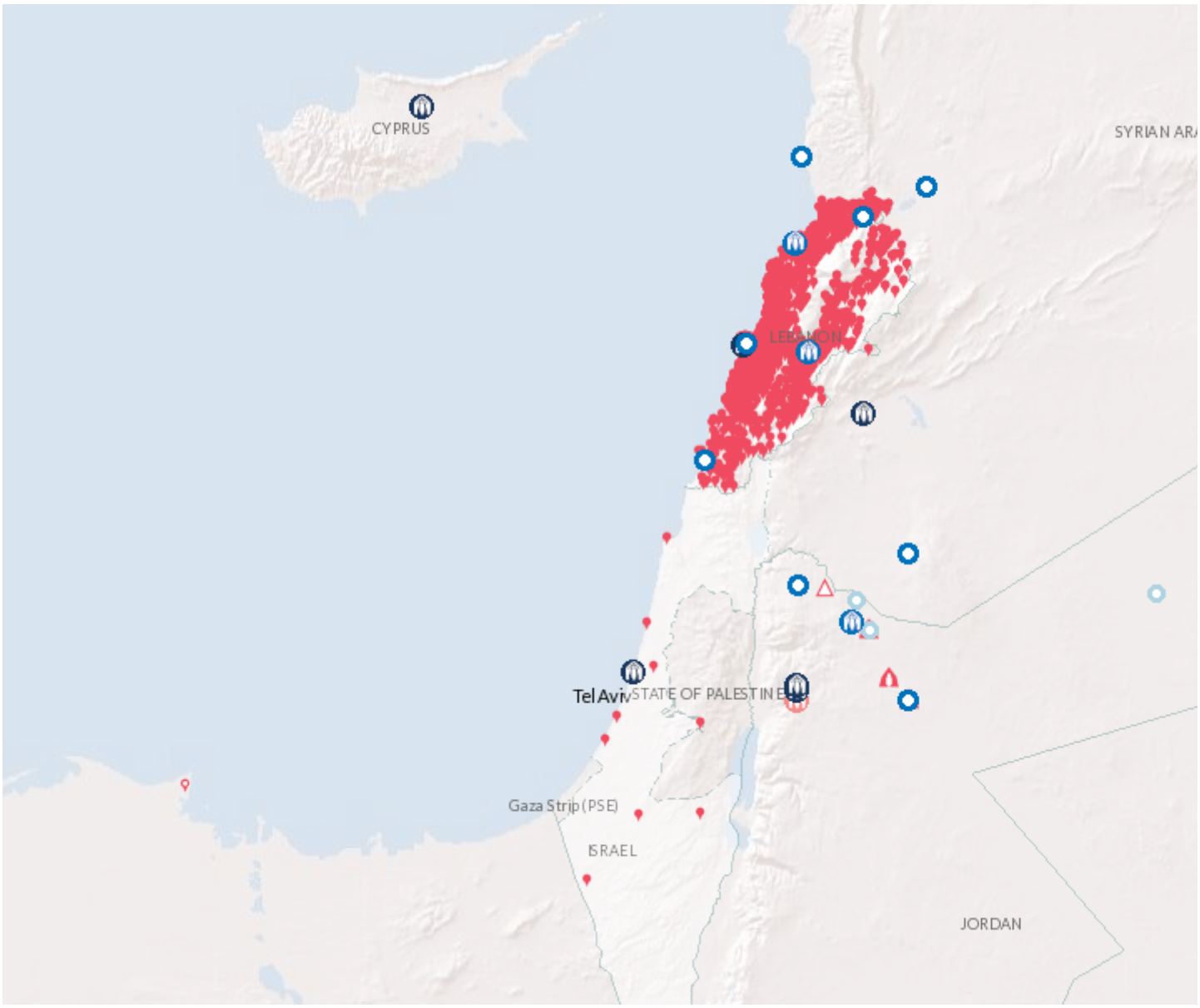
UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | Global Focus
UNHCR Operations Worldwide

# 2018 Year-End report

1/7/2019

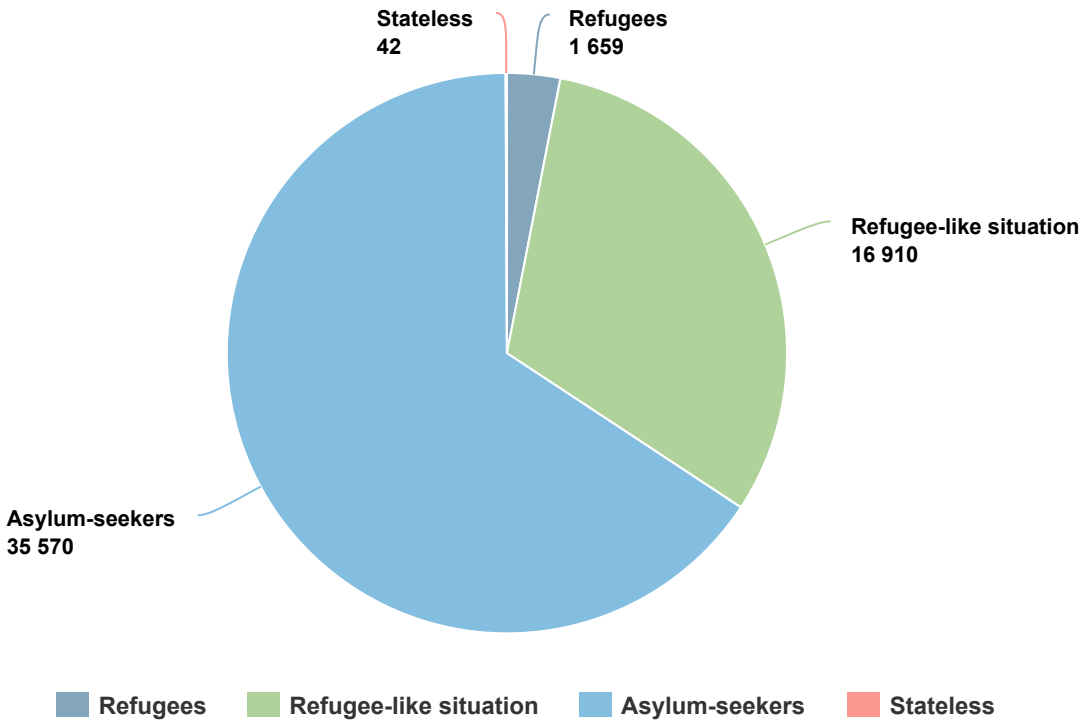
## Operation: Israel



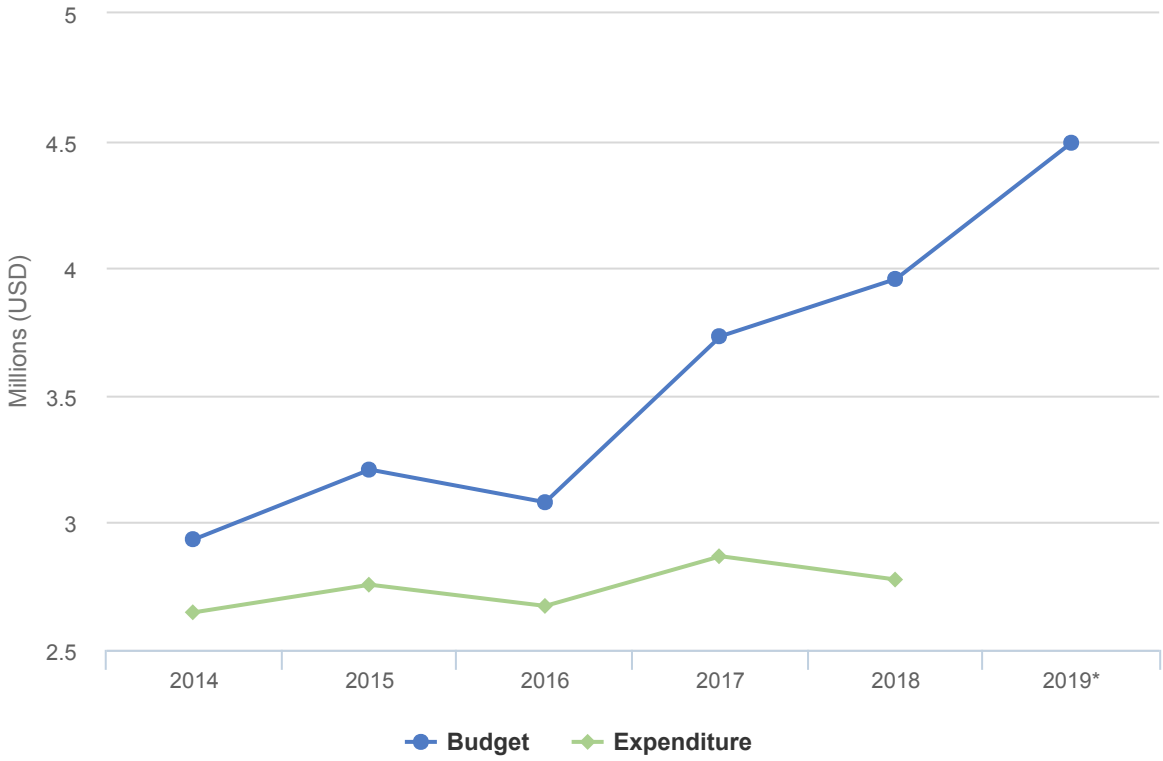
## People of Concern

**2%** **DECREASE IN 2018**

| | |
|---|---|
| **2018** | 54,181 |
| **2017** | 55,250 |
| **2016** | 44,665 |



# Budgets and Expenditure for Israel



## Operational context

The protection environment for UNHCR's people of concern in Israel remained restrictive in 2018. In April 2018, UNHCR came to an agreement with the Government upon a Framework of Common Understanding that would put in place a timetable to implement solutions for the some 39,000 Eritrean and Sudanese asylum-seekers over the next five years. However, the agreement was rescinded immediately rescinded after political leaders claimed it would allow integration of too many people of concern into the country.

## Population trends

In 2018, the number of people of concern to UNHCR saw minor change from previous years, standing at 33,627, including the children of asylum-seekers defined by Israel as "infiltrators". The vast majority are Eritreans (24,007) and Sudanese (6,594) who entered before the closure of the border with Egypt in 2013. No new arrivals have been reported since May 2016.

In the course of 2018, refugee status was granted to six asylum-seekers (5 Eritreans, one Nigerian). Another 509 received temporary humanitarian protection either on a group basis (485 Sudanese) or individually (24 various nationalities). At the end of 2018, there were some 36,550 asylum applications pending a decision at first instance.

## Key achievements

Despite the Framework of Common Understanding not materializing, a revised proposal that shortened the timeline to 3.5 years was shared with the Government and is currently being advocated for. According to this version, the first year foresees at least 4,000 departures out of Israel through sponsorships, resettlement and family reunification in return for the same number being granted temporary residence permits in Israel that allow them access to gainful employment, health care and social assistance. Threatened widespread detention and forced relocation to Rwanda and Uganda were ceased, and enforced residence in Holot— a semi-detention center in the Negev desert—was also ended.

In 2018, UNHCR:

- Advocated for access to adequate public services for asylum–seekers with specific needs and provided support and assistance, including psycho-social counselling, legal advice, employment support, financial assistance, and income-generating projects;
- Continued to identify and refer victims of torture to the inter-ministerial committee assigned to map and identify the needs of victims. More than 100 cases were referred during the reporting period;
- Conducted trainings on domestic violence for police officers, government officials and practitioners;
- Through its multi-stakeholder SGBV forum, worked closely with various local NGOs and community associations to address SGBV and related issues;
- Organized training for schools and municipalities and supported NGOs' afterschool programmes and community-based initiatives in order to decrease risk factors for children and improve their learning.
- Continued to advocate for a fair and effective national asylum system by monitoring procedures, expert training and providing legal positions and country of origin information.
- Supported litigation by its partners aimed at influencing government policies regarding in particular the treatment of asylum-seekers from Eritrea and Sudan. This resulted in the granting of humanitarian status to hundreds of Sudanese from Darfur during the reporting period.

- Employed resettlement as an instrument of international protection for survivors of torture, the disabled or severely traumatized refugees who need specialized treatment unaffordable in Israel, or to reunite separated refugee families.

## Unmet needs

Due to the rejection of the Framework of Common Understanding, UNHCR continues to advocate for protection and durable solutions for the approx. 40,000 people of concern in Israel, for whom solutions would have been funded through plans set out in the Framework.