UNHCR EGYPT
SUDAN EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE
24 July 2023

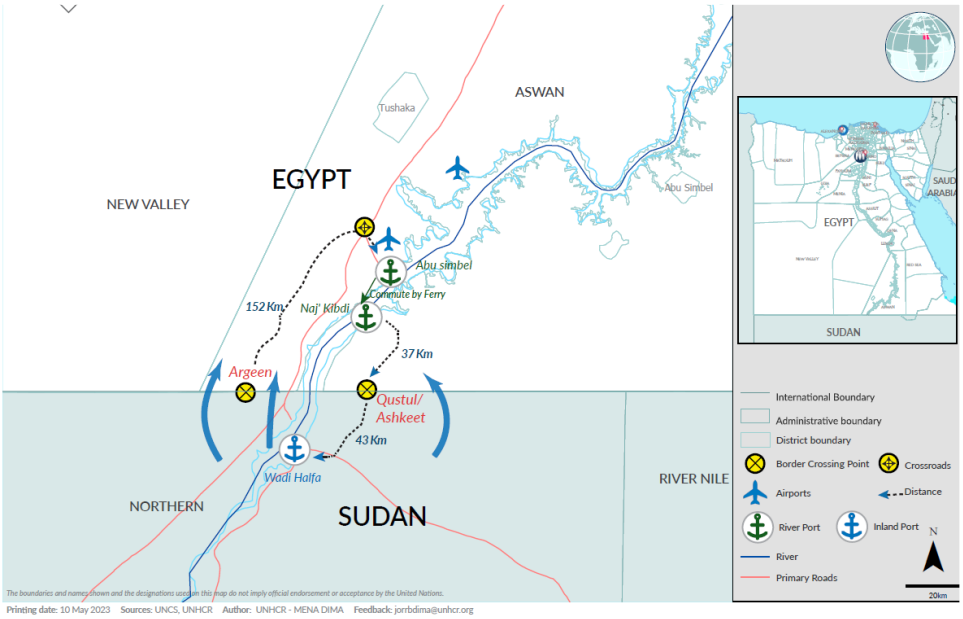
Nasr (left) and Adel (right) both arrived with from Khartoum at the end of May and are registering with UNHCR
Credit: UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

>250,000

Sudanese have entered Egypt from Sudan via the two official border crossings, Arqeen and Qoustol, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
According to the latest update provided to UNHCR on 22 June

$25.2 million

UNHCR's financial requirements for the Sudan emergency response in Egypt.



LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- Hervé de Villeroché, Special Advisor to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on Development, visited Egypt between the 17 and 21 July 2023. His mission aimed at mobilizing support for development and inclusion initiatives to benefit Sudanese refugees in Egypt. The mission followed the High Commissioner's visit to Egypt in late May where he stressed the importance of a longer-term vision of sustainable support to Sudanese, their host communities and Egypt generally in challenging economic circumstances.
- On 16 July, Egypt's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has assured UNHCR that the Government's new draft asylum law will be fully in line with international standards, by adhering to the 1951 and the 1969 refugee conventions including the right to asylum and protection against refoulement alongside articles supporting education, employment, and health care.

Sector highlights

UNHCR continues to strengthen its engagement and coordination leadership with partners in Cairo as well as in the south and border areas, while continuing to engage local authorities and community-based organizations to assess the needs and scope of the response. Two technical inter-sector working groups (ISWG), one in Aswan and one in Cairo, continue to meet on a bi-weekly basis to report any issue that needs the attention of the inter-agency working group.

Protection

So far in July, the Office noted an increase of 67% in the number of registration requests for unaccompanied and vulnerable separated children, compared to the month of June. In response to this, the monthly number of registration slots for unaccompanied and separate children were increased from 300 to 360, and additional slots for emergency cases will be created as needed.

Regarding the intentions of new arrivals, in the latest discussions with some 30 newly arrived Sudanese refugees facilitated by the UNHCR protection team, all reported that they were heading to Cairo, including to Faisal, Nasr City and New Cairo, mainly due to the accessibility of services and possibility of family reunification.

Registration

As of 23 July, UNHCR has provided pre-registration appointments for 19,760 newly arrived households (42,059 individuals) of whom 10,549 households (22,449 individuals) have been registered. According to UNHCR registration data, over 94% are Sudanese, followed by South Sudanese and Eritreans. Some 60% are female-headed households.

UNHCR's reinforcement of its help line capacity in recent weeks has paid off with greater demand on the lines since the start of the crisis. The number of operators has trebled to 32 and the number of channels has increased fourfold to 120. The Infoline is an important registration tool with just over half (53%) of all calls relating to registering with UNHCR. So far, 13,000 new arrivals have received registration appointments through the Infoline. Other enquiries relate to assistance provided by UNHCR and partners (17%), protection (15%), while durable solutions and legal enquiries make up the rest. Most of those who call are located in the Greater Cairo area and are women (71%).

Cash assistance

UNHCR continues to provide one-off emergency cash assistance to registered and unregistered new arrivals from Sudan.

Sara, a single mother of two, has recently arrived from Sudan and has received cash assistance from UNHCR allowing her to find a place to stay and buy some clothes for her son. ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

As of 22 July, since the start of the Sudan conflict, a total of 19,688 registered and unregistered individuals (6,886 families) have been identified by UNHCR as eligible for the emergency cash assistance among whom 10,968 individuals (3,853 families) have already been assisted. Some 4,079 unregistered families (12,568 individuals) were assessed by UNHCR partner, Caritas, for eligibility for emergency cash assistance via assessments in Aswan, Greater Cairo, and Alexandria – 73% of these were female-headed households.

Around 62% of the assessed unregistered families (2,540 families, 8,367 individuals) were found eligible for emergency cash. As of 22 July, 1,578 unregistered families (5,203 individuals) have already been assisted through Egypt Post Office. 4,346 eligible registered cases (11,321 individuals) have been identified to receive emergency cash assistance and 2,275 cases (5,765 individuals) have already been assisted; the remainder is currently being assisted.

Livelihoods

Hervé de Villeroché, UNHCR Special Advisor to the High Commissioner on Development, visited Cairo between the 17 and 21 July 2023. Bilateral meetings with the Minister of Social Solidarity, the Minister of International Cooperation, and the Assistant Foreign Minister for Multilateral Affairs and International Security at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were held where Mr. de Villeroché thanked the Egyptian Government for its inclusion efforts, in particular in the areas of health and education, and for having received a significant number (250,000) of those having fled the conflict in Sudan following the eruption of the conflict in mid-April. He also reiterated UNHCR's support and willingness to further enhance its cooperation with the Government of Egypt. During his visit, Mr. De Villeroché met with the World Bank Country Director in Egypt, the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) Vice President of Corporate Support, and the IFC Regional Director for North Africa.

Three months into the conflict, UNHCR continues to hold regular focus group discussions with newly arrived Sudanese refugees in large refugee-hosting communities across Egypt. Education and employment opportunities, difficulties registering with UNHCR, and integration all feature prominently in the list of challenges outlined to UNHCR in recent discussions. During a livelihoods mission conducted jointly by UNHCR and UNDP, refugees highlighted the need for economic inclusion through access to the Egyptian labour market. The new arrivals could contribute to the latter as many are university graduates. However, they are unable to work in their fields of study in Egypt and are compelled to work in the informal sector as daily workers in the fields of construction, mining, agriculture, or producing handmade products. UNHCR identified the need to provide broader support to local grassroots organizations and NGOs to respond to the high demand. Furthermore, refugees requested that awareness sessions and campaigns directed at Sudanese and Egyptian communities be undertaken to mitigate rising community tensions given the large influx of Sudanese.

Core relief items

Items distributed to newly arrived individuals:

634,000 Bottles of water

150,000 hygiene kits

80,000 Sanitary items

So far UNHCR installed of two rub halls in Qoustol border crossing, and a third rub hall has been installed in the zone between the two borders. Those installations have been facilitating the scale up of the response as well as providing space for asylum-seekers to rest. In addition, UNHCR delivered nine commercial fridges, 15 family tents, 50 office chairs, 30 tablets, 20 smartphones and 250 waiting benches to partner ERC.

Main needs and gaps

Since the onset of the crisis, new arrivals have consistently told UNHCR that accommodation is their greatest immediate challenge. Prohibitively expensive rent, exploitation by landlords, sudden evictions to accommodate higher paying tenants and scarcity of accommodation have in many cases left new arrivals homeless or faced to live in undignified, unsanitary conditions. UNHCR Protection Counseling has highlighted that approximately 55% of the people served cite shelter as a top concern. To help mitigate the challenge in the short term, UNHCR provides monthly and emergency cash assistance to the most vulnerable families in Aswan, Greater Cairo, and Alexandria, and is also liaising with partners and refugee led organizations (RLOs) to support interactions with landlords and increase options of emergency housing. In addition, access to territory under the 10-June new admission procedures remains a concern.

Financial information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical and generous contributions of its public and private donors who have contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding to its operation in Egypt, including in response to the Sudan situation. The overall Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) is currently funded at 24%, while the Egypt chapter of the same is funded at 27%.

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