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Update on UNHCR operations in the Middle East and North Africa**A. Situational analysis, including new developments***Syria situation*

In March 2022, the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic entered its twelfth year. Some 5.6 million Syrian refugees continued to be hosted by neighbouring States amid difficult economic conditions and faced increased vulnerabilities. Against this background, negative rhetoric about Syrian refugees in some countries have generated intercommunal tensions.

The [vulnerability assessment framework](#) for Jordan explored vulnerability across multiple sectors, and non-Syrians and camp-based refugees in Azraq and Zaatari were included for the first time. The study found that when compared to the previous year, economic conditions had deteriorated for many Syrians in the first quarter of 2022. As a result, 90 per cent of refugee families frequently resorted to at least one harmful coping strategy to survive. According to the study, 55 per cent of refugee families were living in sub-standard shelter compared with 38 per cent in 2018, and the debts of Syrian households outside of camps had increased by 39 per cent between 2018 and 2021.

The [2021 vulnerability assessment for Syrian refugees in Lebanon](#) conducted by UNHCR, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) found that despite increases in assistance, 88 per cent of Syrian refugee households were unable to meet their basic needs. The World Bank also estimated that half of the Lebanese population was living below the poverty line.¹

Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, some 14.6 million people, including 6.9 million internally displaced, are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. This represents an increase of 9 per cent compared to the previous year. Between January to mid-2022, UNHCR provided over 115,000 internally displaced persons, returnees and host community members with legal assistance, some 278,000 with core relief items and 7,900 with shelter packages. In July 2022, the United Nations Security Council voted to renew Security Council Resolution 2165 (2014) for a period of six months (until 10 January 2023), allowing humanitarian organizations to continue using the Bab al-Hawa border crossing to assist 345,000 internally displaced persons in the north-west. So far in 2022, UNHCR has organized 38 cross-border deliveries through Bab al-Hawa, providing a total of 40,500 kits containing core relief items, 14,000 family tents and 20,000 hygiene kits.

In 2022, approximately 33,400 refugees had returned voluntarily to the Syrian Arab Republic by the end of August, from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye. An [intention-to-return survey](#) conducted by UNHCR in early 2022 showed a decrease in refugees wanting to return within 12 months (1.7 per cent) and those who hope to return one day (58 per cent compared to 70 per cent in 2021). UNHCR considers that the conditions for large-scale organized return are not yet in place.

As of July 2022, UNHCR had provided over 1.1 million Syrians with approximately \$75 million in multipurpose cash assistance to address economic hardships and respond to

¹ See <https://www.jointdatacenter.org/compounding-misfortunes-an-update-to-the-study>.

other needs, including health care and education. UNHCR continued to co-lead the development of the [regional refugee and resilience plan in response to the Syrian crisis](#) (also known as the 3RP), which reflects the needs of over 270 partners to assist 7.1 million Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers, including 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees and 4.3 million host community members.

Iraq situation

Some 1.2 million Iraqis remain internally displaced, while over 4.9 million internally displaced returnees face insecurity and constrained access to services. More than 245,000 Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR are hosted in neighbouring countries, and over 31,000 unregistered Iraqis live in camps in Al-Hasakeh Governorate in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The lack of civil and identity documentation is one of the primary protection issues faced by internally displaced persons and returnees in Iraq. Over 25 per cent of internally displaced persons and 16 per cent of returnees lack at least one identity document. UNHCR worked to address this, and as of July 2022, over 13,000 internally displaced persons and returnees had received legal assistance, and some 24,300 had secured a civil document. Additionally, some 93,000 refugees, internally displaced persons and internally displaced returnees received multipurpose cash assistance, amounting to \$17.5 million.

UNHCR further designed interventions targeting refugees under the area-based programming for protection and solutions framework with the aim of supporting the humanitarian-development transition and mitigating protection risks, while fostering social cohesion among communities. UNHCR is working with the Government and United Nations partners on the economic integration of refugees in Iraq and inclusion of persons of concern in the social safety net.

North Africa

The situation in Libya remained complex, with periodic clashes in Tripoli and other parts of the country between armed forces and local militia groups. Despite this, the number of displaced persons decreased gradually. Between January and April 2022, the number of internally displaced persons dropped from 168,000 to 160,000, while the number of internally displaced returnees rose from 673,500 to 681,000. The number of persons seeking asylum in Libya remained steady, with some 43,000 registered with UNHCR as of mid-2022. Despite shrinking operational space, UNHCR continued to deliver vital protection services, including facilitating the departure of some 1,000 vulnerable individuals through evacuation and resettlement schemes, while providing health consultations and referrals to specialized services for persons in detention and at disembarkation points.

The number of persons seeking asylum in Tunisia increased slightly in 2022 (some 9,500 registered individuals compared to 9,255 in 2021), while sea departures from Tunisia rose to 19,852, representing an increase of 23 per cent compared to the same period in 2021. UNHCR provided ongoing support to refugees and asylum-seekers, including those rescued at sea. They were given medical assistance, counselling sessions, core relief items as well as temporary accommodation.

Egypt hosted some 288,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR continued to provide protection services on an equal basis, aiming to reduce and ultimately eliminate differences based on nationality. The organization engaged with national counterparts to explore areas for refugee inclusion in national social protection schemes, including access to health and education. UNHCR continued to carry out refugee status determination and resettlement activities, while advocating with the authorities access to persons in administrative detention and the prevention of instances of refoulement.

UNHCR supported the Government of Algeria to strengthen refugee protection systems, notably registration and refugee status determination in urban areas. An increase in mixed movements resulted in a 20 per cent rise in new asylum applications from January to July 2022, with 1,400 individuals newly registered. UNHCR maintained life-saving

interventions for Sahrawi refugees in the camps near Tindouf, notably in the sectors of health and water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as through the rehabilitation of hospitals and water networks. A strategic and targeted response was planned in the health sector following a joint UNHCR-WFP nutrition survey, with preliminary results revealing increased stunting and anaemia levels in children aged six months to five years.

Morocco remained a transit country for mixed movements as well as a destination country for refugees and asylum-seekers. There are currently some 9,300 asylum-seekers and 9,700 refugees in the country. Sea crossings continued along the north-west Africa maritime route, while several attempts to cross through Nador to Melilla resulted in multiple deaths and injuries. UNHCR supported persons of concern in urban areas, including by reinforcing access to national documentation and by working to expand economic inclusion and access to services to encourage self-reliance and foster local integration.

Mauritania hosted some 92,700 refugees and asylum-seekers, including 83,010 Malian refugees in the Mbera camp and surrounding areas as of August this year. There were some 8,500 new arrivals from Mali between January and July 2022, which was confirmed after registration resumed in Mbera. To respond to rising needs associated with the influx, UNHCR activated the first phase of the inter-agency contingency plan in March 2022. Along with development actors, UNHCR explored modalities for the inclusion of refugees in national social systems to enhance self-reliance and made efforts to expand access to education among refugee children.

Gulf Cooperation Council

UNHCR continued resource mobilization activities among Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which have been supportive of UNHCR in addressing humanitarian emergencies in a number of regions. Between January and July 2022, UNHCR raised \$75.6 million from both government and private donors. Additionally, some \$19.3 million was raised through UNHCR's Refugee Zakat Fund to support vulnerable refugee and internally displaced families in Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen. As a result, cash assistance was delivered to cover basic needs, including rent, food and health care. Core relief items were also provided.

Israel

Israel received an influx of Ukrainian nationals beginning in February 2022, with some 25,000 arrivals. UNHCR continued refugee status determination and resettlement activities for Eritrean and Sudanese refugees, and worked with the authorities to explore areas for improved access to education, employment and health services for refugees.

Yemen

Yemen remained among the most challenging humanitarian and protection crises globally, with 23.4 million people (73 per cent of the total population) requiring assistance, including 12.9 million with urgent needs. Internally displaced persons continued to face the prevailing threat of hunger, with up to 19 million in need of food assistance and 160,000 experiencing famine-like conditions. Despite a welcome truce beginning in April 2022, over 45,500 individuals were newly displaced during the year, with ongoing blockades impeding humanitarian access and the delivery of vital aid. By the end of July 2022, there were also some 97,300 refugees and 13,800 asylum-seekers in Yemen.

Life-saving health interventions were provided for internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum-seekers, including screening, treatment and awareness-raising on communicable diseases, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), at UNHCR-supported clinics. Health partners provided over 10,100 refugees and host community members with vaccinations as part of the national polio campaign. Over 420,000 internally displaced persons and 8,500 refugees had received \$20 million in cash assistance between January and July 2022. In addition, UNHCR and partners delivered quick impact projects to support livelihood activities. Planning for the resumption of the assisted spontaneous returns of Somali asylum-seekers was under way, with 600 projected to return in 2022.

Mixed and onward movements

Mixed movements of refugees alongside migrants continued through the region, primarily in North Africa. Refugees and migrants faced multiple risks, including death, at the hands of smugglers and traffickers. Among new arrivals between January and July 2022, UNHCR operations in North Africa identified and registered some 13,500 people in need of international protection. High risk journeys across the sea to Europe continued, with some 51,100 people crossing from North Africa between January and July 2022. Approximately 1,300 deaths were recorded, primarily of people attempting to cross the sea from Libya. While sea departures from Libya remained the highest in the region, departures from North Africa to the Canary Islands remained high, with some 9,700 people arriving in 2022 and over 320 deaths. Elsewhere, some 34,400 people arrived by sea to Yemen, while sea departures from Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic led some 1,200 people crossing to Europe during the first half of 2022.

UNHCR continued to work with the national authorities and partners to increase access to people who may need international protection and ensure their identification and referral. UNHCR also worked to increase the provision of information on the specific risks associated with irregular journeys in the region and how to access protection and support. UNHCR sought to strengthen protection options and alternatives to dangerous journeys, including by reviewing registration strategies to further identify and prioritize for registration those with clear international protection needs.

B. Progress and challenges in achieving the 2022 plan

Contributing to a safe and favourable protection environment

Between January and July 2022, over 110,000 individuals were newly registered as persons of concern in the region. This is an increase compared to 2019, when approximately 88,000 were registered during the same period. The primary nationalities registered were Syrians, followed by Sudanese and Malian nationals.

During the first half of 2022, some 109,119 persons participated in awareness-raising sessions aimed at preventing gender-based violence as well as women empowerment activities in the countries covered by the regional refugee and resilience plan in response to the Syrian crisis. Some 79,800 survivors and those at risk of gender-based violence benefited from response services, 23,534 individuals were trained on protection, and 82,634 girls and boys benefited from specialized protection services. Almost 1.5 million persons were supported through community outreach, community centres and other initiatives, and 917,607 children were enrolled in formal education.

To advance compliance with the policy on the prevention, risk mitigation and response to gender-based violence, a number of activities took place aimed at enhancing the capacity of UNHCR operations across sectors. Tailored support for children and youth was provided, and access to civil documentation, including birth registration, was prioritized. Regional trainings were also organized for UNHCR staff on interview techniques for engaging with persons with mental health and psychosocial vulnerabilities, on psychological first aid and on the management of emotional crises for those engaged in individual case processing. As part of raising awareness around self-harm and suicide prevention, advocacy messages were developed to strengthen responses for persons with psychosocial needs. UNHCR also provided timely country-of-origin information and guidance, including a position on returns to Gaza, to support fair and efficient asylum procedures. UNHCR remained active in the “No Lost Generation” initiative, encompassing education, youth and child protection, and mental health and psychosocial services-related work.

Empowering communities and partnership

UNHCR strengthened and expanded partnerships in line with the “whole-of-society” approach embodied in the Global Compact on Refugees. Collaboration with governments, development actors, financial institutions, the private sector, faith-based organizations, civil

society organizations and academia aimed to foster protection space in the region. Civil society actors and partners participated in the global consultations with non-governmental organizations on localization and climate action, resulting in recommendations for empowering local actors. UNHCR maintained support for the Middle East and North Africa Civil Society Network for Displacement, which delivers services and assistance to host communities and displaced persons.

The network also joined the Non-Governmental Organizations Reference Group for the Global Refugee Forum 2023, established by UNHCR, which will advise on the preparations and facilitate the engagement of non-governmental organizations in the development of pledges and initiatives. UNHCR continued its strategic partnership with the League of Arab States, including on child protection, as well as prevention and response to gender-based violence.

To support community structures and provide equal access to information and protection for people with specific needs and diverse profiles, over 1.5 million community members were reached through outreach volunteer groups in Algeria, Iraq, Israel, Jordan and Lebanon. This was achieved through 900 community centres, including nearly 100 community centres and a number of other mobile and satellite centres in the Syrian Arab Republic, and thanks to direct support to 2,100 community-led initiatives in the region, with call centres and social media used to reach people in remote areas.

In March 2022, together with Washington University, UNHCR supported the training of the Community Protection Network. Attended by 48 community and grassroots organizations working in the region, the training focused on outreach to persons with international protection needs and identification strategies and tools to promote equal access of people with specific needs to information and protection. In June 2022, a UNHCR regional learning event on disability inclusion in the context of displacement was launched together with the International Disability Alliance. It involved 33 participants from 14 countries, including UNHCR staff, governments, partners and organizations of persons with disabilities working in the Middle East and North of Africa.

Pursuing solutions

Operations scaled up their resettlement capacity while strengthening integrity safeguards, as reflected in the UNHCR internal risk register for the region. Multi-year plans were developed to meet increased resettlement opportunities in 2022 and the coming years. Between January and August 2022, the cases of some 14,250 individuals were submitted for resettlement (some 11,500 Syrians and 2,750 refugees of other nationalities). The increase, compared with 2021, was achieved through improved coordination, including enhanced staffing capacity and identification mechanisms.

UNHCR strengthened the knowledge and skills of UNHCR staff responsible for individual case processing and protection to improve the quality and efficiency of information-gathering. Operations received guidance on the implementation of refugee status determination strategies and standard operating procedures, particularly on differentiated and remote processing modalities, backlog management and the handling of complex cases.

In close coordination with States and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), some 11,772 individuals in the region departed for resettlement by end of August 2022. The annual opportunities for resettlement only meet 5 per cent of needs in the region. The expansion of resettlement opportunities remain a priority in order to promote international responsibility-sharing, as reflected in the Global Compact on Refugees.

Approximately 34,000 Syrian refugees returned home in the first eight months of 2022, a slight increase compared to 2021. Together with the Regional Durable Solutions Working Group, and under the regional refugee and resilience plan in response to the Syrian crisis framework, UNHCR and partners continued to consolidate support to returning refugees via counselling, assisting with documentation and addressing specific needs with a view to reducing the risk of harm, and enabling informed and dignified returns.

In collaboration with States, partners and other stakeholders, UNHCR sought to widen access to complementary pathways in North Africa and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. UNHCR is improving the data available on complementary pathways and strengthening its engagement (via ongoing meetings and projects) with the Middle East and North Africa Contact Group for Complementary Pathways, consisting of over 100 representatives from States, non-governmental organizations, academia and UNHCR operations, in order to expand these solutions in the region.

C. Financial information

The current 2022 budget for the region stands at \$2,432.4 million. This represents a 6 per cent decrease over the 2021 budget of \$2,704.2 million.

As of 13 September 2022, only 35 per cent of the region's 2022 financial requirements were funded, taking into consideration the indicative allocation of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions.
