



| Working environment |

Security concerns dominate government asylum policies and practices in the Middle East and North Africa. The region generates and hosts a large number of refugees and displaced people. Despite the complex situation, improvements in the conditions for the displaced can be made, and the region has the potential for an expanded asylum space.

Developments in Mauritania are particularly encouraging. The repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal is nearing its end, the reintegration of the returnees is on track and consolidation of the national asylum system is underway.

However, there appear to be no solutions in sight for the protracted Palestinian refugee situation. Moreover, the continuing displacement of Iraqis is putting a serious strain on the asylum systems and socio-economic conditions in the main countries hosting Iraqi refugees in the Middle East.

UNHCR remains concerned about the deteriorating situation of the nearly 1.4 million Iraqi internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the large number of Iraqi refugees in the region. Of particular concern are the displaced women and children, many of whom are affected by sexual and gender-based violence, including trafficking, survival sex and child labour.

Though the countries hosting Iraqi refugees have shown considerable hospitality and respect for the right to asylum, the global financial crisis has taken its toll. The presence of huge numbers of Iraqi and Palestinian refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan is putting severe strains on the economies and social service systems of these countries. Sustained international support is essential if the protection space for Iraqi refugees in the Middle East is to be preserved.

A photograph of a young woman wearing a black headscarf and a black jacket, looking down at a two-year-old child she is holding. The child is wearing a black shirt with a red trim. They are in a room with a stone wall and a window with a white lace curtain. The title 'MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA' is overlaid in large white serif font on the right side of the image.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

A young displaced Iraqi mother and her two-year-old son at their rented house in Erbil, about 250 miles north of Baghdad, Iraq.

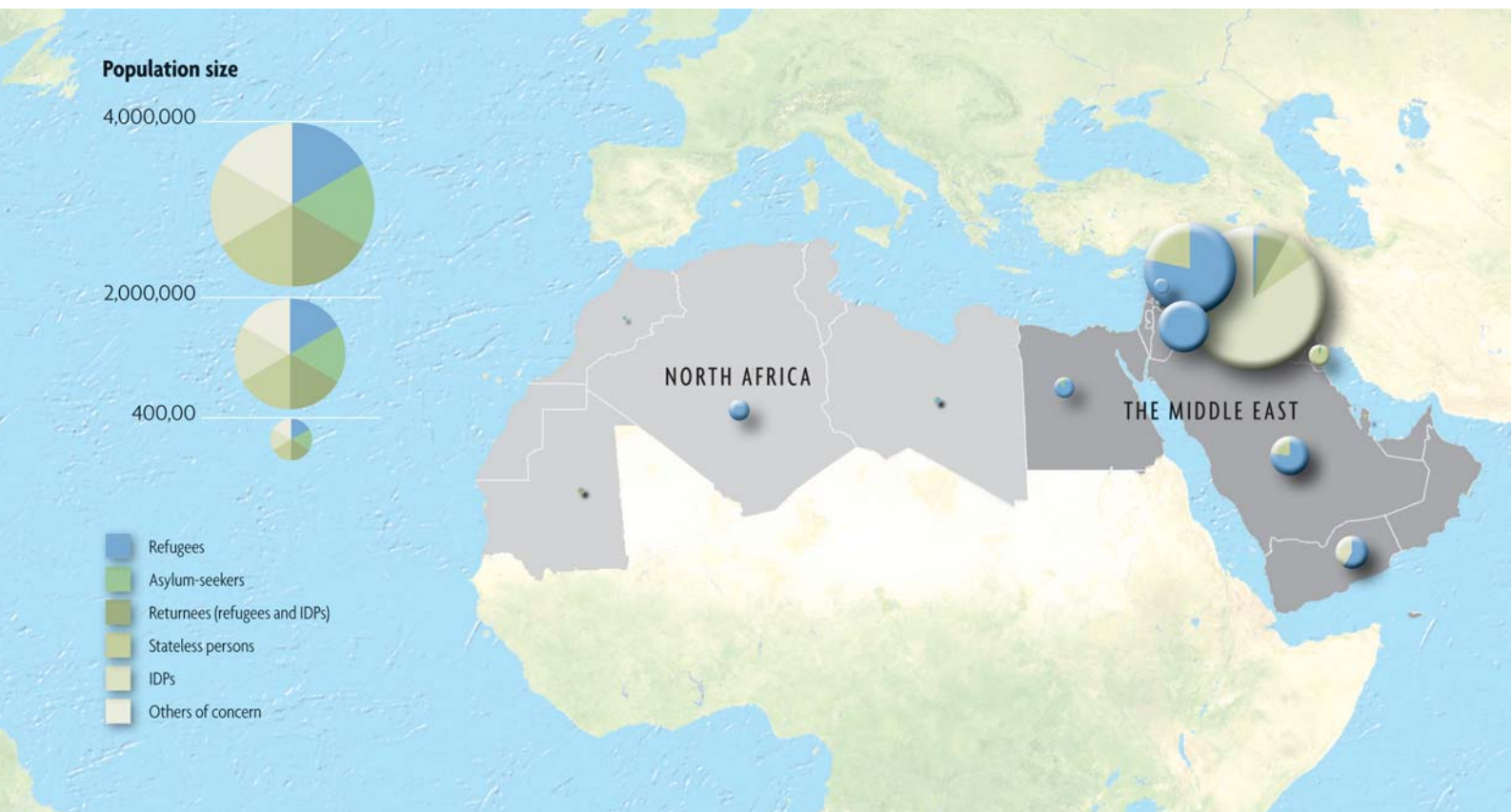
While the conditions in Iraq are not yet conducive to organized voluntary repatriation, many Iraqis are returning home on their own. Some improvements in the security situation, together with growing frustration regarding continued displacement and deteriorating conditions in asylum countries, may result in higher return rates in 2010. Meanwhile, UNHCR provides basic assistance to those returning in an effort to support the sustainability of returns.

In May 2009, UNHCR issued new Eligibility Guidelines on Iraq. These confirmed the protection needs of asylum-seekers originating from Baghdad, Nineveh, Diyala, Salah al-Din and At-Tamim, while recognizing the significant improvements in security in the southern provinces and Al-Anbar.

Egypt hosts refugees and asylum-seekers from Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and other sub-Saharan countries. Attempts by asylum-seekers to cross from Egypt into Israel in search of protection and better economic opportunities are affecting the protection climate and complicating the situation. Dialogue with the Governments of Egypt and Israel and capacity-building activities, are helping UNHCR to promote the establishment of protection-sensitive mechanisms to deal with these and other challenges.

In Israel, UNHCR has increased its presence to assist the authorities in registration and refugee status determination, as well as to promote the establishment of a national asylum system consistent with international standards. A positive development in this respect is the Government's recent decision to cancel the "Hadera-Gadera" visa, which prohibited the presence of refugees and asylum-seekers in central Israel.

In Yemen, UNHCR cares for more than 154,000 refugees, mostly from Somalia, and some 77,000 Yemeni IDPs directly affected by the internal conflict that broke out in the northern part of the country in 2004. Fighting in and around the northern province of Sa'ada since August 2009 has resulted in significant new population displacements. Lack of security hinders UNHCR's access to the displaced, who according to local sources may number as many as 150,000 people. The Government has traditionally maintained an open-door policy towards Somalis, recognizing them as refugees on a *prima facie* basis. However, the operational environment for UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies is extremely challenging. Insecure conditions in parts of the country are hindering access to people of concern, while the continual increase in mixed-migration movements is straining the



national asylum system and posing additional burdens on the Government and aid agencies.

As both a transit route and a destination, North African countries are affected by major mixed-migration movements, mostly from sub-Saharan African countries. While the majority of people involved in these movements are in search of better economic opportunities, many are in need of international protection. The absence of national and regional legal frameworks and strategies to deal with the issue makes it difficult to ensure protection for those who need it.

The prospect of a solution for Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria remains remote, in the absence of a political solution for Western Sahara. The refugees continue to depend on UNHCR's assistance for their survival. In cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, and the Moroccan and Algerian authorities, UNHCR continues to implement the Confidence-Building Measures programme to facilitate personal contacts between refugees in the camps and their family members in Western Sahara.

The comprehensive needs assessments revealed serious gaps in the international community's response to refugee crises in a number of countries in the region. For instance, high rates of anaemia and malnutrition, particularly among children and lactating women, and the poor condition of tents in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf, need to be remedied. UNHCR will address these gaps through targeted programmes in the relevant operations.

As a key part of its strategy for Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps, UNHCR intends to reorient its assistance programmes towards greater investment in education, health and nutrition activities.

| Strategic objectives |

- *Meeting the humanitarian needs of refugees and IDPs inside Iraq and other*

countries in the Middle East, by providing basic material, medical and other assistance as well as supporting the governments of refugee-hosting countries

The security conditions and lack of absorption capacity inside Iraq are not conducive to large-scale voluntary repatriation programmes. UNHCR will focus on protecting and assisting Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries, while searching for durable solutions, primarily resettlement, for the most vulnerable among them.

To this end, UNHCR is soliciting more international support for refugee-hosting States, particularly the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan. The Office will also intensify its protection and reintegration activities inside Iraq in order to assist those refugees and IDPs who choose to return despite the imperfect security conditions. Mechanisms to deal with the reception and reintegration of returnees have been put in place.

- *Ensuring that the basic humanitarian and protection needs of refugees and IDPs in Yemen, as well as refugees and other people of concern to UNHCR in North Africa, are met*

UNHCR's strategy focuses on the provision of protection and basic humanitarian assistance, including self-reliance opportunities, to refugees while searching for durable solutions for them. Partnerships with relevant governments and civil society institutions will be enhanced to promote the establishment of national legal frameworks and responsive asylum systems.

In Yemen, UNHCR works with WFP and other partners to assist IDPs. The growing number of refugees and migrants is becoming an unbearable burden on the country's economy and social-service structures. Increased international support is crucial if the protection space in Yemen for refugees and others of concern is to be maintained.

Financial information

UNHCR's financial requirements in the Middle East and North Africa have increased over the past five years, mainly due to displacements in and around Iraq and the expansion of the supplementary programme for the Iraq situation. The Annual Programme Budget also increased in 2009 due to growing protection activities in Israel and Yemen. In 2010, UNHCR's budgets will increase in most countries as a result of the comprehensive needs assessments. The combined budgets of Iraq, Jordan and Syria alone will be almost USD 500 million. Iraq will be UNHCR's biggest country operation and Syria the biggest refugee operation under Pillar 1. The large increase in Iraq is mostly attributed to the need to improve shelter and other infrastructure for IDPs.

- *Bridging protection gaps and ensuring that people in need of international protection in mixed-migration movements are protected according to international law and standards*

UNHCR intends to foster partnerships in the region in an effort to build national capacities to address migratory movements in line with international standards. The aim is to balance refugee protection with the security and migration-management interests of States. UNHCR's 10-Point Plan of Action, which was piloted in North Africa and envisages activities elsewhere, including in sub-Saharan countries, is the strategic framework for refugee protection in the context of mixed migration movements.

- *Improving the capacities of governments by promoting the establishment of an international protection regime, including responsive asylum systems, consistent with international standards*

UNHCR aims to expand asylum space in the Arab world by promoting greater awareness of displacement issues and engaging with the national institutions responsible for refugees and asylum-seekers. The Office will provide these institutions with technical support, advice and training in refugee law. A series of workshops is planned for 2010, targeting government structures, civil society institutions and regional organizations.

- *Promoting respect for the rights of refugees and stateless persons in the Arab world through partnerships with States, inter-governmental organizations and civil society institutions*

UNHCR is building comprehensive partnerships with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the League of Arab

States (LAS) and the Gulf Cooperation Council, seeking their political, humanitarian, and financial support. Partnerships are also being established with prominent non-governmental organizations and civil society institutions in the Gulf.

The Right to Asylum between Islamic Shari'ah and International Refugee Law – a Comparative Study was launched by UNHCR and the OIC in June 2009. The book is being widely disseminated among governments and civil society institutions. In 2010, UNHCR will also commission a comprehensive study on the refugee situation in the Arab world, and together with the LAS, conduct a series of refugee law workshops for Arab parliamentarians.

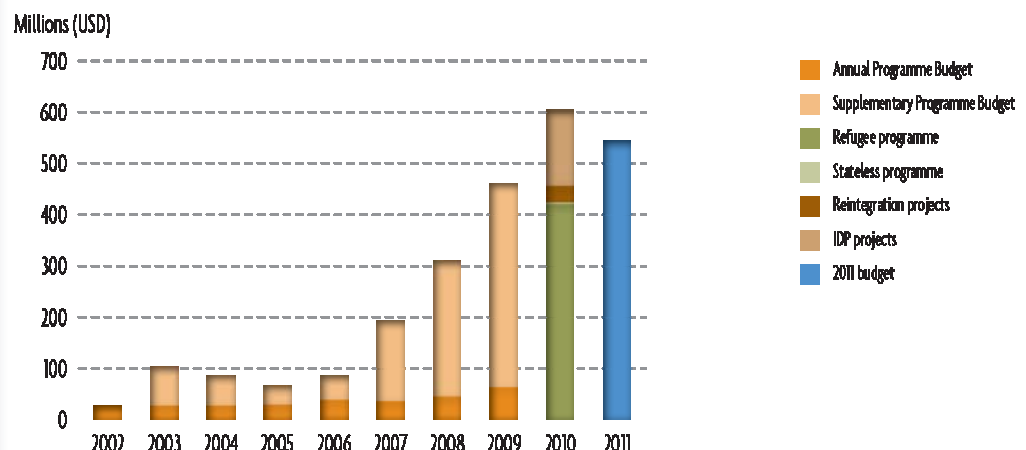
- *Monitor developments related to statelessness, identify protection gaps affecting stateless persons, and advise governments on how to reduce statelessness*

The Office has embarked on a comprehensive strategy to address statelessness in the region. The strategy includes extensive training on statelessness issues, both for UNHCR staff as well as for personnel of relevant government offices and civil society institutions, and the development of statelessness policy papers.

| Challenges |

Reconciling refugee protection with the national security interests of States is a key challenge for UNHCR, which is highlighted by the absence of national asylum systems. An increase in extremist activity, the volatile situation in Iraq, the long-standing Palestinian issue and the growing phenomenon of mixed-migration movements—particularly to North Africa and Yemen—pose major hurdles for refugee protection and humanitarian work in general. ■

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



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

Operation	Revised budget ¹	PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	Total	
		Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects		
	2009	2010					2011
NORTH AFRICA							
Algeria	9,897,416	18,106,749	0	0	0	18,106,749	18,126,800
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	4,204,196	5,405,723	0	0	0	5,405,723	5,405,700
Mauritania	8,009,944	7,842,600	22,350	0	0	7,864,950	1,750,100
Morocco	1,955,030	2,550,253	0	0	0	2,550,253	2,550,300
Tunisia	882,261	611,758	0	0	0	611,758	611,800
Western Sahara (CBM)	4,114,811	11,797,442	0	0	0	11,797,442	11,797,400
Regional activities	1,041,660	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	30,105,318	46,314,525	22,350	0	0	46,336,875	40,242,100
MIDDLE EAST							
Egypt	10,528,259	13,778,847	295,041	0	0	14,073,888	14,083,900
Iraq ²	167,815,492	87,704,282	1,033,161	31,088,775	144,459,007	264,285,225	265,251,200
Israel	2,356,531	3,067,763	0	0	0	3,067,763	3,067,800
Jordan	47,053,784	63,459,834	0	0	0	63,459,834	64,456,000
Lebanon	9,790,296	13,433,142	232,382	0	0	13,665,524	11,957,700
Saudi Arabia	2,743,392	2,675,048	511,327	0	0	3,186,375	3,186,400
Syrian Arab Republic	129,839,745	166,203,239	552,969	0	0	166,756,208	110,909,200
United Arab Emirates ³	817,907	1,654,253	98,149	0	0	1,752,402	1,752,400
Yemen	41,020,854	22,813,582	0	0	5,365,031	28,178,613	28,325,400
Regional activities	18,365,886	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	430,332,146	374,789,990	2,723,029	31,088,775	149,824,038	558,425,832	502,990,000
Total budget	460,437,464	421,104,514	2,745,379	31,088,775	149,824,038	604,762,707	543,232,100

¹ Includes supplementary programme requirements of USD 399,792,553.

² Includes regional activities in 2010 and 2011.

³ Excludes support services in Dubai that are included under the newly created Division of Emergency, Security and Supply under Global Programmes.