

# Egypt Weekly Update

## Syria Operation

7-13 October 2013

### Response in Egypt to Syrian Crisis

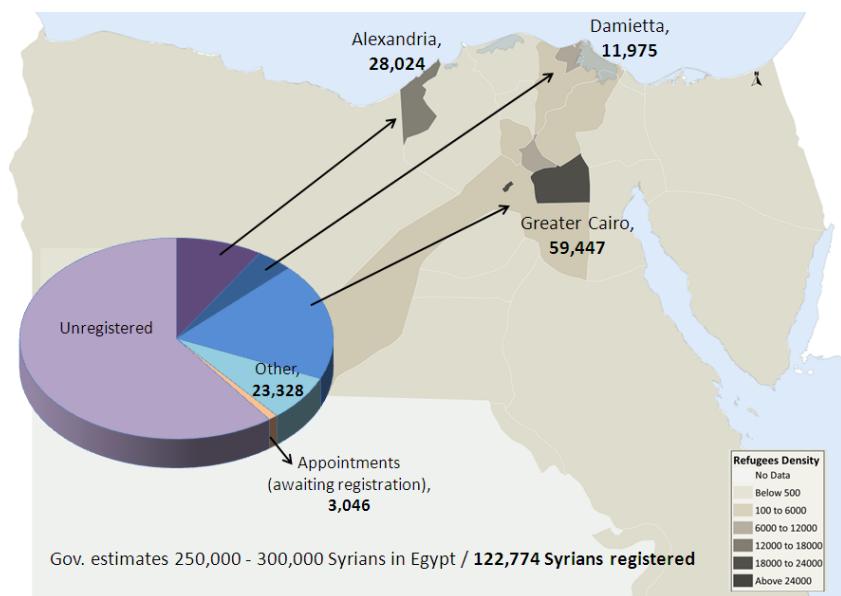
As the conflict in Syria continues to escalate, the number of people fleeing into other countries in the region in search of refuge has been increasing. Some 250,000 to 300,000 Syrians currently reside in Egypt according to Government estimates provided in June, of which UNHCR has registered 122,774 individuals as of 12 October.

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 have 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 12 October)



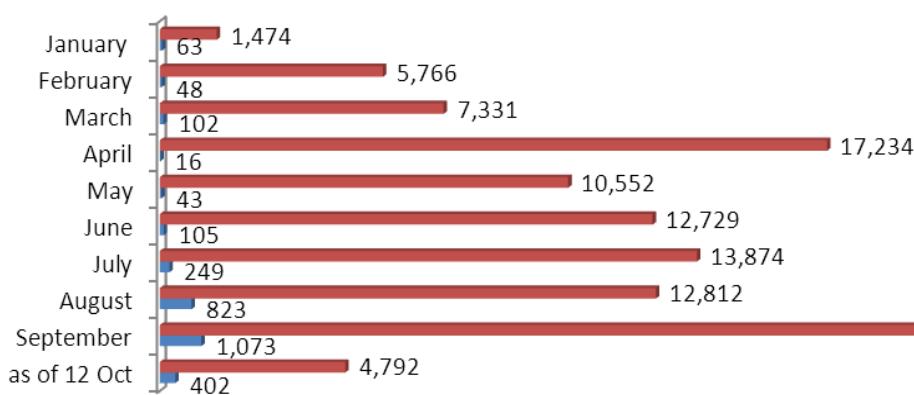
49.8% of registered Syrians arrived to Egypt through a transit country; of those, 77.2% passed through Lebanon, 12.3% through Jordan, and 10.5% through others countries.

During the week, 1,530 individuals registered in the Zamalek Registration Centres; 25 persons were identified with specific needs.

### Gender and Age Breakdown

Age Group	F	M	Total
0 - 4	8,742	9,219	17,961
5 - 11	10,609	11,280	21,889
12 - 17	6,990	8,112	15,102
18 - 39	22,291	22,528	44,819
40 - 59	9,029	8,960	17,989
60+	2,483	2,531	5,014
<b>Total</b>	<b>60144</b>	<b>62630</b>	<b>122,774</b>

### Registration and Closure Trends in 2013



**Registration Total: 110,183**

**Closure Total: 2,924**

**From 1 Jan – 12 Oct**

## Protection Timeline



### Illegal Departures

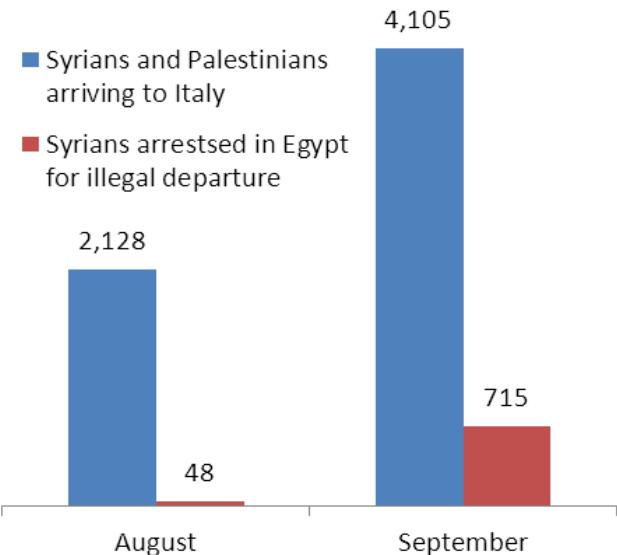
Since August there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Syrians attempting to cross the Mediterranean from Egypt to Italy. From January to 30 September, some **7,557** Syrians and Palestinians have arrived along the coast of Italy; **6,233** have arrived along the coast of Italy since August. This is compared with an estimated **350** Syrians who arrived in 2012. Most of the Syrian refugees that make landfall are not seeking asylum in Italy and continue on to other countries in Europe.

UNHCR recognizes that there have also been an increasing number of unaccompanied minors making the voyage. As the cost of travel can range from 2,000-5,000 USD per person, some families are spending their resources to send their children with a distant relative or friend.

Although Egypt is not the only point of departure for Syrians bound for Italy (some are arriving from Libya and Turkey), a reported **63** boats have arrived along the coast of Italy from Egypt since the beginning of the year. Conversely, UNHCR is aware of **809** Syrians arrested in Egypt since August for attempting to illegally depart; **144** have been deported to third countries (at least **44** were children). Although the Egyptian prosecutors have not placed charges, approximately **589** Syrians remain in administrative detention, including women and **84** children. UNHCR has had difficulties in accessing the detained in order to properly verify numbers, conditions, and needs, or provide legal assistance.

### Detentions/Deportations/Releases

Between July and September, authorities placed Syrians under greater scrutiny and singled them out at checkpoints or picked them up from homes and business, and in some cases arrested them due to lack of valid residency permits, out after curfew, or suspicion of violence. UNHCR is aware of **65** deported and some **46** that remain in detention, including some children, for which UNHCR and its legal partners have had only limited access to verify and provide assistance.



### Shipwreck

Weather and sea conditions in the Mediterranean are making the travel between North Africa and Italy increasingly hazardous. A couple of ships have capsized off the coast of Italy in the last few weeks and on 11 October a boat that had set out from Alexandria with 112 passengers (40 of whom were Syrian) sunk even before it could make way into the open sea. A reported twelve bodies were recovered, including 5 children, 4 women and 3 men.

The survivors, who lost all their belongings when the boat sank, are being held in detention facilities in two police stations. Approximately 8-10 children are among those detained in one of the police stations.

UNHCR is continuing to follow up to verify information and provide assistance.

### **Protection/Field**

UNHCR conducted a field visit to Hurgada Red Sea Governorate, on 10 October to establish contact and set up mechanism for the exchange of information with local authorities. UNHCR also established contact with the local community and set up a Community Based Protection Network to assist in flagging protection concerns and disseminate information throughout the community, including raising awareness about the importance of registration and services available to the Syrian community.

The Governor's office estimates that there are around 2,000 Syrians in the governorate, and noted that Syrians in the area have the same access to public schools, public health and other social facilities as Egyptians. Many of the Syrians in the area noted, however, their savings are becoming depleted and are increasingly finding it difficult to afford housing and survive. An increasing number of families are in desperate need of financial assistance. As well, many Syrians in Hurghada are concerned about their inability to obtain Egyptian visas for their relatives still in Syria.

### **QIPs**

In view of the deteriorating protection environment for Syrian refugees in Egypt, UNHCR is looking at developing 15-20 Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in collaboration with Egyptian municipalities in refugee-affected areas, refugee communities and local/international NGO partners, between October and December 2013. Aimed at addressing the existing lack of services in deprived host communities, QIPs are ultimately intended to improve the image of refugees and reduce tensions between them and the host community, with the goal of improving the protection environment for Syrian refugees in Egypt.

UNHCR has launched an invitation for QIP proposals to its partners and held a meeting with the host and refugee community in a particularly deprived neighbourhood in Greater Cairo where a brainstorm resulted in a number of potential QIP proposals.

### **Partners:**

Caritas • Catholic Relief Services (CRS) • Islamic Relief Worldwide • Mahmoud Mosque society • Refuge 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:**

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### **Community Outreach/Capacity Building**

UNHCR conducted an awareness session on 6 October for 26 volunteers from the Community Based Protection Networks (CBPNs) in Sadat City. The session focused on UNHCR's mandate and information about registration and protection of Syrian refugees in Egypt. The session stressed the importance of respecting Egyptian laws and regulations. Moreover, the participants were advised to get their residence permit on their Asylum Cards and to disseminate this advice among the Syrian community in their respective residential areas. The participants were briefed on the services UNHCR provides to Syrian refugees in Egypt and how to access them.

The Centre of Democracy and Social Peace Studies associated with the Library of Alexandria hosted a two-day workshop on International Refugee Law on 9-10 October. UNHCR assisted members of human rights organizations and activists in Alexandria in building a better understanding about the rights, obligations and needs of refugees, with specific focus on the Syrian refugee situation. 33 independent activists, lawyers and researchers from 5 human rights organizations have participated in the workshop. The workshop involved active discussions on cases of Syrian asylum seekers trying to illegally migrate to Europe, and the increasing numbers of Syrians detained in the northern coastal cities of Egypt.

### **Hotline**

UNHCR responded to 917 calls:

### **Breakdown by type of inquiries**

