICRC tent
- Internet connection provided using a BGAN Explorer 500, shared with a secured access point ("TSF")
- Access point was used by ICRC, UNHCR, and Tunisian doctors.
- 1st March: connection moved to Chucha camp

4.2. Chucha transitional camp

- Internet connection requested by IOM
- Date of setup: 1st of March 2011
- Location : HCO Area
- Internet connection provided using a BGAN Explorer 500, shared with a protected access point ("TSF") with an 8dBi omnidirectional antenna to cover a large area.
- Average consumption: 30Mo/day
- Access point was used by IOM and the Tunisian army medical service.
- 25 March: connection handed over to IOM. TSF's AP as back-up.
- 10 April: connection re-opened for the Tunisian army medical service at their request

As well as setting up internet connections and high-speed satellite lines, TSF teams have also been providing technical and telecommunications support for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as they manage the temporary camps on the border.

Conclusion

A new camp has been set up in Remada in the south of Tunisia, on the border with Libya that houses Libyans exclusively. TSF is carrying out a mission of evaluation in order to know the needs of these refugee populations.

The situation at Raj Ejdir border crossing has evolved and remains unpredictable considering the current context in Libya. The number of people who cross the border has decreased. In collaboration with the other humanitarian actors, TSF has to set up appropriate solutions to respond to the priority needs of the migrants.

As well as this mission on the border between Tunisia and Libya, a TSF team arrived in Benghazi in Libya on Wednesday 13 April. In coordination with the UN agencies and the NGOs in the field, and in partnership with the European Commission, TSF installs a broadband internet connection for the humanitarian community.