

**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

7 March 2012
English
Original: English and French

Standing Committee
53rd meeting

**Overview of UNHCR's operational strategies in
the Middle East and North Africa**

A. Situational analysis including new developments

In Iraq, just over 67,000 refugees had repatriated by the end of 2011 according to Government records. Meanwhile, around 1.2 million people remain internally displaced throughout the country. UNHCR and its partners are providing internally displaced persons (IDPs) with basic services and assistance in both areas of displacement and of return. Some 38,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Iraq are currently living in camps, settlements or urban centres, including around 10,000 Palestinians who reside in Baghdad.

With regard to Camp New Iraq (formerly Ashraf), UNHCR is part of the overall United Nations efforts to find a peaceful solution to the situation under the leadership of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed between the Government of Iraq and UNAMI for the relocation of the camp residents to a Temporary Transit Location in Baghdad – Camp Hurriya. Under the MOU, UNHCR is responsible for the verification and refugee status determination of residents who have filed applications. Some 400 persons have already moved to Camp Hurriya.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Government continues to maintain a generous refugee policy by offering support to 110,000 refugees registered with UNHCR, the majority from Iraq. UNHCR is supporting 11,000 people from among the most destitute refugee families through its financial assistance programme. Together with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and other partners, basic services are also being provided to help the refugees cope with an increasingly difficult socio-economic situation. The current unrest, however, has created a challenging environment for Iraqis and other refugees. While UNHCR and its partners continue to provide as much assistance and protection as possible, many refugee families have been affected by the marked decline in economic activity which, in turn, has put a strain on their livelihood and coping mechanisms. Following the withdrawal of the World Food Programme (WFP), UNHCR took over the provision of food assistance by increasing the monthly financial assistance that is provided to the refugees.

In Lebanon, over 11,000 refugees and asylum-seekers are registered with UNHCR, with Iraqi refugees remaining the largest population. UNHCR continues to provide health, legal, and education assistance through its partners. In the north, over 7,500 displaced Syrians are currently registered, and UNHCR provides new arrivals with non-food items (NFIs) and vouchers to complement the food assistance provided by the Government. Host families also benefit from this assistance. The Ministry of Education has granted access to public schools for all Syrian children in northern Lebanon and UNHCR covers the costs of tuition fees and school equipment.

In Jordan, UNHCR's protection and assistance programmes for Iraqi refugees are supporting the Government's efforts, in particular in the health, education and social development sectors. At the end of 2011, around 33,600 Iraqi refugees were registered with UNHCR. An additional 5,000 Syrians who have left their country due to the unrest

have also been registered so far and are residing mainly in urban areas, either with host families, or in rented units. In partnership with the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD), UNHCR Jordan provides assistance to Syrians in Jordan with particular attention being given to vulnerable families.

Through its Regional Office in Riyadh, the External Relations Hub in Abu Dhabi, and the Liaison Office in Kuwait, UNHCR is advancing its partnerships in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, notably with Governments, NGOs and private-sector partners. The External Relations Hub in the United Arab Emirates is focusing on fundraising initiatives and the promotion of UNHCR's work in media outlets based in the Gulf. In Kuwait, UNHCR is encouraged by recent steps taken by the Government, including the announcement that it will provide a number of rights for refugees such as access to services and documents, as well as the decision to naturalize some 34,000 Bidouns. UNHCR has offered assistance and technical expertise to the Government in support of efforts to resolve the Bidoun issue.

Yemen is facing a number of challenges with 215,000 refugees hosted in the country, almost half-a-million Yemenis internally displaced, and the ongoing mass influx of refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa. In 2011, over 103,000 refugees arrived in Yemen. UNHCR's operation in Yemen has to deal with multiple humanitarian situations simultaneously. Owing to the mass protests and conflict in Sana'a and other urban areas, many refugees who were self-reliant before are now finding it difficult to find income-generating opportunities, and in some cases have had to flee from fighting. This has led to an increasing number of vulnerable cases. There has been renewed internal displacement in 2012, especially in Hajjah governorate in the north.

Despite the protracted political unrest and deteriorating security situation, the Office and its partners continue to provide essential services. UNHCR is able to maintain a broad presence in the country with eight offices spread out between from north to south, in addition to four transit centres along the coast to receive a persistent influx of new arrivals from the Horn of Africa, and is working with implementing partners to share responsibilities and cover areas where access for international staff is restricted.

New arrivals in Israel, mostly Eritreans, continue at an average of 2,000 per month, many reporting severe abuse at the hands of human smugglers in Sinai. The total number of asylum-seekers in Israel is currently around 50,000, 90 per cent of whom are from Eritrea and Sudan. Almost 14,000 asylum-seekers arrived during 2011 alone. A recently adopted legislative amendment to be applied under a three-year temporary order, allows for the prolonged detention of persons who have illegally entered the country and who cannot be deported to their countries of origin. This will affect some 1,500-2000 nationals of Côte d'Ivoire, and 2-3,000 South Sudanese. UNHCR has maintained that the ending of temporary protection must be associated with access to refugee status determination (RSD) and has indicated its preparedness to help strengthen the Government's RSD capacity as necessary. The Ministry of the Interior has now confirmed that South Sudanese will be able to apply for asylum, and UNHCR will be involved in the determination of those choosing to return voluntarily.

In Egypt, some 6,000 new arrivals, mainly from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan, were registered by UNHCR Cairo in 2011, bringing the number of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt to over 44,500 individuals. UNHCR has increased its registration, RSD and protection capacity to manage the new influx. Currently, there are some 2,000 people of concern stranded at the Egyptian-Libyan border at Saloum. In January 2012, UNHCR was authorized by the Government to set up a camp within the port area with an enhanced security structure. On 23 October 2011, the cut-off date for RSD and resettlement processing was officially announced and since then, the number of new arrivals has declined. It is expected that some of those stranded at Saloum may begin departing for resettlement during the year. To date, more than 1,600 persons have been submitted for resettlement, but only 240 have been accepted and departed so far.

The overall operational environment in Libya remains unpredictable. More than 9,400 refugees and asylum-seekers who were registered with UNHCR before the crisis remain in Libya with expired documentation. The majority are Eritreans, Iraqis, Somalis, and Sudanese. UNHCR is discussing with the interim Government the conclusion of a Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding. Since the outbreak of hostilities in Libya,

Third Country Nationals, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa, have become more vulnerable to human rights violations, including arbitrary search, arrest and detention. Despite the end of the armed conflict, some 93,500 Libyans remain internally displaced, mainly in Tripoli, Benghazi and the Nafusa Mountains. UNHCR provides emergency shelter and non-food assistance to IDPs and conducts systematic protection monitoring at IDP sites throughout Libya.

UNHCR continues to work in close cooperation with the Government of Tunisia. A model cooperation agreement has been signed and plans are under way to develop a national asylum system. Meanwhile, UNHCR continues to conduct RSD and to advocate for residence permits for the 90 refugees it has recognized. The border has remained open for Libyans, who continue to enjoy de facto temporary protection in Tunisia. UNHCR continues to assist some 500 vulnerable Libyan families not able to return to Libya immediately. In addition, there are currently some 3,400 registered persons of concern in the Shousha transit camp, mainly from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan, for whom UNHCR is prioritizing resettlement as a durable solution. To date, over 3,250 persons have been submitted for resettlement: almost 1,750 have been accepted and 680 have departed. The Office continues to provide protection and essential services in Shousha camp, while anticipating the gradual consolidation of camp activities into national services.

UNHCR has continued to provide protection and assistance to the Sahrawi refugees in the camps near Tindouf, Algeria. WFP continues to provide 90,000 general food rations and 35,000 supplementary general food rations to the most vulnerable refugees. There have been some improvements in the nutrition sector as a result of the implementation of a programme to combat malnutrition and anaemia among children under 5 years of age and pregnant and lactating women.

At the end of 2011, over 42,600 persons had registered for the Confidence Building Measures (CBM) programme in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria and in the Western Sahara. Some 12,300 people have benefited from this programme so far, and at a recent CBM meeting in Geneva in January, it was agreed that a larger aircraft with a carrying capacity of 150 passengers would be chartered, in order to increase the number of beneficiaries of the family visits from 2,000 to 6,000 persons annually. The CBM meeting participants adopted the updated Plan of Action and also agreed to hold another cultural seminar in July-August 2012 following the successful convening of the first seminar held in Madeira, Portugal, in September 2011.

Following the Government of Algeria's recent renewed request for support to develop national refugee legislation and put in place asylum structures, UNHCR has reiterated its readiness to provide technical assistance in legal drafting expertise, human rights/refugee law training workshops, and go-and-see visits by government officials to countries with developed asylum systems.

Also in Algeria, it has been reported that a significant number of displaced Malians are being hosted by families on the Algerian side of the border. The Algerian authorities have established a transit centre near the border town of Bordj Badji Mokhtar, and UNHCR has offered to assist the authorities' relief efforts.

Discussions with the Government of Morocco are ongoing concerning the adoption of a comprehensive national asylum system. A team of technical experts from the Government visited UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva in November 2011 to discuss the requirements for putting in place such a system. Meanwhile, UNHCR continues to undertake capacity-building activities for law-enforcement officials and the judiciary, and plans to expand its programme, by including law-enforcement officials working at the borders and increasing the number of persons benefiting from training events in 2012.

In Mauritania, some 33,000 Malian refugees, mainly Tuaregs, have fled across the border as a result of the recent wave of violence in Mali. The number of refugees crossing into Mauritania continues to increase at a rate of several hundred per day. In close coordination with the authorities, UNHCR is relocating the refugees to a camp site some 50 kilometres away from the border. Around 10,000 persons have already moved to the new site. UNHCR is coordinating the response to the crisis, in close collaboration with a national coordinator and a follow-up committee appointed by the authorities. As an immediate response to the influx, UNHCR dispatched an assessment mission to the area,

and has delivered a one-month supply of food rations for the refugees as well as basic relief items, including contributions from UNICEF and UNFPA. UNHCR has also airlifted tents for 7,000 families from its stockpiles in the region and deployed an emergency response team.

Following a Tripartite Commission (Mauritania-Senegal-UNHCR) meeting in October, the voluntary repatriation of the remaining Mauritanian refugees in Senegal resumed in November 2011. Close to 22,000 refugees have returned home from Senegal since the operation started in 2008. The operation will be completed on 25 March 2012.

B. Financial information

The 2012 Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) budget approved by the Executive Committee was \$565.5 million.

The total budget requirement for the Iraq situation in 2012 is \$364.9 million. It should be noted that the needs for displaced Syrians are not included in the current CNA budget as the 2012 planning process took place prior to the current crisis. Additional requirements of \$35 million to cover food needs for Iraqi refugees have been requested.

A regional appeal has been launched, including for \$10.3 million required to address the immediate needs of the new refugee arrivals from Mali in Mauritania, as well as to set up a camp to relocate the refugees away from the border.
