



The Middle East

Major developments

The volatile security situation in Iraq continued to dominate events in the Middle East, leading to uncertainty on the future of thousands of Iraqi nationals still seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

In Egypt, refugee status determination (RSD) of South Sudanese asylum-seekers remained suspended owing to the signing of the peace agreement by the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in January 2005. However, later in the year, violent demonstrations by Sudanese demanding increased assistance and resettlement opportunities by UNHCR led to the tragedy of 30 December 2005, where 28 protesters died following confrontations with the police in Cairo.

The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council continued to demonstrate increased interest in partnership with UNHCR. UNHCR organized training workshops and conferences to provide a better understanding of its role and operations.

UNHCR piloted a series of projects in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, aimed at improved reception facilities, protection monitoring, refugee status determination and streamlined mechanisms for the distribution of assistance. The projects adopted a community-based approach, and ensured the integration of age, gender and diversity concerns.

Bahrain

Egypt

Israel

Iraq

Jordan

Kuwait

Lebanon

Oman

Qatar

Saudi Arabia

Syrian Arab Republic

United Arab Emirates

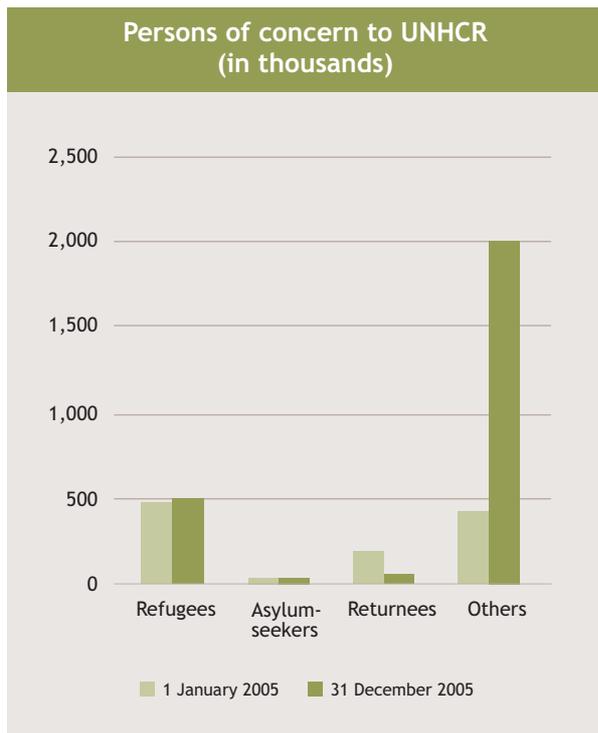
Yemen



Challenges and concerns

Thousands of Somali and Ethiopian asylum-seekers and refugees continued to undertake risky sea journeys to Yemen in 2005. Many lost their lives in these dangerous ventures. UNHCR estimates that up to 12,000 Somalis

arrive in Yemen every year. Nearly 8,000 Somali and Ethiopian refugees are assisted by UNHCR in the Al Kharaz camp near Aden. UNHCR estimates that there are roughly 78,000 refugees living in Yemen, while government figures indicate over 150,000. Somalis, who are granted *prima facie* refugee status, make up the majority, numbering some 64,000 according to UNHCR's estimates.



A number of security incidents in Yemen hampered UNHCR's programme delivery. The incidents included the kidnapping of seven UNHCR staff members and other foreigners, resulting in the introduction of rigorous security precautions and travel under military escort.

In the vicinity of Kharaz camp, local communities organized several demonstrations demanding that refugee projects benefit them also. Similar demonstrations in Aden and Sana'a created a serious security problem, leading to violent clashes with the authorities.

Progress towards solutions

Accession to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees continued to be UNHCR's main objective in the Middle East. Consultations with the Syrian Government continued, following Syria's stated intention to accede to the Convention.

In 2005, UNHCR focused on capacity building of local counterparts in the Gulf countries and the promotion of refugee law. UNHCR conducted refugee law training sessions and workshops for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), various government officials and NGOs in collaboration with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Similar trainings were held in the region in Qatar, Jeddah, Doha and Abu Dhabi.

Although refugee status determination of Sudanese asylum-seekers remained suspended in Egypt, some 4,000 refugees benefited from the resettlement programme in 2005.

Operations

In **Egypt**, limited socio-economic opportunities for refugees forced many to remain dependent on the assistance provided by UNHCR and non-governmental organizations to meet their basic needs. UNHCR continued to provide assistance and training opportunities for refugees aimed at increasing their self-reliance. Vocational training, job placement activities, and capacity building were organized for the refugee community. Age, gender and diversity concerns were mainstreamed in all programmes.

In **Israel**, UNHCR reinforced refugee status determination procedures, reducing the processing duration from 18 to six months. Some 200 Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from the Government's temporary protection. Government authorities and NGOs continued to provide basic

humanitarian assistance to the refugees in the country. In December 2005, an exchange of letters with the Government was signed to establish a fully-fledged UNHCR presence in Israel.

In **Kuwait**, the Office focused on providing protection to over 1,500 refugees and asylum-seekers of Somali, Iraqi, Palestinian and Afghan origin. These activities were carried out in coordination with the Government of Kuwait.

In **Lebanon**, there were concerns over the arrest of asylum-seekers and refugees in 2005. UNHCR organized a seminar and discussions in Beirut aimed at improving the existing Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and the Government of Lebanon. The discussions were fruitful and a new Memorandum of Understanding is scheduled to be signed in 2006.

UNHCR emphasized mainstreaming age, gender and diversity considerations into all its assistance activities. This ensured the participation of women and girls in the decision-making processes governing the delivery of services. UNHCR also improved the Community Development Centre, which provides training, counselling, and other services to refugees.

Considering that local integration is still not a viable option for most refugees in Lebanon, resettlement is viewed as the most feasible durable solution. A resettlement hub was established in Beirut, in order to harmonize resettlement policies and strategies in the region.

Budget and expenditure (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget ¹	Total	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget ¹	Total
Egypt	4,940,651	737,614	5,678,265	4,190,904	78,357	4,269,261
Iraq	956,238	27,645,177	28,601,415	951,053	24,480,526	25,431,579
Israel	135,351	0	135,351	116,897	0	116,897
Jordan	1,663,496	3,712,958	5,376,454	1,629,253	2,836,160	4,465,413
Lebanon	2,922,394	1,209,970	4,132,364	2,679,223	362,834	3,042,057
Saudi Arabia	1,976,974	0	1,976,974	1,853,543	0	1,853,543
Syrian Arab Republic	1,673,431	1,033,371	2,706,802	1,607,061	221,354	1,828,415
Yemen	4,993,831	0	4,993,831	4,493,600	0	4,493,600
Regional projects ²	0	675,000	675,000	0	477,398	477,398
Total	19,262,366	35,014,090	54,276,456	17,521,534	28,456,629	45,978,163

¹ The supplementary programme figures apply to the Iraq Operation and the Supplementary Programme for Return and Reintegration of Sudanese Refugees to Southern Sudan.

² Includes reintegration and repatriation or Iraqi refugees and other persons of concern.

Note: The supplementary programme budget does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.



Yemen: Registration of Somali refugees in Sana'a. UNHCR / R. Ek

Through its regional representation in **Saudi Arabia**, UNHCR concentrated on strengthening adherence to refugee law principles in the Gulf countries. Efforts undertaken included encouraging improved levels of protection and promoting accession to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the promulgation of domestic refugee laws.

In 2005, an arrangement was reached with the Saudi authorities to provide an alternative solution for the residual group of refugees in Rafha camp. For the first time, the Saudi Government authorized Iraqi refugees and their families to leave the camp and settle in urban areas within the country. Under the new arrangements, refugees will be issued identification cards and a residence permit by the Saudi Ministry of the Interior, and will be allowed to work and access medical and education services. Those who do not choose residence in Saudi Arabia have the option to repatriate to Iraq, in which case they will also be provided with financial incentives.

In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, UNHCR focused on building local capacity to receive and protect refugees. The Syrian Arab Republic had expressed its intention to accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in 2004. In this regard, further discussions were held with various officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Government. Subsequently, UNHCR embarked on a series of advocacy and information dissemination activities in relation to the 1951 Convention.

Multifunctional teams, comprising protection, community services, programme and field staff were established for the implementation of the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy. Introduction of the needs assessment strategy was aimed at improving reception facilities, protection monitoring, refugee status determination, and distribution mechanisms for assistance.

In 2005, Syria continued to receive a large number of Iraqi refugees. By the end of the year, UNHCR had

registered over 23,500 Iraqi refugees, out of an estimated 450,000 Iraqis living in the country.

In 2005, **Yemen** received more than 15,200 refugees (13,200 Somalis and 2,000 Ethiopians), bringing the total number of refugees in the country to over 78,000. These new arrivals had been smuggled into Yemen from the port of Bossasso in North-East Somalia (*Puntland*), through the Gulf of Aden. UNHCR continued to run a reception centre in Mayfa'a (close to Bir Ali, the port of disembarkment) where refugees and asylum-seekers were registered, provided with basic assistance and offered the option of transportation to Kharaz camp in Lahj Governorate.

Hundreds of people have died in these perilous sea ventures since September 2005, and UNHCR called on international action to stem the flow of people falling prey to smugglers. UNHCR has been working with local authorities in *Puntland* to sensitize people on the dangers of such undertakings. UNHCR is also working with other actors to uphold the integrity of the international

maritime search and rescue regime, and to safeguard the humanitarian tradition of rescue at sea.

With regard to durable solutions, UNHCR processed requests from refugee families who opted for voluntary repatriation. The Office also assisted some 638 refugees to access resettlement to third countries.

In July, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Yemen and opened registration centres in six governorates to renew expired refugee cards and document refugees who arrived in Yemen since 2003.

Funding

Funding remained a concern for UNHCR operations in the Middle East. The operation in Yemen was most affected by funding constraints. The unprecedented number of Iraqi asylum-seekers arriving in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon also placed a further strain on UNHCR's resources.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)			
Earmarking ¹	Donor	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget
Middle East			
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe</i>	0	2,041
	Spain	0	1,634
	Sweden	3,025,719	0
	United States	2,094,380	9,600,000
Sub-total		5,120,099	9,603,675
Egypt			
	European Commission	906,111	0
	Netherlands	84,643	0
	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS	24,010	0
	United States	1,317,200	0
Sub-total		2,331,964	0
Iraq			
	Japan	500,000	0
	UNDG Iraq Trust Fund	0	990,000
	United Kingdom	0	195,977
	United States	726,080	9,649,400
	USA for UNHCR	0	847,170
Sub-total		1,226,080	11,682,547
Jordan			
	United States	447,845	0
Sub-total		447,845	0
Lebanon			
	United States	508,205	0
Sub-total		508,205	0
Syrian Arab Republic			
	Australia	12,000	0
	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)	4,435	0
	United States	217,870	0
Sub-total		234,305	0
Yemen			
	Dutch Postcode Lottery (NPL)	396,301	0
	European Commission	340,467	0
	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)	7,490	0
	Italy	129,366	0
	Sweden	756,430	0
Sub-total		1,630,054	0
Total		11,498,552	21,286,222

¹ For more information on the earmarking, please refer to the donor profiles.