

# Egypt

October - December 2020

As of 31 December 2020, **259,292 refugees and asylum-seekers from 58 countries** were registered with UNHCR Egypt, half of whom are from Syria.

Most refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt live in the **urban areas** of Greater Cairo and on the North Coast.

During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, UNHCR adapted its activities to the changing circumstances, continuing to provide critical assistance and protection support.

## KEY INDICATORS

**10,031** families received monthly multi-purpose cash grants in the fourth quarter of 2020

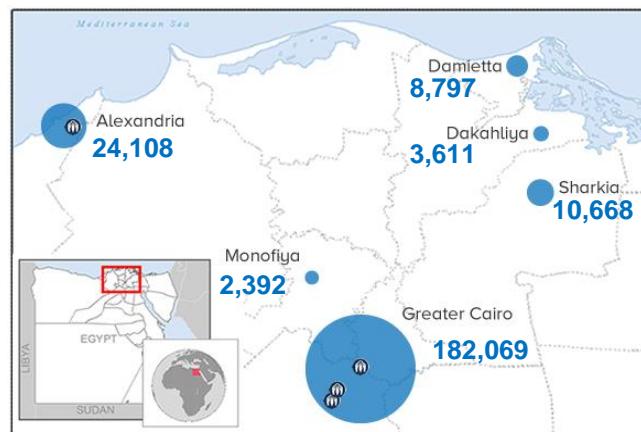
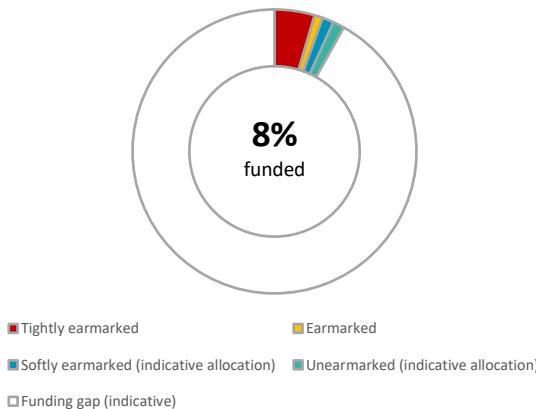
**4,051** unaccompanied and separated children were registered with UNHCR Egypt as of end of December 2020

**1,314** refugees departed to resettlement countries in 2020

## FUNDING SITUATION (27 JANUARY 2021)

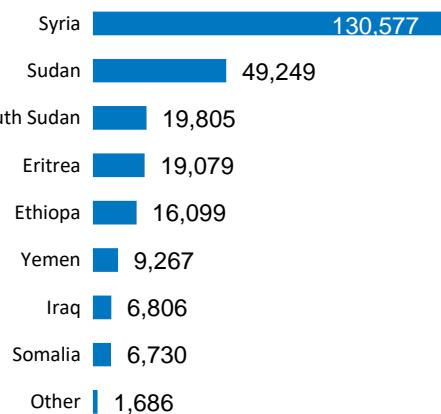
### USD 126.8 million

requested for the Egypt operation in 2021



## REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

### Countries of Origin



## Challenges and advocacy measures during COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact on the welfare of refugees and asylum-seekers during the last quarter of 2020. A major concern raised by the refugee community were **expired UNHCR documents and residence permits**. In this regards, refugees and asylum-seekers expressed fear of arrest and detention.

Community leaders asked UNHCR to fully resume in-office activities, however this was not feasible during the last quarter of 2020 due to increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases in Egypt and the safety precautions required to protect refugees, asylum-seekers and staff. UNHCR's in-office activities focused on indispensable services related to **Registration, Resettlement and some Protection services, while other activities continued to be provided remotely**.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR received up to 1,500 daily visitors in its four offices in Egypt (three offices in Cairo and one in Alexandria). While the processing capacity is significantly hindered by physical distancing measures and the limited structure of UNHCR premises, the agency has identified ways of expanding its registration activities. In December 2020, the **registration unit began working in shifts** to serve an average 600 cases per week. In the first months of 2021, UNHCR will remodel its interview rooms in 6<sup>th</sup> of October City and Zamalek to significantly increase the number of people served with continuous registration activities - including with document renewal - as well as the number of asylum-seekers newly registered. The registration of unaccompanied and separated children will also continue to be prioritized. Furthermore, UNHCR's Field Office in Alexandria continues to conduct mobile registration missions for communities living in remote areas of Egypt's North Coast.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR **advocated with the authorities to exercise tolerance towards refugees and asylum-seekers whose identification documents had expired**. UNHCR has further been liaising closely with the World Health organization (WHO) and Egypt's Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) to ensure refugees and asylum-seekers with COVID-19 symptoms have access to health care on the same level as Egyptian nationals.

UNHCR has advocated together with WHO to ensure refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy equitable access to the Government of Egypt's **vaccination plan for COVID-19**. UNHCR understands that the Ministry of Health and Population has included refugees and asylum-seekers in **the discussions and planning for COVID-19 vaccines**. For the first phase of COVID-19 vaccination, the priority group will be health workers and patients with chronic medical conditions.



*A Sudanese refugee, during a job interview in a job fair organized by Refuge Egypt, UNHCR Partner.  
©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes*



## PROTECTION

- UNHCR Egypt has strengthened and adapted its **communication with refugees and asylum-seekers** since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Communication channels include **phone, e-mail, social media, messaging applications and video calling**. Since the start of remote work modalities throughout 2020, UNHCR Egypt's Infoline and registration hotlines **responded to over 160,000 calls**.
- UNHCR conducts **protection, reception and counselling activities** based on case referrals made via phone calls and e-mails. These activities enabled UNHCR to swiftly identify the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers and to provide them with assistance, protection and durable solutions as necessary.
- UNHCR continued to conduct **remote Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews** with stringent **procedural and integrity standards** in place. Between October - December 2020, a total of **1,018 remote RSD interviews** were conducted involving 1,911 persons. In addition, 965 RSD decisions were finalized, affecting a total of 1,434 individuals.
- As of 31 December, **4,051 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)** were registered with UNHCR Egypt. Given partial suspension of registration activities, all newly identified children at risk - including unaccompanied children - underwent a thorough protection screening by telephone. **Emergency registration** was then facilitated for children with **heightened vulnerabilities or protection risks**. All unregistered children at risk remained under close monitoring by UNHCR's Child Protection team.
- Following the launch of the piloted community meetings with unaccompanied children (UAC), the UNHCR Child Protection team held two additional community meetings with Ethiopian and Somali UAC in November, in cooperation with UNHCR partner Save the Children. During these meetings, the children expressed challenges with budgeting their financial expenditures, lack of awareness on education opportunities, and difficulty accessing services in the large urban context of Cairo, as well as general harassment and discrimination in public spaces.
- In line with prevention measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, UNHCR and Child Protection partners continues to **carry out most activities remotely while attending to urgent and emergency cases in person**. This includes emergency registration of high-risk cases and urgent alternative care needs for children facing abuse. In addition, the 24/7 emergency child protection helpline run by UNHCR partner Caritas remained functional during the reporting period to rapidly respond to child protection related queries.
- Between October - November, **226 Best Interest Assessments (BIAs)** were conducted for children at risk, mainly UASC. In addition, UNHCR responded to **1,340 child protection related inquiries over e-mail**.



South Sudanese refugees received sanitizers donated by RB in response to the UNHCR's COVID-19 appeal.  
©UNHCR/ Pedro Costa Gomes

- In the fourth quarter of 2020, UNHCR and its **Gender-Based Violence** (GBV) partner CARE International in both Alexandria and Cairo responded to **523 GBV incidents**. The **survivors received multi-sectoral response services** including safety, medical, psychosocial, livelihoods, legal services and quality case management. Remote interviews and counselling with survivors are on-going, with minimal physical contact where emergency services are required (e.g. when disbursing emergency financial assistance to survivors). Inter-agency GBV case conferences were also held in both Alexandria and Cairo to discuss and meet the needs of complex GBV cases.
- CARE International continued conducting **virtual GBV prevention awareness activities**. A total of **869 women, men and children attended basic psychosocial awareness**, early marriage, self-defense, children's camp, sexual and reproductive health and legal awareness sessions. During their sessions, teenage girls expressed satisfaction with the virtual sessions as it gave them an opportunity to discreetly pose questions to facilitators without feeling shy or rearing judgement from fellow participants. In Cairo, **562 women and children attended various activities and workshops** at the Women Friendly Space in the last quarter of 2020.
- The **GBV Sub-Working Groups** in both Alexandria and Cairo continued with thematic discussions on various elements of GBV and further discussed developments on GBV and the COVID-19 pandemic. In Cairo, UNHCR concluded the Post-Distribution Monitoring of the UNFPA-UNHCR **interim cash project** and the results from the interviews with survivors were analyzed and presented to the working group. In Alexandria, the sub-working group noted under-reporting by Syrians of GBV incidents, particularly for intimate partner violence incidents, as well as increasing number of GBV incidents against minors being reported.
- In the last quarter of 2020, UNHCR held **three training sessions on GBV**, with community leaders and volunteers from various nationalities. One predicted outcome from these sessions is to build a network of informed community volunteers who will support GBV survivors as first responders in the communities and link them with critical emergency services. At the request of the trainees, additional trainings shall be conducted in 2021.
- UNHCR conducted various activities for the **2020 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence** (25 November – 10 December) in both Cairo and Alexandria. In Greater Cairo, a total of **500 dignity kits** were distributed to refugees and asylum-seekers at UNHCR premises as well as through CARE; two **virtual sessions** on Livelihoods and Legal Services were held with community leaders in coordination with Refuge Egypt and United Lawyers; social media messages were disseminated; and **two interactive sessions** were held with UNHCR staff. In Alexandria and the North Coast, UNHCR distributed **500 sanitary kits; 13 activities** were coordinated together with Caritas; and two **focus group discussions** were conducted.
- UNHCR continued to facilitate **birth registration** for refugees and asylum-seekers. The cases included children born out of wedlock or GBV incidents, as well as children whose birth registration was delayed and has therefore become more complicated. A total of 87 birth certificates were issued through legal service providers contracted by UNHCR during the reporting period. **Securing birth registration is crucial in preventing statelessness** and facilitating individuals' **access to governmental services**.



*A Sudanese refugee seen at a bazar organized by UNHCR partner Refuge Egypt. ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes*



## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

- **Meetings with the refugee community** in from October - December took place through both virtual modality as well as in-person, with precautionary measures in place. During the fourth quarter, UNHCR's Community-based Protection Team and sector experts met a total **of 303 community members** from Cairo and Alexandria. **Thematic meetings** focused on UNHCR Registration, protection services provided during the COVID-19 situation, and more specifically legal protection as well as cash-based interventions. The meetings gave room for Q&A and open discussions.
- **Refugee outreach volunteers** in Alexandria continued to provide support to refugee communities, where they **play a significant part in raising awareness, identifying challenges and vulnerable cases, responding to inquiries, and facilitating access** to different services. The team of volunteers maintains communication with the community through messaging groups, where they provide timely and immediate responses. Between October - December, **volunteers in Alexandria responded to more than 1,900 inquiries**. In addition, 54 awareness sessions were conducted on COVID-19 using online platforms, reaching over 600 refugees and asylum-seekers of different nationalities.
- UNHCR also maintained two-way communication and daily engagement with the communities through **mobile messaging groups** with over 130 community leaders and **more than 7,000 community members**. During the COVID-19 situation, refugees and asylum-seekers increasingly reported being unable to ascertain the authenticity of some information circulating on various online platforms. Direct communication channels with UNHCR enabled them to inform the agency of these rumors and **receive immediate clarification**.



An 11 years old Syrian girl participating in a drawing activity at Matrouh Public library. ©Caritas Egypt



## HEALTH

- UNHCR through its health partners continued to ensure **sustained access to essential health services** such as life-saving emergency services, regular supply of medicines for patients with chronic conditions, the management of complicated pregnancies as well as **mental health services during the second wave of COVID-19 infections in Egypt**.
- Since end-November 2020, UNHCR Egypt has engaged an expert on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), recruited by the Dutch Surge Support (DSS). The expert is supporting the **Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP)** over a three-month period in developing an emergency MHPSS response in the context of COVID-19. In addition, he is expected to review MHPSS coordination mechanism among humanitarian actors in Egypt.

- Save the Children International (SCI) continued to implement a Primary Health Care project on behalf of UNHCR. Within this project, **virtual capacity building sessions were provided for 93 MoHP professionals** on different health topics in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sessions were based on the needs identified together with MoHP during supportive supervision visits. The topics included dental clinic guideline for COVID-19, autism and childhood illness. SCI further organized a five-day **training on Sexual and Reproductive Health for 19 refugee community health workers** from Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta.
- UNHCR Health partner Caritas Alexandria organized events to observe World Mental Health Day on 10 October, World Diabetes Day on 14 November and World AIDS Day on 1 December. The objective was **to raise awareness among refugees and asylum-seekers on these important health topics**. An event for **people living with HIV HIV/AIDS** was organized by UNHCR's partner Refuge Egypt in Cairo on 22 December. The event was attended by Director of Egypt's National AIDS Program and the Director of UNAIDS in Egypt. The participants reiterated the importance of continuation of HIV treatment and care during the pandemic, and reassured the Government's support in inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national AIDS activities.



## BASIC NEEDS AND SELF RELIANCE

- UNHCR delivers **monthly unconditional cash grants** to extremely vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to provide protection and assistance, and to prevent reliance on negative coping mechanisms. Between October - December 2020, a total of **10,031 vulnerable families** (comprising 39,536 refugees and asylum-seekers) were supported with multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA).
- In response to the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers, **579 families** (1,977 individuals) were targeted for **short-term cash support** using additional supplementary budget received for the COVID-19 response. During the reporting period, 480 cases (1,696 individuals) received their cash assistance while distribution for other targeted cases continued after December.
- Furthermore, **3,127 families** (9,070 individuals) received **interim cash support** from UNHCR. The interim cash program seeks to sequence cash assistance with protection interventions for an interim basis (ranging from three to six months) for cases **facing serious protection risks**, namely: (a) newly arrived refugees with serious protection needs and risks, (b) newly identified persons with specific needs with inability for self-care, (c) other protection cases with serious protection profiles identified during the course of the year (GBV survivors, children-at-risk, LGBTI at high-risk of physical harm, persons with highly sensitive backgrounds and profiles, cases of repeated physical threats/harm), and (d) cases with temporary medical needs that impact on their ability to work.
- In addition, a total of **2,313 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) received UNHCR cash for protection**. Cash assistance provided to UASC is a main element of the holistic child protection case plan developed during the initial Best Interest Assessment (BIA) and continuously monitored through child protection case management.
- In December, UNHCR started the distribution of **winter assistance** with an initial target of **59,159 cases (100,591 individuals)**.
- Between October - December, 484 refugees and asylum-seekers participated in diverse **trainings for livelihood purposes**. In addition, 123 people were placed in jobs and 565 were provided with guidance on labor market opportunities. With support from UNHCR, **311 refugees and asylum-seekers started and/or expanded their businesses** after receiving livelihood cash grants.

- Livelihood partners were trained on the usage of Refugee Assistance Information System (**RAIS**), a web-based assistance management platform used by UNHCR and partners to ensure a coordinated delivery of assistance. The partners will use RAIS to **administer referrals of cases to livelihood projects** and to have an effective monitoring and tracking system.
- The Egyptian social enterprise *Byhand* has started its onboarding process to **MADE51**, UNHCR's global brand of artisanal home décor and accessories crafted by refugees. *Byhand* will focus its work on straw handicrafts and plans to include 15 women in the production.



*Injy Ali, an Egyptian TV Presenter, speaking at UNHCR reception at El Gouna Film Festival in October 2020 ©UNHCR*



*A refugee woman shows off her handcrafted brooches featuring well-known Egyptian film actors as part of the "Stars in the Sky" project supported by UNHCR. ©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes*

- Refugee artisans created giveaways for guests of the El Gouna Film festival. The 50 women from Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Eritrea and Yemen prepared brooches featuring some of Egypt's most recognized film actors. Entitled '*Stars in the Sky*', the project is a unique collaboration between "Ebda3 men Masr" by ALEXBANK, Thaat Social enterprise & Innovative Consultancy and UNHCR.
- **Refugee artisans in Egypt** as well as local social enterprises participated in an **online global workshop on MADE51**. The workshop covered a wide range of topics such as marketing, design, product development, programming and contracting in this sector. Furthermore, the workshop included a session that gathered refugees who are part of this platform from different countries to discuss their engagement in MADE51 and the skills they have developed.

- Under MADE51, refugee artisans **displayed their handcrafted products** such as aprons and towels at an exhibition held from 10 - 15 October at Egypt International Exhibition Center.

*Martha, a South Sudanese refugee, works in MADE51 project which is supported by UNHCR.  
©UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes*





## EDUCATION

- At the beginning of the school year, many refugees and asylum-seekers expressed concern their children would miss out on education, the reason being that they held expired identification cards and residence permits. UNHCR advocated with the Ministry of Education to authorize the enrollment of refugee and asylum-seeking children in public schools, despite the expiration of their documents. These **efforts were successful** and on 4 October 2020, the Ministry of Education informed UNHCR that **refugees and asylum-seekers with expired documents would be admitted in Egyptian schools for the academic year 2020/2021.**
- For the current academic year, 43,910 **refugee and asylum-seeking students** (21,533 girls and 22,377 boys) **registered to receive education grants.** The grants contribute to school fees and other related expenses such as uniforms, books and transportation. In addition, a top-up was added to the regular education grants for this school year to enable families to purchase internet credit for students to access online learning.
- In addition, **1,513 unaccompanied and separated children** (713 girls and 800 boys) and **368 children with special needs** (116 girls and 252 boys) received **enhanced education grants.** This allowed students with special needs to enroll in schools that have the model of education and care suitable for their needs.



## DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- UNHCR continued to conduct **remote resettlement interviews** with stringent procedural and integrity standards in place. Between October - December, **818 refugee cases were submitted for resettlement** to Canada, France, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. The main nationalities included Syrians, Sudanese, Eritreans, South Sudanese, Ethiopians, and Somalis. As of end-December, a total of 2,478 refugees were submitted for resettlement consideration in 2020.
- Between October - December, 405 refugees departed on resettlement to destinations such as Canada, France, Sweden, USA, Portugal, Netherlands and Spain. **A total of 1,353 refugees departed Egypt for resettlement in 2020.**

## Other developments

- On 5 October, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the launch of the Egypt Chapter of the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2020 - 2021 in response to the Syria Crisis (3RP), and the Egypt Response Plan for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers from Sub-Saharan Africa, Iraq and Yemen 2020 – 2021 (ERP). The event came as part of the Government of Egypt's sustained efforts to support refugees and asylum-seekers from all nationalities in Egypt. In his statement during the launch, Ambassador Ihab Fawzi, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral Affairs and



*Ambassador Ihab Fawzi and UNHCR Representative Karim Atassi during his intervention at the 3RP/ERP launch.  
©UNHCR/ Pedro Costa Gomes*

International Security highlighted the **need for more resources to support public services and foster community resilience** in particular in education of refugee children in public schools and in secondary and tertiary healthcare. He also **called for more resettlement opportunities** for refugees in Egypt. The launch event was attended by representatives from donor countries, appealing partners and UN agencies. The funding levels received by the appealing partners of the **3RP** and **ERP** for 2020 did not exceed 39 per cent and 24 per cent respectively.

- The 2020 16-days of Activism Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence was launched under the **umbrella of the League of Arab States**, within the framework of the global campaign. In his opening remarks, UNHCR Egypt's Representative Karim Atassi explained that despite efforts to prevent gender-based violence and resources invested towards this goal, women and girls were still subject to various forms of violence due to discriminatory social norms, adding that the risks women and girls faced were further multiplied within the asylum context.
- UNHCR once again attended the fourth **El Gouna Film Festival** (GFF). This year, UNHCR and Gouna Film Festival signed a cooperation agreement to allow UNHCR a platform within the festival to **raise public awareness about the refugee cause and feature refugee voices**. Together with the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development (SFSD), UNHCR organized a panel discussion titled 'Children Matter'. It was moderated by Lebanese TV presenter Raya Abirached and featured Lebanese director Nadine Labaki, UNHCR Representative Karim Atassi, Assistant Secretary General and Head of Social Affairs Sector of the League of Arab States Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, Executive Director of SFSD Eng. Noura Selim, and UNHCR High Profile Supporter, Actress Kinda Alloush. UNHCR's advocacy efforts at the Gouna Film Festival culminated in a partnership agreement with SFSD to support refugee children in 2021-2022. The agreement was announced at a high-level reception co-hosted by both parties.



Eng. Samih Sawiris, Founder of SFSD, and UNHCR Representative Karim Atassi during signing a partnership agreement at El Gouna Film Festival. ©UNHCR



Participants of the panel discussion 'Children Matter' at El Gouna Film Festival from left to right: Moderator Raya Abirached, Karim Atassi, Eng. Noura Selim, Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh and Kinda Alloush. ©UNHCR/Kaidar Ayoub

- On 25 October and at the onset of the Gouna Film Festival, UNHCR and **Egyptian design company Okhtein** launched a joint digital campaign to support those severely impacted by the **Beirut explosion** on 4 August 2020 and UNHCR's efforts on the ground to assist the most vulnerable citizens and refugees in the aftermath of this tragedy. The campaign kicked off with a virtual auction of an exclusively tailor-made bag produced for the #StandwithLebanon campaign and displayed at the Gouna Film Festival.

## Working in partnership

- **UNHCR works closely with the Government of Egypt, UN and NGO partners to provide protection and assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees.** The Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) chaired by UNHCR is the main interagency coordination mechanism overseeing six sectorial working groups gathering representatives from UN agencies, as well as international and national NGOs. The protection sector includes three sub-working groups which consist of Child Protection, Response to SGBV, and Durable Solutions. The other working groups are for Education, Health, Basic Needs and Cash, Livelihoods, and Communication with Communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR works very closely with partners to ensure a coordinated response to the emerging needs. UNHCR and partners implementing activities on its behalf meet on a bi-weekly basis to discuss the COVID-19 response. All meetings currently take place via videoconferencing.
- **In 2020, UNHCR Egypt worked through the following implementing partners:** All Saints' Cathedral • CARE International • Caritas Egypt • Catholic Relief Services (CRS) • Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights (EFRR) • Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) • Save the Children International (SCI) • Terre des Hommes (TdH) • United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) • United Nations Volunteers (UNV).
- **In the frameworks of the Egypt Response Plan for Refugees and Asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan Africa, Iraq and Yemen (ERP) and the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP) focusing on Syrian refugees and host communities, UNHCR appeals together with the following partners in Egypt:** CRS • CARE International • Caritas Egypt • Don Bosco • ERC • Fard Foundation • International Labour Organization (ILO) • International Organization for Migration (IOM) • Mostafa Mahmoud Society (MMS) • Plan International • SCI • World Food Programme (WFP) • World Health Organization (WHO) • United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) • United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) • United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) • UN Women

## Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **USD 10.3 million** as of 27 January 2021.

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**Sweden | Netherlands | Denmark | Germany | Switzerland | Ireland | Belgium**

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## LINKS

Syria Regional Refugee Response: [data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria](http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria)  
UNHCR Refugees & Migration Emergency Mediterranean Response: [data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/Mediterranean](http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/Mediterranean)