

BRIEFER: Melissa Fleming, Chief Spokesperson

107 Syrian refugees to depart Lebanon for temporary relocation in Germany

Geneva, 10.09.2013 - 107 highly vulnerable Syrian refugees are due to leave Lebanon under a temporary Humanitarian Admissions Programme that was announced by Germany in March of this year. The group is headed for Hannover, and is the first to be assisted by UNHCR in this process.

On arrival the refugees are being transferred to an accommodation centre in Friedland in Lower Saxony where they will stay for fourteen days. The refugees will be offered cultural orientation courses – basic language training and basic information on Germany, including the school and health systems, as well as help in interacting with the local authorities.

At the end of the two week period, the refugees will leave for locations across Germany. They will be accommodated in small centres or apartments and will have full access to medical, educational and other social services. During their stay the refugees have the right to work. The residence permit issued for these refugees is for two years, with the option to extend if the situation in Syria remains unchanged.

Germany's Humanitarian Assistance Programme provides for up to 5,000 places for Syrian refugees, and as such is the biggest relocation programme currently in existence for the Syria crisis. UNHCR teams in the Syria region are currently preparing additional referrals for this programme, which we expect to be fully subscribed by the end of 2013. The International Organization for Migration is involved with us in organizing travel, pre-medical checks, and other support.

Resettlement of refugees, whether formal resettlement or expedited relocation – as is the case with Germany's Humanitarian Admissions Programme – is a vital and potentially life-saving tool for helping particularly vulnerable refugees. Those resettled may be women and girls at risk, people with serious medical conditions, survivors of torture or others with special needs.

UNHCR announced in June of this year, in its 2013 Syria Regional Response Plan, that it was seeking 10,000 places for humanitarian admission and 2,000 places for resettlement of Syrians in acute need. Since then – Germany and Austria have committed places for humanitarian admission (5,000 and 500 respectively) – whereas a number of other countries have come forward with offers of resettlement places. These include Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Together these countries have pledged more than 1,650 resettlement places,

960 of which are for 2013. The United States of America has indicated that it is willing to consider an additional unspecified number of cases.

UNHCR is continuing to urge States to come forward with further offers of resettlement or relocation. In particular, and because of the growing size of the Syria refugee population in countries neighbouring Syria, we hope to see countries offering places outside their current annual quotas and allowing for expedited processing. This would help meet the needs of highly vulnerable Syrians, and it would ensure that resettlement opportunities remain available for highly vulnerable refugees from other countries.

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