

Egypt Weekly Update

Syria Operation

2 – 8 September 2013

Response in Egypt to Syrian Crisis

As the conflict in Syria continues to escalate, the number of people fleeing into other countries in the region in search of refuge has been increasing. Some 250,000 to 300,000 Syrians currently reside in Egypt according to Government estimates provided in June, of which UNHCR has registered 99,024 individuals as of 7 September.

Although Egypt has been providing gracious hospitality and support to refugees fleeing the crisis in Syria, as a result of alleged involvement of a few Syrians in the current political turmoil, there has been a shift in perceptions and the level of sympathy afforded to the Syrian community. The Government of Egypt announced temporary measures on 8 July requiring Syrians coming to Egypt to obtain a visa and prior security approval. Syrians have also been experiencing verbal threats, physical assaults and there have been increasing incidents of detention and deportation.

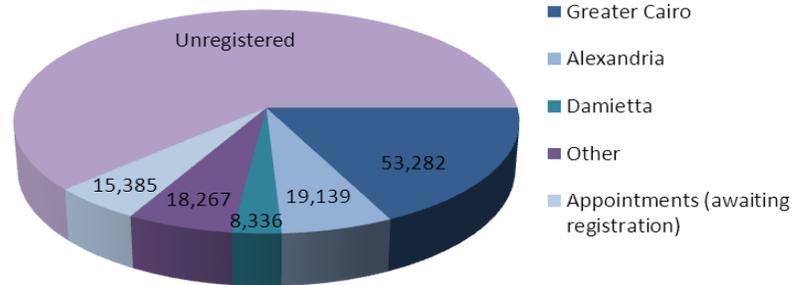
Most Syrians in Egypt are scattered in urban neighbourhoods, renting and sharing whatever accommodation they are able to afford. Lately, UNHCR has noted a decrease in Syrian's interest in registering with UNHCR, a sharp increase in the number of refugees closing their files, and increasing reports of departures by sea to Europe. Furthermore, loss of livelihood opportunities is leading to increased levels of vulnerability among Syrians.

UNHCR conducts registration, provides counselling through the Zamalek Registration Centre, which opened in November 2012, and works with partners to provide legal assistance and address the social assistance needs of vulnerable Syrians in Egypt. UNHCR also operates hotlines for emergencies and inquiries, and sensitizes refugees of the dangers of involvement in political activities.

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Registration of Syrians in Egypt (as of 7 September)



Gov. estimates 250,000 – 300,000 Syrians in Egypt

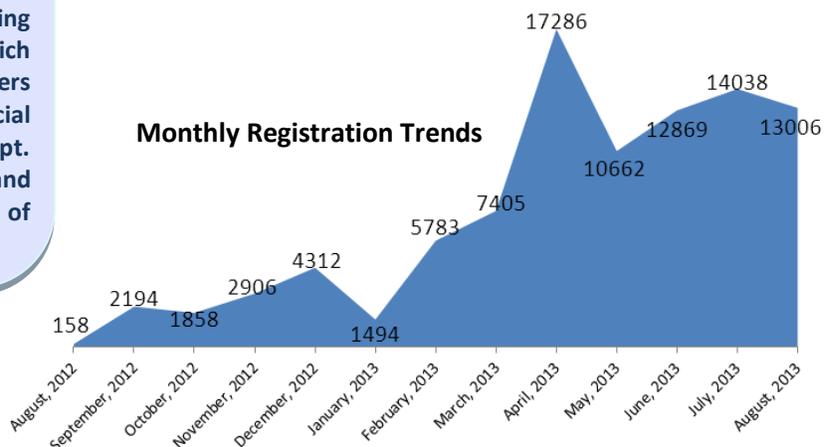
47.3% of registered Syrians arrived to Egypt through a transit country; of those, **78.1%** passed through Lebanon, **12.1%** through Jordan, and **9.8%** through others countries.

During the week, **3,798** individuals registered in the Zamalek Registration Centres; 165 persons were identified with specific needs.

Gender and Age Breakdown of Registered Syrians

Age Group	F	M	Total
0 - 4	6995	7364	14359
5 - 11	8693	9139	17832
12 - 17	5730	6661	12391
18 - 39	18001	17490	35491
40 - 59	7409	7425	14834
60+	2025	2092	4117
Total	48853	50171	99024

Monthly Registration Trends



Protection

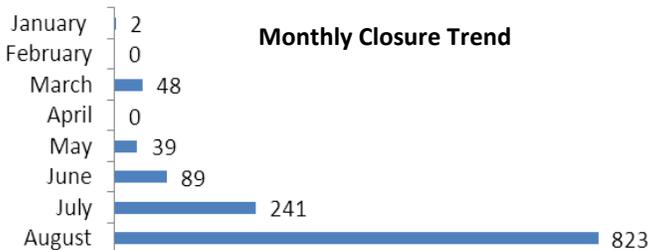
UNHCR continued its advocacy with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and judiciary on arbitrary arrest and detention of Syrians, including those arrested for attempting to leave Egypt illegally either to Libya or Europe. UNHCR and UNICEF continue to raise the detention and deportation of children, including unaccompanied children, as a concern. UNHCR also continues to seek clarification from the Egyptian authorities on visa and residency requirements and particularly how Syrians whose residency permits have expired can renew them without fear of deportation.

During the week, UNHCR conducted mobile registration in 6 of October in Greater Cairo, and is also in Alexandria identifying Syrians who wish to register in order to provide appointments and vulnerable cases for fast-track registration. UNHCR also conducted a field visit to Bourg Al Arab neighbouring Alexandria, to assess the condition of the Syrian there and identified Syrians wishing to register.

UNHCR met with community leaders in Alexandria to provide a briefing on services, and conducted focus group discussions during which the participants highlighted that they are feeling increasingly insecure and no longer feel welcome in Egypt. Many believed that they should prepare to leave as soon as they have an opportunity to. They also disclosed that an increasing number of Syrians in the community are looking into how to illegally migrate to Europe, and that they have heard that a number of Syrians have already engaged the services of smugglers.

Closures

Although Syrians are continuing to register with UNHCR, 294 individuals closed their files over the week. Most of the Syrians closing their files have cited economic concerns, an interest in re-joining family members in other countries, and anxiety over their insecurity in Egypt.

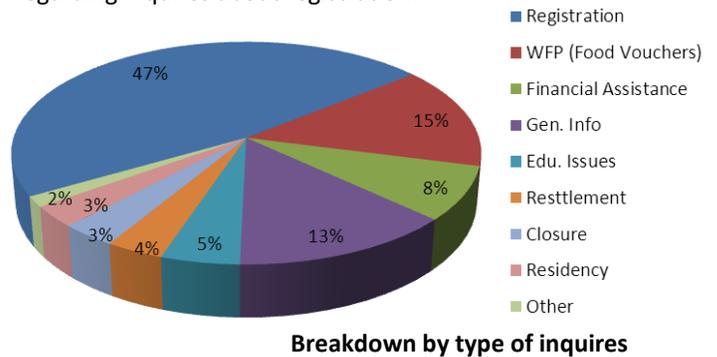


Detentions

During the last two months, UNHCR confirmed 208 arrests of Syrians, of whom 87 were deported, 33 were released, and 88 remain in detention. There have been further reports but due to lack of access, UNHCR has as of yet been unable to verify. Included in the above total are 50 Syrian who were arrested trying to illegally cross by boat from Alexandria to Italy. Some members of this group are minors, and UNHCR, UNICEF and Egyptian legal partners are following up on the cases.

Hotline

During the week UNHCR responded to 712 calls, nearly half regarding inquires about registration.



Community Services

During the week 34 cases were referred to health facilities, 67 cases were referred to Islamic Relief and Caritas for financial assistance, and 22 cases were referred to PSTIC for psychosocial counselling.

Food

Despite delays in August due to security concerns, WFP completed distribution of food vouchers to Syrian refugees in the first week of September. 31,775 beneficiaries (90% of the target) were provided with food vouchers in Damietta, 6 of October and Obour with numbers for Alexandria still to be confirmed (for a total target of 50,000 persons). As a result of decreasing livelihood opportunities for Syrians in Egypt, there is increasing demand for inclusion in the food voucher distribution, and those receiving the vouchers have requested greater support, including UNHCR financial assistance.

Education

In partnership with Ministry of Education and UNICEF, UNHCR continued a Joint Schools Needs Assessment of public schools accommodating high numbers of Syrian refugees with a mission in Alexandria from 4-5 September. Although the mission could not gauge the impact of the school environment on learning process as classes have yet to begin, a number of gaps were nevertheless noted, such as an insufficient number of teachers, desks blackboards, lab equipment, computers, and classrooms to absorb the added numbers. The mission also took note of potential space through refurbishment, although this will require significant funding. Furthermore, some school districts have yet to be notified of the Ministry of Education’s directive allowing Syrians to have the same access to public schools as Egyptians for the coming school year.

Partners:

- Caritas • Catholic Relief Services (CRS) • Islamic Relief Worldwide • Mahmoud Mosque society • Refugee Egypt • Ressala Association • Terre Des Hommes - TADAMON and Psycho-Social Services and Training Institute in Cairo (PSTIC) • Save the Children • UNICEF • WFP