

Response in Egypt to Syrian Crisis

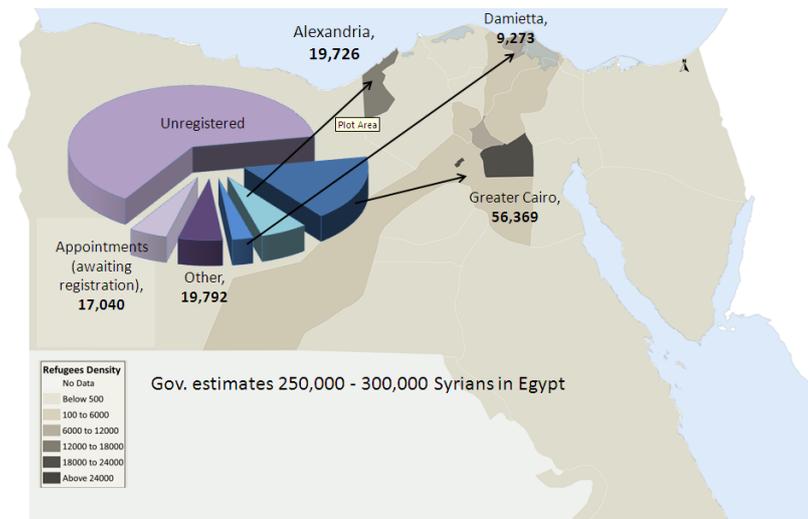
As the conflict in Syria continues to escalate, the number of people fleeing into other countries in the region in search of refuge has been increasing. Some 250,000 to 300,000 Syrians currently reside in Egypt according to Government estimates provided in June, of which UNHCR has registered 109,739* individuals as of 21 September.

As a result of alleged involvement of a few Syrians in the recent 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 increasing incidents of verbal threats, physical assaults, detention and deportation.

Most Syrians in Egypt are scattered in urban neighbourhoods, renting and sharing accommodation. Lately, there has been a sharp increase in the number of refugees closing their files with UNHCR and leaving Egypt, citing economic concerns, an interest in re-joining family members in other countries, and anxiety over their security in Egypt. Most have indicated they will depart to Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon among other destinations. Some have also noted they intend to return to Syria. There has also been increasing reports of departures by sea to Europe.

UNHCR conducts registration, provides counselling, and works with partners to provide legal assistance and address the social 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.

Registration of Syrians in Egypt (as of 21 September)



48% of registered Syrians arrived to Egypt through a transit country; of those, 78% passed through Lebanon, 12.3% through Jordan, and 9.7% through others countries.

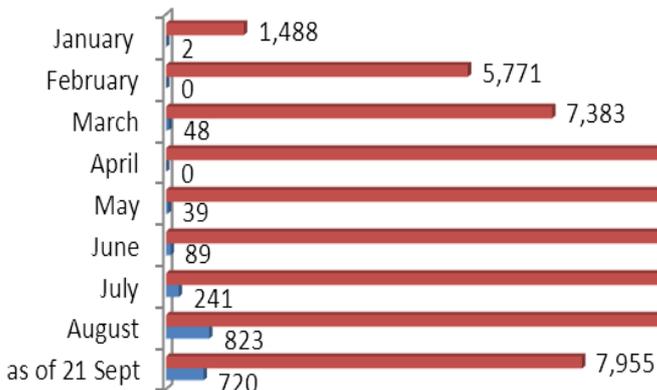
During the week, 2,274 individuals registered in the Zamalek Registration Centres; 4,579 were registered during mobile registration; 134 persons were identified with specific needs.

Gender and Age Breakdown

Age Group	F	M	Total
0 - 4	7,400	7,800	15,200
5 - 11	9,200	9,746	18,946
12 - 17	6,067	7,082	13,149
18 - 39	19,131	18,751	37,882
40 - 59	7,819	7,830	15,649
60+	2,133	2,201	4,334
Total	51,750	53,410	105,160*

*Consolidation is underway for the mobile registration database; individuals registered by the mobile team are included in the total (109,739) but not in the breakdown provided.

Registration and Closure Trends



Registration Total: 90,251
Closure Total: 1,962
From 1 Jan – 21 Sept

Syrians refugees (generally with family or business links) flee to Egypt

UNHCR registered nearly 25,000 Syrians

Several media outlets begin negative campaign against Syrians following a few Syrians allegedly involved in demonstrations

Increasing number of Syrians, citing economic and security concerns, departing Egypt. Increase in attempts to illegal cross over by boat to Europe

2011-2012

March – April 2013

July 2013

August – present



Protection Timeline

increasing number of Syrians begin fleeing to Egypt due to lower cost of living compared to other countries in the region, good protection space, and welcoming environment, including access to education and health care

Government enacts visa requirements and security check for Syrians. Passengers of several flight were not allowed to disembark and were returned back. Government announced that the measures are temporary and have also been applied to several other nationalities

Increasing incidents of Syrians experiencing verbal threats, physical assaults, detention and deportation. Due to the political unrest and current security situation, more and more Syrians are approaching UNHCR for protection

Protection/Field

UNHCR initiated an information campaign through the Community Based Protection Networks (Syrian community leaders and volunteers) on the risks of illegal departure. UNHCR also concluded an exercise in Damietta to identify Syrians who wish to register in order to provide appointments and vulnerable cases for fast-track registration; 2,749 Syrians were identified. Meanwhile, UNHCR is conducting mobile registration in Alexandria.

Detentions/Deportations/Releases

Syrians have fallen under greater scrutiny since early July, and during intense periods of instability in Egypt, authorities singled out Syrians at checkpoints or picked them up from homes and business. During the last two months, UNHCR is aware of **146** arrests of Syrians related to lack of proper residency, out after curfew, or suspicion of violence. Of these, **35** were released, **65** deported and **46** remain in detention, including some children.

Authorities have ordered a number of those detained to leave the country, whereby family members are instructed to purchase tickets for their departure. Most have departed to Turkey, Lebanon, or other countries where they do not require a visa to enter, while some have opted to return to Syria.

There have been further reports of arrests and detention but due to lack of access, UNHCR has as of yet been unable to verify. UNHCR, UNICEF (for the children) and Egyptian legal partners are following up on all the cases reported.

Since the beginning of August there has also been an increasing number of Syrians attempting to cross illegally by boat to Europe, and several cases of attempting to illegally cross the border to Libya or transit through Egypt with fraudulent documents. UNHCR is aware of **462** Syrians arrested in this regard; 54 were released, 106 deported (of which at least **45** were children) and **302** remain in detention, many of whom are women and children (around **37** children).

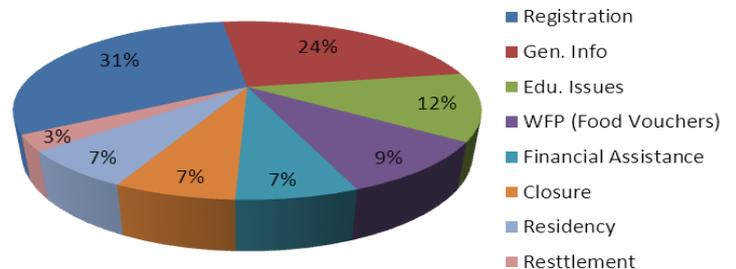
UNHCR and its legal partners have had difficulties in accessing the detained in order to properly verify numbers, conditions, and needs, or provide legal assistance.



On 16 September at around 10:00, some 70 Syrians and 100 other nationalities set off in a boat from the Abu Kir Port in Alexandria in an effort to try to illegally cross to Europe, with Sweden as the intended final destination. After about 30 minutes they were intercepted by the Egyptian Coast Guard and the ship was instructed to halt. Failing to do so, the Coast Guard opened fire, resulting in the death of two of the passengers (one of whom was a Syrian man) and the wounding of two others. Egyptian authorities seized the boat, arrested the passengers.

Hotline

UNHCR also responded to 665 calls, nearly half regarding inquires about registration.



Breakdown by type of inquires

Community Services

During the week, 30 cases were referred to health facilities, 37 cases were referred to Islamic Relief and Caritas for financial assistance, and 4 cases were referred to PSTIC for psychosocial counselling.

Training and Capacity Building

On 17-18 September, UNHCR conducted 2 training workshops on case management and referral mechanisms for 79 staff members of implementing and operational partners (Caritas, Refugee Egypt, PSTIC, IRW, CRS, Tadamon, ACSFT, Resalah, Mahmoud hospital, Save the Children and AMERA). The workshops were held at the premises of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Cairo. The workshops focused on inter-agency cooperation among UNHCR partners in Cairo, and referral mechanism for Syrian refugees seeking different services.

Partners:

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

For further information:

Teddy Leposky • Associate Reporting Officer • leposky@unhcr.org
Marwa Hashem • Assistant Public Information Officer • hashemma@unhcr.org



Egyptian volunteers assisting UNHCR in conducting a quantitative survey targeting 500 Syrian refugee families in Egypt as part of a joint assessment. Four UN agencies, seven national and international organizations and Cairo University are participating in the assessment to identify assistance gaps, humanitarian needs and protection challenges. The process will be conducted between 15 September and 15 October and will cover five Governorates. The findings of the assessment will be the platform for the upcoming strategic planning and will directly feed the Regional Response Plan for 2014.