

Middle East and North Africa

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Middle East and North Africa region is facing one of the most challenging periods in its recent history. Violence in the region is characterized by persistent inter- and intra-State armed conflict, high unemployment rates and deepening poverty. Continued instability has resulted in mass displacement, increased protection needs, and sustained mixed movements, with people fleeing in search of safety and better opportunities.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) system-wide, Level-3 emergency declarations (see *Responding with lifesaving support* chapter and *Glossary*) for Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and Yemen remain in effect, with all three emergencies deteriorating further in 2017, a trend that will likely continue into 2018.

Syrians constitute the largest refugee population worldwide under UNHCR's mandate. Neighbouring countries and host communities continue to generously accommodate more than 5 million Syrian refugees, overstressing basic services. In parallel, refugees have become increasingly vulnerable.

A man and woman flee fighting in the old city of Mosul, Iraq, in June 2017.

Providing assistance to both refugee and host communities, supporting improvements in social cohesion and peaceful co-existence, will remain crucial for UNHCR. With over ten million IDPs in the region, the Office will also continue to respond to ongoing and protracted displacement inside Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

The organization will also maintain its response to the dramatic consequences of mixed movements in the region, while working to alleviate some of the underlying drivers of such flows. As the central Mediterranean route remains the main corridor to reach Europe (Italy) from Libya, UNHCR is scaling up its operational presence in Libya to meet the needs of IDPs and refugees suffering from severe abuse and living in dire conditions.

Providing protection and advocating for protection space, supporting access to asylum, expanding opportunities to find durable solutions for people of concern and strengthening IDP coordination and response will be UNHCR's priorities in the region in 2018.

MAJOR SITUATIONS

Syria situation

The Syria crisis continues to trigger large-scale displacement, with more than 1.3 million people reportedly internally displaced in the first half of 2017 alone. As of September 2017, there are 5.1 million registered refugees in the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and more than 6 million IDPs inside Syria.

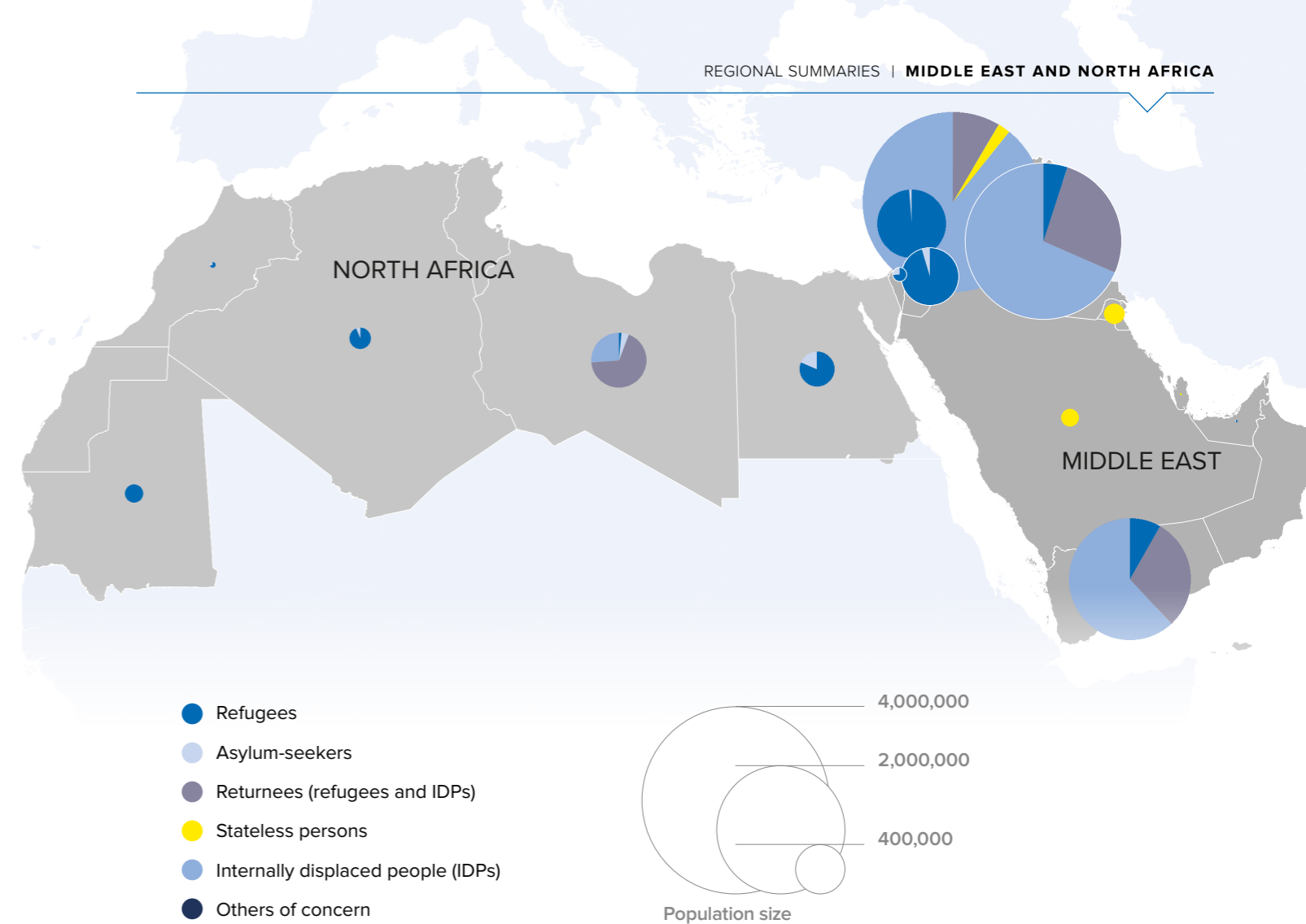
Mounting demographic, social, economic, political and security pressures in the region have led to the introduction of border

management measures, which effectively prevent thousands of vulnerable people from seeking safety abroad. While acknowledging the outstanding levels of generosity of host governments and their communities, UNHCR will continue to advocate for access to asylum, including for those inside Syria or stranded at the borders. It will also call for expanded international responsibility-sharing to reduce the pressure on host countries in the region.

Across Syria, UNHCR and partners are operating in extremely challenging conditions. Faced with limited access and security, they are often unable to provide humanitarian assistance to those in need, including more than half a million people living in besieged and hard-to-reach areas or in close proximity to rapidly shifting front lines.

An estimated 600,000 IDPs and more than 30,000 refugees spontaneously returned home to areas of relative stability in the first half of 2017. While UNHCR does not promote, nor facilitate, the return of refugees to Syria, based on current trends, the Office foresees that up to 100,000 refugees may have returned by the end of 2017 with a modest increase projected for 2018. The Office will consequently expand its protection response to monitor returns and to provide humanitarian assistance as necessary, targeting both returnees and nearby populations.

UNHCR will advocate for protection space and access to asylum to be maintained for Syrian and Iraqi refugees in host countries, ensuring their welfare in camp and urban settings and stressing the need for donor support to host countries. It will do this both directly and in partnership with host governments, donors, and humanitarian and development agencies.



In this context, UNHCR continues to co-lead the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in Response to the Syria Crisis (3RP) with UNDP. This coordination mechanism, with more than 240 government, UN and NGO partners enables the provision of protection and assistance to more than 5.1 million refugees across the region. In 2018, the 3RP will continue to focus on innovative approaches to encourage efficiency, while promoting synergies between resilience and humanitarian programming. UNHCR also coordinates the protection, non-food item/shelter and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) sectors inside Syria.

Iraq situation

In Iraq, an estimated 3.4 million IDPs require assistance and protection. In addition, at least 257,000 Iraqi refugees are registered with UNHCR in neighbouring countries.

As a result of the operation to retake Mosul, one million people have been displaced since October 2016, including around 22,300 who fled to surrounding countries. Further displacement is expected as operations are consolidated in areas such as Tel Afar, Hawiga and Shirqat in the north of the country. One year on, 833,000 people remain displaced due to the Mosul crisis and in dire need of protection and assistance. Some 244,000 people have returned.

While return movements are anticipated in 2018, many are expected to remain displaced given the considerable protection challenges and integration obstacles to return. Operations will prioritize emergency response, as well as return assistance, within UNHCR's broader protection-oriented strategy.

Ensuring the protection of displaced and affected populations, including safe and sustainable returns, will be essential components of the broader recovery and stabilization efforts in Iraq in 2018 and beyond.

Yemen situation

Yemen is one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world, with people trying desperately to survive in the face of protracted conflict, staggering food insecurity and a massive cholera outbreak. Civilians have borne the overwhelming brunt of the continuous and deepening decline of Yemen's economic, social, political and security situation. More than 80 per cent of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance or protection interventions, and almost 2 million civilians remain internally displaced. In addition, Yemen continues to host more than 280,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from Ethiopia and Somalia.

With the number of those in need of humanitarian and protection assistance increasing each year, UNHCR will expand its cash-based programming in Yemen in 2018, in order to deliver assistance to those hardest to reach. Protection interventions for IDPs and returnees will be strengthened, particularly through community-based protection (see *Glossary*) networks, with a focus on providing legal assistance, and psychological and social support, particularly for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV, see *Glossary*). UNHCR will continue to offer assistance to Somali refugees wishing to return to Somalia, and will also help widen the scope of a regional information campaigns highlighting the risks of dangerous crossings to and through Yemen.

Libya

In Libya, civilians continue to suffer due to conflict and insecurity, with some 226,000 internally displaced Libyans, 267,000 returnees and 42,800 registered refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR continues to witness the dramatic consequences of mixed movements, with Libya being the most significant transit point for refugees and migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. During the past five years, millions have made this dangerous journey. More than 90 per cent of those arriving in Italy by sea are reported to have departed from Libya. Between January and September 2017, Libya's coastguard rescued almost 10,600 refugees and migrants, while approximately 2,400 people are believed to have perished or gone missing.

UNHCR has significantly scaled up its operations in Libya as part of a comprehensive regional strategy to mitigate protection risks along main migratory routes. Although access remains challenging, UNHCR will continue to deliver life-saving protection and assistance in 2018, while also advocating for alternatives to detention.

REGIONAL STRATEGY

Maintaining protection space

Given the region's challenging humanitarian landscape, characterized largely by mass displacement triggered by violence and complex mixed movements primarily towards Europe, UNHCR's strategy will centre on providing access to safety and asylum, and ensuring protection for refugees in host countries.

UNHCR will advocate for protection-sensitive border management and pursue an open dialogue with governments, ensuring humanitarian actors get the access they need to protect and assist thousands of vulnerable people seeking safety abroad.

The Office will also continue to conduct individual biometric registration for those in need of international protection, support the management of protection cases, and use identity-based management systems, cash assistance management, and vulnerability and social and economic profiling (see *Safeguarding fundamental rights* chapter).

Community-based protection approaches and support to host governments and communities will remain central to the Office's work in the region. UNHCR will continue to advocate the inclusion and mainstreaming of people of concern into national systems, such as education.

Addressing statelessness

The various and protracted crises within the region, new conflicts, and record-high displacement, continue to create new risks of statelessness. UNHCR remains committed to adopting a "Regional strategic approach on the prevention and reduction of statelessness", which builds on the "Global action plan to end statelessness 2014-2024". Key interventions will focus on developing regional frameworks for nationality and birth registration, increasing access to civil status documentation, as well as strategic advocacy, the promotion of women's nationality rights, engagement with regional bodies and capacity-building initiatives.

Emergency response

UNHCR will maintain its capacity in 2018 to rapidly respond to new emergencies in a reliable, predictable and effective way. In response to the unstable situation and complex mixed movements witnessed in Libya, the organization will expand its support to IDPs, returnees and their hosting communities by scaling up the delivery of core relief items and cash assistance. The Office's regional operations are guided by a strategic plan addressing the growing protection and humanitarian needs in Yemen. The capacity to respond to the Iraq and Syria emergencies will be maintained and adapted as displacement continues, with increasing return movements expected to amplify the complexity of these situations.

Strengthening refugee protection in mixed movements

UNHCR will continue working with governments and partners to improve access to safety, protection from *refoulement*, and solutions within existing migration frameworks.

In response to the complex population movements associated with shifting routes, UNHCR will further implement its comprehensive strategy targeting interventions in the countries of origin and transit in sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, and in countries of destination in Europe. Awareness-raising activities, such as UNHCR's information campaign highlighting the risks of dangerous crossings to Yemen, will aim to help people make informed decisions about the risks of onward movement and their options, including voluntary return and access to protection services.

More than 80 per cent of Yemen's population are in need of humanitarian assistance or protection interventions.

Providing safety from violence and exploitation

UNHCR will enhance its gender-sensitive programmes, ensuring these programmes and services are inclusive and easily accessible for all. It will continue implementing strategies that protect children and prevent and respond to SGBV, including in the inter-agency context, to provide safe and secure support to survivors. To protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) people in key operations, UNHCR plans to work with national authorities to strengthen national protection mechanisms and build on existing innovative approaches.

Pursuing durable solutions

UNHCR will advocate for increased resettlement capacity, while maximizing opportunities for individual and comprehensive solutions for refugees in the region. It will be ready to respond to newly emerging scenarios in a timely and flexible manner, when conditions in Syria are conducive to safe and voluntary return, ensuring the continuity of efforts towards protection, humanitarian assistance,

recovery and durable solutions. Until then, the Office will seek other solutions, such as resettlement and alternative pathways to safety and sustainable futures, including through labour mobility, family reunification and academic scholarships. Access to livelihoods and employment for refugees will also remain key priorities. UNHCR will work together with partners and the Governments of Jordan and Lebanon to build on the important progress made in opening space for Syrian refugees to work legally, including through the delivery of work permits.

Diversifying and strengthening partnerships

UNHCR will continue pursuing opportunities for new and innovative approaches and enhanced partnerships in the region so as to expand protection and solutions for people of concern.

UNHCR's response to the Syria crisis, through the 3RP, is an example of effective programming, driven by synergies between humanitarian and development actors. The Office will continue using state-of-the-art iris recognition technology for registration.

Biometric registration enables the operation to be more efficient, from strengthened identity management and improved coordination of assistance delivery, to reducing the risk of fraud associated with cash programmes.

Large-scale, monthly cash-based interventions (see *Glossary*) and voucher programmes will continue empowering refugees with choice, while common inter-agency vulnerability assessments and targeting models, developed with the World Bank, will better identify and assist the most vulnerable. In addition, the Office will also collaborate on multi-sectoral and inter-agency profiling in implementing multi-purpose and seasonal cash programmes.

Furthermore, UNHCR has developed a network of civil society actors, as a unique platform for regional coordination, advocacy and capacity-building. Reinforcing strategic partnerships in the region—particularly with civil society, the private sector and academic institutions—will be one of UNHCR's key priorities aiming to increase public awareness of the refugee cause in the region and mobilizing support for it.

Tighter border control, driven by security concerns, and restrictive asylum policies, have forced more people fleeing persecution and extreme poverty to undertake dangerous journeys to Europe. This places them at serious risk of exploitation at the hands of smugglers and criminal networks, and leads to additional vulnerabilities on arrival.

Reaching the necessary level of funding to be able to respond sufficiently to the increasing needs of people of concern in the region, in a context of increasing insecurity for staff and people of concern, is another major challenge.

CONSTRAINTS

Limited access and security constraints in several locations across the region pose significant operational challenges to UNHCR, restricting the humanitarian space and in, many cases, preventing humanitarian relief and basic protection services reaching those in need.

More details on individual operations are available in the relevant subregional and country operations pages on the Global focus website (<http://reporting.unhcr.org>).



Hussein, who fled Syria in 2012 with his wife and daughter, has been a butcher all his working life. Under Jordan's new refugee employment rules, he can now work at his trade.

New deal on work permits helps Syrian refugees in Jordan

Syrians can now apply for jobs in certain sectors, such as agriculture, construction, textiles and food like Hussein, who fled Syria in 2012 with his wife and daughter and has been a butcher all his working life. Under Jordan's new refugee employment rules, he can now work at his trade and told UNHCR:

"They treated us like real professionals, I felt changed inside. My relationship with my family has got much better because I am now relaxed and I have regained confidence in myself. I can provide what each father would like his children to have."

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region led to a massive surge in humanitarian and protection needs in 2017, which is expected to continue into 2018. With the needs in the region unbaiting, UNHCR's budget for the Middle East and North Africa region is set at some \$2.170 billion—or 29 per cent of the overall budget for 2018—a near threefold increase within five years.

The region will continue to account for the majority of the global budgetary requirements for IDPs, under Pillar 4, mainly due to the operations in Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Within the region, the Middle East is the subregion with the largest funding requirements due, primarily to the situations in Iraq and Syria, with both

refugee programming and IDP projects (Pillars 1 and 4) accounting for over 90 per cent of the budget for the entire region.

Despite sustained and generous contributions, severe shortfalls in funding continue to affect even the region's most visible emergencies. With civilians continuing to flee active conflict areas in Iraq, becoming internally displaced, the gap between critical needs and assistance is becoming untenable. In Syria and countries hosting Syrian refugees, a lack of funding to ensure basic services risks condemning vulnerable families to increasing poverty, and forcing them to make difficult choices about the health, schooling and future of their children.

Funding shortfalls will also significantly affect UNHCR's capacity to protect and assist vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers in the region, particularly in smaller operations.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA 2018 BUDGET BY RIGHTS GROUP | USD millions



BUDGETS FOR MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA | USD

OPERATION	2017 Current budget (as of 30 June 2017)	2018				TOTAL	2019 Proposed budget
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programmes	PILLAR 2 Stateless programmes	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects		
MIDDLE EAST							
Iraq	557,093,761	135,891,731	307,821	-	423,626,565	559,826,117	607,207,598
Israel	3,731,972	3,902,301	-	-	-	3,902,301	3,902,303
Jordan	277,212,606	274,896,607	-	-	-	274,896,607	274,896,687
Lebanon	462,993,683	462,444,318	590,906	-	-	463,035,225	478,037,903
Saudi Arabia Regional Office	5,547,575	5,985,281	216,077	-	-	6,201,357	6,201,753
Syria Regional Refugee Coordination Office	51,161,167	26,395,815	-	-	30,000,000	56,395,815	52,499,180
Syrian Arab Republic	352,000,068	47,257,066	198,641	-	305,544,294	353,000,000	352,999,989
United Arab Emirates	4,215,506	4,871,010	-	-	-	4,871,010	4,871,010
Yemen	113,649,648	95,145,669	-	-	103,597,968	198,743,637	200,808,474
Regional activities	55,932,497	60,917,255	-	-	-	60,917,255	58,117,255
SUBTOTAL	1,883,538,482	1,117,707,053	1,313,445	-	862,768,826	1,981,789,324	2,039,542,151
NORTH AFRICA							
Algeria	36,030,726	36,256,053	-	-	-	36,256,053	36,777,566
Egypt	79,251,293	74,468,653	-	-	-	74,468,653	78,656,917
Libya	72,395,217	28,391,314	-	-	3,067,735	31,459,049	5,808,986
Mauritania	19,390,331	19,300,355	-	-	-	19,300,355	19,314,853
Morocco	7,376,727	6,668,546	-	-	-	6,668,546	6,668,546
Tunisia	5,799,697	5,682,457	-	-	-	5,682,457	6,254,386
Western Sahara (CBM)	7,701,761	8,478,237	-	-	-	8,478,237	8,478,479
Regional activities	3,056,336	4,000,000	-	-	-	4,000,000	4,000,000
SUBTOTAL	231,002,088	183,245,616	-	-	3,067,735	186,313,351	165,959,733
TOTAL	2,114,540,570	1,300,952,668	1,313,445	-	865,836,561	2,168,102,674	2,205,501,884

BUDGETS FOR MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA 2010-2019 | USD

