

# MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

## | Working environment |

The working context in the Middle East and North Africa region, which both hosts and produces a large number of refugees and IDPs, is one in which government policies and practices are largely influenced by political and security considerations. A further complication is that most countries in the region lack formal asylum systems and structures. Though there is a deeply rooted tradition of hospitality towards refugees and other forcibly displaced people, much remains to be done to improve the protection climate and strengthen assistance programmes.

In Iraq, security remains tenuous. The violence that flared up prior to the March 2010 elections did not abate immediately. While the election results were expected to bring about a degree of stability and better prospects for

hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs, the cohesion necessary to form a new government is still lacking, fuelling uncertainty and tension.

While some 1.5 million Iraqis remain displaced within the country and hundreds of thousands of refugees still live in neighbouring States, the number of those fleeing Iraq has declined, in parallel with the relative reduction in violence in the country since late 2008. While conditions do not yet permit large-scale assisted voluntary repatriation, many Iraqis have returned home on their own. These returnees have not taken advantage of UNHCR's individual repatriation assistance, preferring to retain their links with the country of asylum while assessing conditions back home.



**Internally displaced persons in Iraq** live in difficult conditions during their displacement.

In Yemen, the number of Somali arrivals declined drastically in the first half of 2010, compared to the same period in 2009. This could be attributed to developments in Somalia, in particular, tightened control over migration routes.

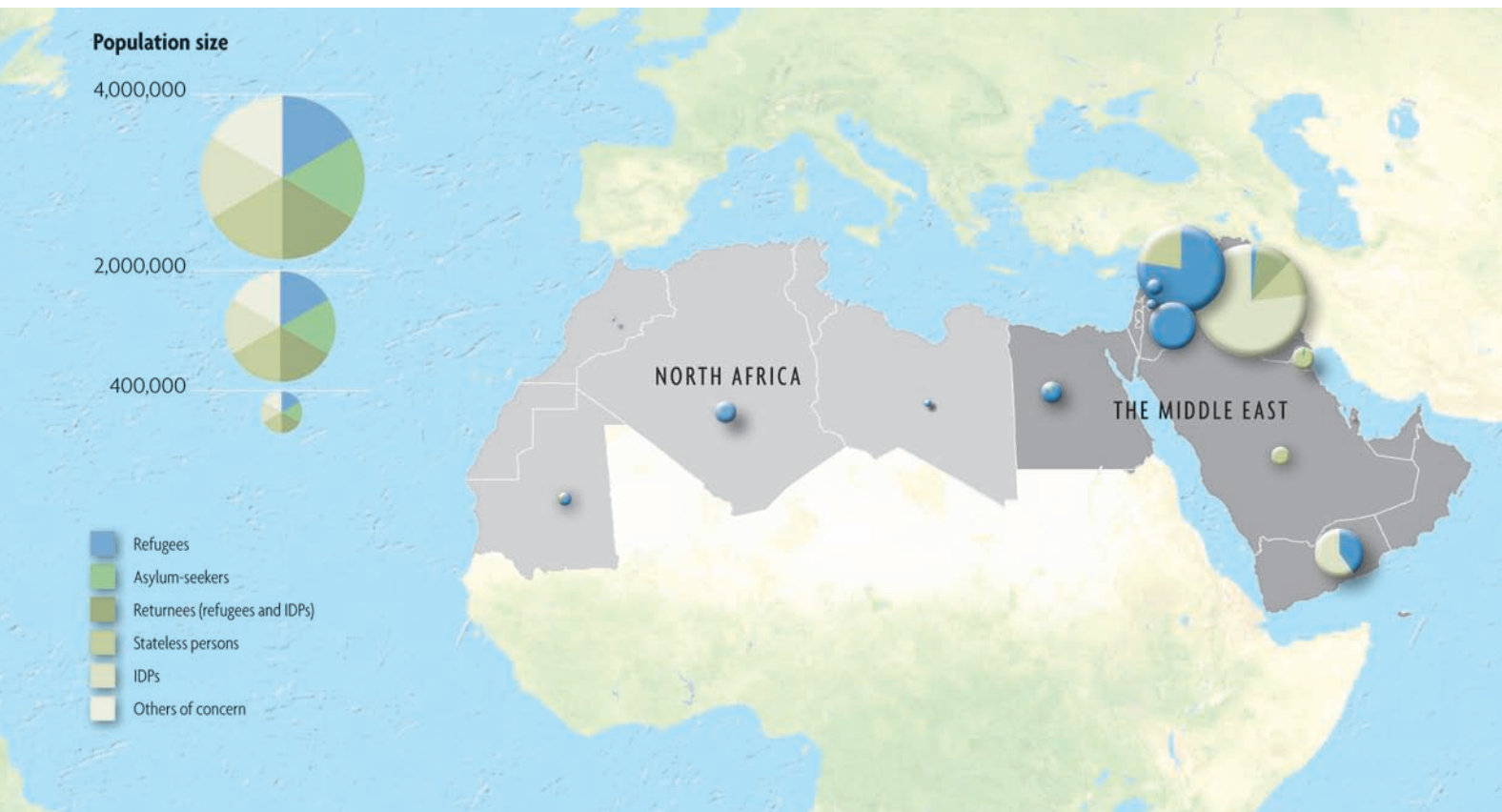
The five-year-old conflict between the Yemeni Government and the Al Houthi movement has led to some 342,000 people being registered as IDPs in northern Yemen. Though a ceasefire agreement was reached in February 2010, few IDPs have returned to the conflict-affected Sa'ada area. They have been impeded from returning home by the lack of a viable government presence and security guarantees, combined with continued destruction and the absence of basic services.

Algeria, Israel, Mauritania and Morocco have made progress in creating national protection frameworks. In Algeria, UNHCR is working with the Government to elaborate a national asylum law. In addition, a

comprehensive protection strategy for the Sahrawi refugees in the country's Tindouf camps has been developed. This strategy, developed in consultation with the persons of concern, is meant to address gaps in protection and human rights, including through the establishment of field protection units.

The family visits to the Western Sahara territory, initiated in 2004 in the context of the Confidence Building Measures Programme (CBM), have been suspended since the end of March 2010. Thus far, some 10,000 refugees have benefitted from this programme. Consultations are taking place with all parties for these visits to resume and hopefully be expanded.

In Mauritania, the Government is consolidating a national asylum system while assisting in the reintegration of close to 20,000 returnees from Senegal. Voluntary repatriation movements from Senegal are expected to resume in October 2010, with the final return of some 2,500 refugees.



In Morocco, another important transit point for sub-Saharan African migrants attempting to reach Europe, UNHCR has been able to forge strong partnerships, and to hold a number of capacity-building sessions with judges, lawyers and police officials. The signing of a Letter of Understanding between the Ministry of Justice and UNHCR on the consolidation and expansion of a programme to build the capacity of the judiciary is under consideration.

Israel still receives large numbers of asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan countries who transit through Egypt and cross the Sinai border in search of protection and better economic opportunities. UNHCR has called upon Israel and Egypt to negotiate mechanisms to manage the situation that respect human rights. At the same time, the Israeli Government has made efforts to set up a national asylum system.

As it awaits a formal agreement on its activities with the Government of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, UNHCR's engagement on protection issues in the country is fragile. The UNHCR Office in Tripoli suspended operations twice in the course of 2010. While new working arrangements and a framework agreement are under discussion with the Government, UNHCR functions temporarily under the authority of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Tripoli. Its interventions are limited to the registered urban caseload, focusing on resettlement.

The Gulf continues to be a region where forging solid partnerships with governments and civil societies, advocacy for international protection and asylum space, as well as strengthening national capacities and fund raising activities are high on UNHCR's agenda.

## Strategic priorities in 2011

### Helping governments in the Middle East to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to Iraqi refugees and to IDPs inside Iraq

In the absence of the security conditions required for UNHCR to promote the voluntary repatriation of Iraqi refugees, the provision of protection and assistance to this caseload in neighbouring countries will continue. Meanwhile, the search for other durable solutions, notably resettlement, will be enhanced. In order to maintain and expand the current protection space, UNHCR continues to appeal to the international community to support the refugee-hosting countries in the

region. At the same time, UNHCR will strengthen its protection and reintegration activities inside Iraq on behalf of returning refugees and IDPs. Mechanisms for the reception and initial reintegration of returnees have been put in place.

### Responding to the protection and assistance needs of refugees and other persons of concern in Yemen, and in countries across North Africa

The situation of refugees and IDPs in Yemen requires more attention, as the vulnerability of these persons increases in direct proportion with the decline in security. UNHCR's strategy provides for protection and basic humanitarian assistance, including the promotion of self-reliance opportunities, while pursuing the search for durable solutions.

Innovative self-reliance programmes will be continued throughout the North African subregion, based on UNHCR's recently issued policy on refugees in an urban context, for which Egypt is a pilot country. UNHCR will also strengthen its advocacy for the establishment of national asylum systems through strategic partnerships with governments and civil society.

### Reaching people of concern in mixed migratory movements in order to bridge protection gaps and ensure asylum space

UNHCR's strategy is aimed at strengthening and expanding partnerships to build national capacity to deal with refugee protection in mixed migratory movements. The 10-Point Plan of Action, piloted in North Africa and implemented in many sub-Saharan countries, remains UNHCR's strategic framework in this regard. At the same time, State concerns over security and migration are taken into careful consideration.

### Increasing the interest and capacity of governments to create asylum systems and procedures in line with international protection law and principles

In order to expand the protection space in the region, UNHCR continues to engage national and regional institutions dealing with refugee issues to promote asylum, and other rights relating to forced displacement. The Office will provide technical support and training in refugee law and continue its series of capacity-building workshops.

## Financial information

UNHCR's financial requirements in the Middle East and North Africa region have decreased for the first time in six years. While budgets in Algeria, Egypt and Yemen have increased, the overall decrease is due to significant reduction in the budgets in Iraq, Jordan and Syria.

- *Raising respect for the rights of refugees and stateless people across the region through strategic partnerships with governments, regional organizations and civil society*

UNHCR's partnerships with intergovernmental organizations aim to ensure respect for the rights of refugees and other persons of concern, including stateless people. The closer links it has formed with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the League of Arab States (LAS), the Transitional Arab Parliament and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) could lead to a better understanding of the rights of people of concern in the region, and enhanced political, humanitarian and financial support. A book entitled *The Right to Asylum between Islamic Shari'ah and International Refugee Law – A Comparative Study*, which was launched in June 2009, is being disseminated widely among governments and civil society institutions. UNHCR and the LAS will also hold a series of refugee and statelessness law workshops for Arab Parliamentarians.

- *Identifying and monitoring protection gaps affecting stateless people and helping governments to reduce statelessness*

To address statelessness in the region, UNHCR has developed a strategy that includes extensive

training on the issue, both for its own staff as well as relevant government bodies and civil society institutions. UNHCR has also increased its research and advocacy efforts on statelessness. In the course of 2011, UNHCR and the Transitional Arab Parliament plan to organize a working session on statelessness in the Arab World.

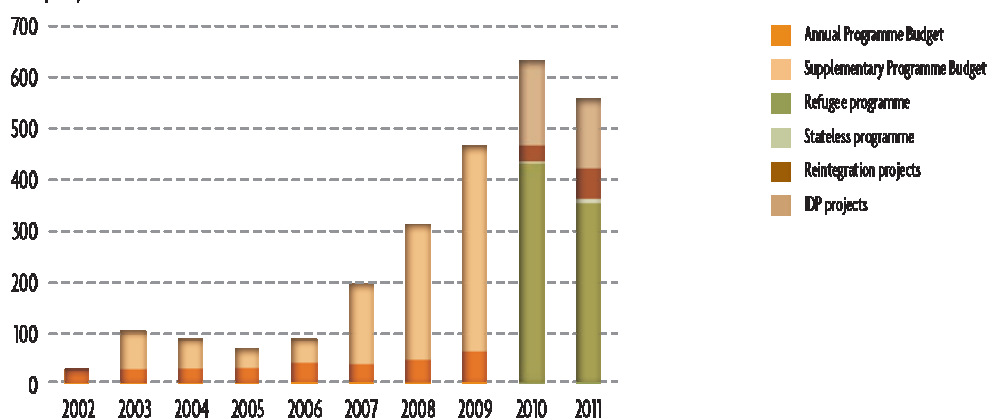
### | Challenges |

The fast-changing nature of conflicts and the politically charged situation in the region stand in the way of efforts to preserve humanitarian space for people of concern. Refugee and IDP situations throughout the Middle East and North Africa are increasingly protracted, aggravated by the political vacuum in Iraq, the progressively volatile situation in Yemen, the long-standing Palestinian issue and the lack of prospects for a resolution of differences on the Western Sahara issue.

The large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers living in urban settings with few prospects for durable solutions are obliging UNHCR to pursue innovative ways of protecting and assisting them. Finally, limited space for international NGOs and the lack of experience among local counterparts require that UNHCR maintains a strong presence in the region with a focus on capacity building. ■

## UNHCR's budget in the Middle East and North Africa 2002 - 2011

Millions (USD)



## UNHCR'S BUDGET IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (USD)

Operation	Revised budget	PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	Total
		Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects	
	2010	2011				
<b>NORTH AFRICA</b>						
Algeria	18,106,7496	25,509,323	0	0	0	25,509,323
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	5,405,723	6,236,846	0	0	0	6,236,846
Mauritania	7,864,950	7,185,528	0	0	0	7,185,528
Morocco	2,550,253	2,623,340	0	0	0	2,623,340
Tunisia	1,190,472	612,419	0	0	0	612,419
Western Sahara (CBM)	11,797,442	12,305,208	0	0	0	12,305,208
Subtotal	46,915,589	54,472,664	0	0	0	54,472,664
<b>MIDDLE EAST</b>						
Egypt	14,073,888	18,845,937	679,846	0	0	19,525,783
Iraq	264,285,219	37,232,724	4,087,597	61,210,298	108,067,620	210,598,239
Israel	3,067,763	2,689,268	0	0	0	2,689,268
Jordan	63,459,834	43,412,779	0	0	0	43,412,779
Lebanon	13,665,524	12,453,792	661,358	0	0	13,115,150
Saudi Arabia Regional Office <sup>1</sup>	3,186,375	3,110,018	946,131	0	0	4,056,149
Syrian Arab Republic	166,756,208	117,734,272	409,849	0	0	118,144,121
United Arab Emirates	1,752,402	2,714,634	340,826	0	0	3,055,460
Yemen	50,200,066	33,842,457	0	0	25,861,689	59,704,146
Regional activities	0	22,000,001	2,000,000	0	0	24,000,001
Subtotal	580,447,278	294,035,882	9,125,607	61,210,298	133,929,309	498,301,096
<b>Total</b>	<b>627,362,867</b>	<b>348,508,546</b>	<b>9,125,607</b>	<b>61,210,298</b>	<b>133,929,309</b>	<b>552,773,760</b>

<sup>1</sup> Covers the Arab Gulf States including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman, Bahrain and Qatar.