Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada | Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

PRIORITY SITUATIONS CORE GROUP

Field Visit to Lebanon & Egypt - November 2024

CONCEPT NOTE

Purpose of the Field Visit

The Priority Situations Core Group (PSCG), currently co-chaired by Canada and the USA, serves as a multilateral forum on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways for the admission of refugees comprising resettlement States, the European Commission and EUAA, IOM, and UNHCR, which acts as the Secretariat. It aims to optimise, coordinate, promote, and ensure support for resettlement and complementary pathways, and to maximise the strategic impact of resettlement programs in refugee-hosting countries.

The PSCG is organizing a **field visit to Lebanon and Egypt in November 2024**, hosted by the respective UNHCR country operations and government counterparts. The destination countries were chosen based on the interests expressed by the PSCG members. The field visit offers a valuable opportunity for the representatives to deepen their understanding of the operational context to this situation, the broader response to forced displacement by UNHCR, States, and partners involved in refugee protection and solutions, and the needs of refugees in these host countries, as well as to meet with host country authorities and partners to exchange views, discuss issues and express solidarity through third country solutions. PSCG can also leverage advocacy efforts on key matters in the host country.

In **Lebanon**, the PSCG will meet with the Government and partners and UNHCR senior management and staff. In addition, the PSCG will visit registration and interview sites in Beirut and spend a day in the field in Tripoli to visit UNHCR programs and meet with refugee families.

Resettlement needs in Lebanon are higher than ever. Resettlement/third-country solutions are of increasingly crucial and strategic importance to maintain the already decreasing protection space. A PSCG field visit would be a clear sign of solidarity and may have a positive influence on refugee protection. The economic collapse in Lebanon, coupled with constantly deepening negative rhetoric around Syrian refugees, makes their situation extremely precarious. Municipalities and authorities are implementing more and more restrictive measures, including widespread threats of eviction, curfews restricting movement, and confiscation of property, adding up to heightened risks of arrests, detention, and deportation. The security situation following increased tensions along Lebanon's southern border has exposed an increased number of vulnerable refugee families in the south to secondary displacement and related protection risks. While these developments in the security situation have led to hesitation among some resettlement countries with regards to processing resettlement cases out of Lebanon, UNHCR continues to process refugees' cases for resettlement across the country. The operation's facilities and case processing modalities allow for flexible arrangements that can be accommodated to meet the needs of resettlement countries, especially in view of the critical importance of resettlement for refugees in Lebanon.

In **Egypt**, the PSCG will meet with the Government, IOM, RSC, and partners, UNHCR staff and refugees and will visit registration and interview sites as well as ongoing projects related to refugee protection. Egypt is a key location for the routes-based approach, particularly the Central Mediterranean and the response to the Sudan situation.

As of 17 March 2024, an estimated 8.4 million people have been forcibly displaced since the onset of fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023. While most remain in Sudan, over 1.7 million have crossed into neighboring countries including to **Egypt**, where an approximate 700,000 persons have arrived as of mid-July 2024. These movements comprise Sudanese nationals as well as South Sudanese, Eritreans, Ethiopians, and other foreign nationals previously residing in Sudan including refugees and asylum-seekers. In 2023, the Government of **Egypt** imposed restrictions on the entry of Sudanese nationals.

Shrinking protection space combined with inflation and an increased numbers of arrivals have had serious impact, including increasingly negative rhetoric towards refugees and asylum-seekers. Refugees and asylum-seekers in the region are increasingly struggling to meet their basic needs. Based on current individual vulnerability assessment undertaken as part of the targeting for cash assistance, UNHCR Egypt estimates that some 85% of those referred currently live below the poverty line. Although this figure is not generalizable for the refugee population, it provides a worrying and accurate snapshot of the needs in country. UNHCR Egypt is planning to conduct and multi-sectoral vulnerability assessment for the entire refugee population to be launched by the end of 2024. Faced with an increasingly precarious protection environment in Egypt (as well as other countries in North Africa), many refugees and asylum-seekers continue to choose to move onwards along the Mediterranean route and towards Europe.

In Egypt, resettlement remains the only viable durable solution for the most vulnerable refugees. In line with the strategic use of resettlement, it is considered a tangible expression of solidarity and responsibility sharing with the Government of Egypt and means to improve the dialogue towards building a more favorable protection space, aiming at ensuring measures such as keeping Egypt's borders open for new arrivals, extending the length of residence permits, and expanding refugees' access to educational and livelihood opportunities. Based on the yearly assessment and projection, it is estimated that 70,000 individuals will be in need of resettlement in 2025 in Egypt.

The aim of the field visit is to better understand the current situation in both Lebanon and Egypt, understand resettlement needs within the context of refugee response plans, and subsequent importance of the increase of refugee resettlement and potential for complementary pathway programs. Of particular importance in Lebanon are discussions on security issues and access, as well as other potential impediments to in-person selection missions and resettlement processing. For Egypt, with an already large refugee population residing in Egypt, the impact of the new influxes since the start of the Sudanese crisis on social services remains a significant concern. The field trip would be an important acknowledgement of this effort and generosity and could offer opportunities for increased collaboration and solidarity mechanisms with the Egyptian authorities. Potential advocacy dividends

include increased protection space and lifting of any entry restrictions at the border. The field visit will include a review of the resettlement programs and infrastructure, meetings with refugees and local partners, and engagement with the host governments.

Participants

The field visit is addressed to all Core Group Member States. While participation from the capital of PSCG countries is essential, we also encourage participation from local Embassies (to forge and strengthen connections in the host States) as well as participation from local actors in resettlement countries, including municipalities and others who may benefit from a deeper understanding of refugee protection in host States. All Core Group members, whether currently having active resettlement programs, preparing to initiate resettlement programs, or wishing to learn about resettlement in both countries are encouraged to join the field visit. In addition, resettlement should be positioned clearly as part of sustainable programming and broader development priorities and agendas of donors and resettlement states alike. For this reason, for the Egypt leg of the field visit we welcome participation of colleagues who work on development.

Itinerary

The field visit is taking place in November 2024. Expected arrival date in Cairo, Egypt is on Saturday 16 November, with a program in Cairo and nearby locations on Sunday 17 and Monday 18 November. On Tuesday 19 November in the morning, the Priority Situations Core Group members will fly from Cairo to Beirut for the second part of the field visit, taking place in Lebanon on 19, 20 and 21 November. On Friday 22 November (a public holiday in Lebanon) all delegates will depart from Lebanon.

PSCG Secretariat support provided to PSCG field visit delegates:

- The PSCG Secretariat will be advising on the arrival date in Cairo for delegates, the specific flight to take from Egypt to Lebanon and the proposed departure date out of Lebanon.
- At least two months ahead of the field visit dates, the PSCG Secretariat will advise on the recommended hotel to reside in each location, to ensure that all delegates reside in the same location and to facilitate smooth logistics.
- Each delegate is expected to arrange their own flights to and from field visit locations and their own hotel reservation in each location.
- UNHCR Operations will kindly facilitate all transportation and activities during the field visit.
- The PSCG Co-Chairs will draft a field visit report to be shared with all Core Group members following the field visit.
- Each delegate is expected to arrange their own visas when and if required for field visits.
- UNHCR Operations will facilitate transportation to/from the airports in Cairo and Beirut.