



sohri
Swedish
Observatory
المُرصد
السويدي

IT'S HARD TO LIVE HERE

Refugee rights assessment in Egypt - 2022



The Swedish Observatory for Human Rights Information (SOHRI), is a Swedish non-profit organisation for Human Rights advocacy and international solidarity. We work for democracy, human rights, social justice, and peace. We support and partner with governmental and non-governmental organisations, progressive movements and parties that change societies and people's everyday lives.

SOHRI works within the framework of the principles established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments regardless of the identity or affiliation of the victim or violator. We research and document human rights violations, relying on primary sources and our extensive networks within various civil society to investigate and report on cases and issues of pressing concern.

Published in 2022 by
The Swedish Observatory for Human Rights Information - SOHRI
Sweden

©SOHRI, 2022

Index: MDE 1/11/2022
Original language: English
Head Office, Lund - Sweden

Some rights reserved. This publication may be reproduced by any method without fee for advocacy, campaigning and teaching purposes, but not for resale.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-noncommercial-no derivatives 4.0 international license.

sohri.org





CONTENTS

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Summary	1
Background	2
Current refugee context in Egypt	3
Methodology	4

PART II: FINDINGS

VULNERABILITIES	9
1- Protection	9
2- Education	59
3- Psycho-social issues	67
4- Livelihoods	69
5- Health care	71
COPING STRATEGIES	72
SOCIAL DYNAMICS	75

PART III: RECOMMENDATIONS

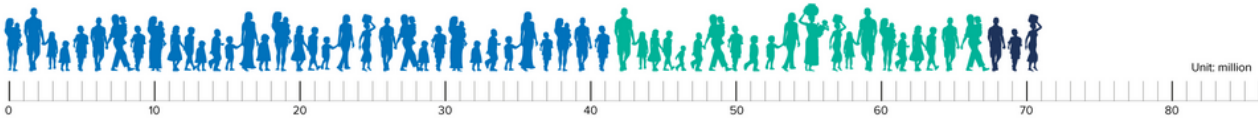
First: Policy recommendations	77
Second: Arbitrary detention of refugees	77
Third: Positioning	78
Fourth: Programming recommendations	80
ENDNOTES	83

NO ONE LEAVES HOME UNLESS HOME IS THE MOUTH OF A SHARK

Home, by Warsan Shire



70.8 million forcibly displaced people worldwide



Internally Displaced People

41.3 million

Refugees

25.9 million

20.4 million under UNHCR's mandate
5.5 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate

Asylum-seekers

3.5 million

Where the world's displaced people are being hosted



About 80 per cent of refugees live in countries neighbouring their countries of origin

57% of UNHCR refugees came from three countries

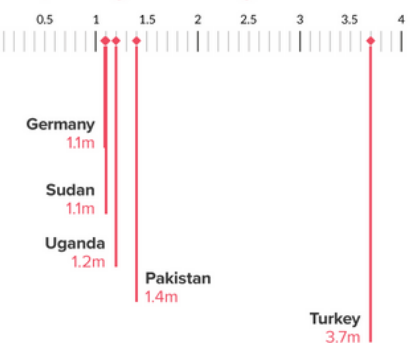


341,800 new asylum seekers

The greatest number of new asylum applications in 2018 was from Venezuelans



Top refugee-hosting countries



UNHCR has data on

3.9 million stateless people

but there are thought to be millions more



92,400 refugees resettled

37,000 people

a day forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution

16,803 personnel

UNHCR employs 16,803 people worldwide (as of 31 May 2019)

134 countries

We work in 134 countries (as of 31 May 2019)

We are funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, with 86 per cent from governments and the European Union and 10 per cent from private donors

EGYPT

As of 2022, Egypt hosts more than 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers. Estimates by local NGOs and groups working with refugees and asylum seekers suggest that the current number could be as much as twice as high. Since 2011, many of these refugees have been Syrians fleeing the civil war. By 2013, more than half of Egypt's refugee population was made up of Syrian nationals. Unfortunately, Egypt lacks an effective civil society which can ensure that the human rights of refugees are respected, as well as the rule of law.

The Syrian refugee population has been particularly vulnerable following the political and social upheaval in Egypt during the summer of 2013, with an increasingly high number of arbitrary arrests and detentions among Syrian nationals being reported by human rights groups. Furthermore, from the 8th of July 2013, Syrian nationals have been required to obtain an entry visa and security clearance prior to their arrival in Egypt. Based on the numerous reports of deportation or denied entrance to Syrian nationals, it seems that this policy has resulted in a de facto closure of Egyptian borders to Syrian refugees.

This is indicative of the lack of democratic institutions and procedures in Egypt, which are necessary to ensure refugees have the freedom that they are entitled to. The second largest refugee population in Egypt is Palestinian. Palestinian refugees make up a quarter of the overall Egyptian population. Of the 70,000 Palestinian refugees in Egypt, less than 1% receives assistance from UNHCR, due to an Egyptian government policy which prevents UNHCR registering Palestinian refugees.

Additionally, UNRWA - the UN body which was established in 1949 to assist Palestinian refugees - is not mandated to work in Egypt, meaning that the vast majority of Palestinian refugees based in Egypt do not have access to any UN assistance. The situation of detained refugees has been worsened by the recent closing of NGOs such as Ameera and crackdown on civil society in Egypt. These closures have led to a vacuum of civil society organisations dealing with refugee detainees in Egypt, further dwindling the resources and safeguards that refugees have in the country.

It is hard to live here...We don't feel anything, any more but we are alive. We live without dignity or hope as the days go pass...All I want is to live with dignity...To be able to raise my children. We want to be settled in any country where we can be safe...Where it is easier to live...When we first came [to Egypt] everything was fine, life was good and we were hopeful, but just before Eid [following Ramadan, in August, 2013], everything changed... We want a legal way to leave Egypt so that we don't have to use the sea. It's hard to live here...We cannot live here any more... It is very hard to live here

A refugee whose husband was killed in Syria and now resides in Alexandria, Egypt



REPORT ONLINE



INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY

There are more than 135,000 Syrians registered with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Egypt. Estimates by UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations suggest that the Syrian refugee population in the country could be twice that number. Additionally, more than 6,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria are believed to be residing in Egypt. Unlike Syrian refugees, Palestinians are not allowed to register with UNHCR or UNRWA due to instructions by the Egyptian government. This leaves Palestinian refugees unable to enjoy international protection in Egypt and at risk of forcible return.

In addition to Syrian and Palestinian refugees, there is the continuous ordeal of the African refugees in Egypt. African refugees cannot enter the education system, and legal employment is impossible. Moreover, there are huge safety concerns, as Africans face daily harassment, racism and gender-based violence from the local community. More alerting, according to an investigative documentary by German journalist Thilo Mischke, African refugees, especially the Sudanese, fall victims to organ trafficking in Egypt. Another investigative report by the Coalition for Organ Failure Solutions (COFS) said they were either forced to sell their organs or lured with money. While Egyptian authorities strenuously deny such claims, another video report by Egyptian journalist Hoda Zakaria highlights that black Africans are subject to violence, harassment, rape and organ trafficking. Since the ousting of Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, the situation for refugees particularly from Syria has severely deteriorated.

In 2013 the United Nations reported a rise in landlord intolerance and job dismissal of Syrian workers, whilst the Swedish Observatory for Human Rights Information has documented how refugees have been subjected to verbal attacks, threats and incitement of violence in the national media and by public figures, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention and – in many cases – deportation to Syria. That all along with national policies that obstruct the work of humanitarian organizations, have left refugees there with little visibility or assistance outside the communities where they live. More international attention must be directed towards these marginalized populations. Egypt already has functioning systems in place for helping refugees. But those systems require additional support from donors, the national government, and Egyptians themselves if they are to meet the basic needs of people who have fled there.

BACKGROUND

Given the pressure on service-providers, restrictions on activists, researchers and independent NGOs (both national and international), the waning resources to support refugees, and the levels of desperation of refugees in Egypt; the purpose of this report is to assess the situation of refugees living in Egypt. Based on a study conducted involving interviews, surveys and focus group discussions, a picture was formed of the needs of refugee communities – primarily Syrian – in Alexandria, Damietta and Cairo. Whilst by no means comprehensive, the study outlines the major factors affecting the rights and quality of life of refugees in Egypt (in particularly Syrian), and recommends what may be done to help their situation. This report will aim to present the findings of the study, outlining the key findings to both raise awareness and advocate on behalf of refugee communities living in Egypt.

Egypt has a long history as a refugee hosting country within the region, due to its geographic positioning, its comparatively cheap cost of living, and its largely ambivalent treatment of refugee communities. Egypt is host to refugee and asylum-seeker populations from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Palestine, and Palestinians fleeing Syria. While Egypt has been experiencing ongoing political upheaval and unrest in recent years, it has continued to attract refugees from neighboring countries. Since 2011, an influx of refugees from Syria have been arriving in Egypt, prompting a significant scaling up of the humanitarian response to refugees in Egypt. Refugees in Egypt live within the urban environment, rather than in camps, and face many of the same issues as Egypt's poor, as well as additional refugee specific challenges. As the Syrian conflict becomes increasingly protracted, the prospects of an early return are dwindling. Growing numbers of refugees – Syrians but also Palestinians, Eritreans and other nationalities - are risking the boat journey from the North African coastline in a dangerous attempt to reach Europe.

The goal of this report and assessment is to increase the understanding of the refugee rights context in Egypt, and specifically assess the needs of Syrian refugees in Egypt. Syrians, as the most recent arrivals, the largest in number, Arabic speaking, and with at least formal access to public health and education have a particular set of circumstances that set them apart from other long standing refugee populations in Egypt, who are predominantly African, as well as Iraqi. While this assessment is focused mainly on Syrians, analysis is also included on other populations drawing upon the our findings from Stages 1 and 2 of the research. Stage 3 has entirely focused on the Syrian population, with a thematic focus on education. The overall aim of the assessment is to identify practical and relevant rights based programming recommendations, which are appropriate to the needs and rights of the refugee community.

This report's assessment process is divided into three distinct stages: the first a desktop review of secondary sources; the second stage entailed a series of stakeholder engagements through interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); and the third stage involved a survey carried out at the community level, with a focus on children and education. Stage 1 and 2 revealed that educational support is a key area where support from international community and various stakeholders would be well positioned to make a contribution. This report functions as the overall final report for the assessment. It is not possible to thoroughly cover all issues pertaining to all refugee communities in Egypt. Instead, the assessment has aimed to take a strategic sampling approach, focusing on those stakeholders, communities and issues most relevant to international community / stakeholders involvement and interference.

CURRENT REFUGEE CONTEXT IN EGYPT

At this point in time, there is an increasingly protracted displacement of Syrian refugees in Egypt. There has been an overall reduction in UNHCR's target numbers and level of support, and reduced levels of support for Syrians across the board in the humanitarian sector as the conflict continues. In Egypt, different refugee populations have highly differential access to state services. Even within the same refugee community, or the same service provider, there is a routine level of inconsistency and inequitable access to services.

As refugees and Egyptians face rising costs, there is an increasing rate of food insecurity and housing insecurity. There is a lack of work rights and livelihood options for refugees, which mean that many turn to negative coping mechanisms such as child labor. Without adequate educational support - both material assistance and advocacy to improve access and quality - many children are not attending school consistently. For Syrians, Egyptian health and education services are seen as inadequate and unsatisfactory. The key problems with education for Syrians in Egypt are the differences in dialect, curriculum, relationship with teachers, and the common practice of private tutoring as a parallel educational system. Attempts are made by Syrians to run community schools and educational centers, but these are not supported and the government closes down unregistered schools. Unaccompanied minors are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in a number of ways, especially those from non-English/non-Arabic speaking backgrounds. Another highly vulnerable group are female-headed households; particularly those women who have small children but whom also need to undertake paid work outside the home. There is a distinct lack of per-school options and after school care for refugee children.

Refugees struggle to deal with the bureaucracy and government departments that they face, not just in accessing health and education services but also in relation to visa, residency and security issues. Documentation challenges pose a constant problem for refugees in trying to access services and legalize their residency status. Protection failures are rampant, including deportation and detention. Advocacy and assistance in brokering dealings with government is much needed by refugees. At the same time, this is not the moment for INGO's to articulate rights claims or a rights-based approach in Egypt, but rather to offer strategic support to broker the relationship between refugees and government at the local level. At the same time, the Syrian community is tired, and becoming fatigued by requests for participation in research, assessments, committees, events and projects.

Violence, discrimination and harassment continue against refugees, with Syrians experiencing harassment and discrimination in schools, while African refugees report routine harassment and attacks in public space. Increasingly, many migrants facing desperate situations with a sense of prevailing hopelessness are undertaking irregular migration across the Mediterranean. Numbers of deaths are on the rise in failed sea crossings since 2015. With youth particularly boarding these boats and risk the consequences of deportation, detention, and death.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this study entailed Stage 1: desk research, followed by Stage 2: semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders, and Stage 3: participatory questionnaire implementation with community members.

1. Stage 1 Desktop Review: The desk research involved reviewing a range of UNHCR and INGO documents, as well as academic and media articles.

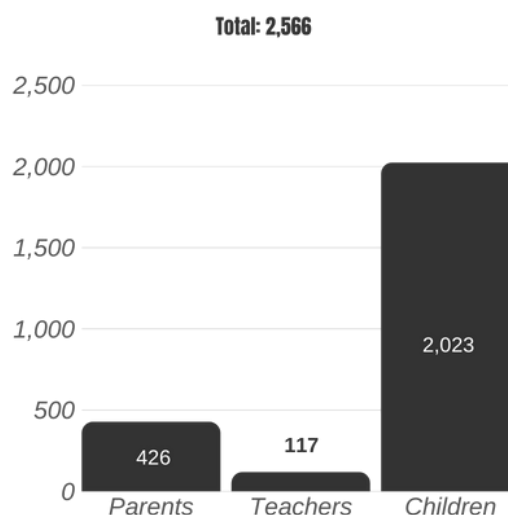
2. Stage 2 Stakeholder Interviews: A selected number of semi-structured interviews with key informants from various stakeholder groups were conducted in order to gain a contextual overview. These include UNHCR staff, partner organisation staff, activist/advocates from the Syrian community, and NGO/CBO staff.

3. Stage 3 Survey: Questionnaires were conducted with 2,566 people (426 parents, 117 teachers, and 2,023 children) across three different geographical areas (Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta) in order to ascertain the needs and priorities for support amongst the community. These surveys were carried out using local NGOs, CBOs and community centres as entry points into the community. The surveys were undertaken within educational centres, schools, NGO and CBO offices, public space such as parks, and private homes.

SAMPLING

The three sites selected were Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta. Within these cities, the selection of specific target areas for the study was made in conjunction with Syrian community centres. These sites were chosen on the basis of several criteria:

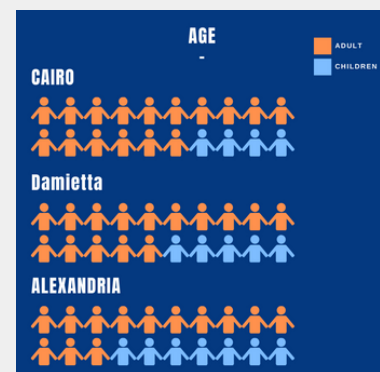
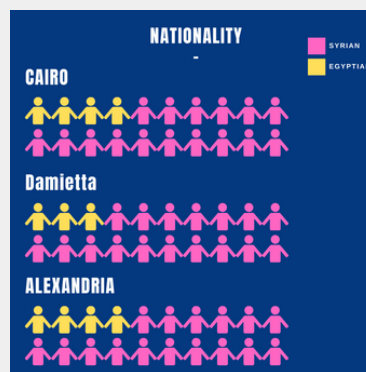
- The presence of significant numbers of Syrians in the area
- Diversity of geographical locations and populations within each city
- Accessibility and existing contacts as point of entry for conducting research
- Availability of populations of interest – specifically parents, children and teachers



Within these geographical areas, we utilized a non-probability sampling method, in order to gather information and gain insight on the particular areas of interest. For this we used purposive sampling, which aims to select cases on the basis of their applicability and relevance to the research question. Sampling of refugees in urban areas is difficult, in part because the total population is not known. However, as this research was not seeking to make statistical claims, purposive sampling was appropriate to the research objectives. For feasibility, accessibility and security reasons, Field Researchers relied upon a combination of self-selection and snowball referrals.

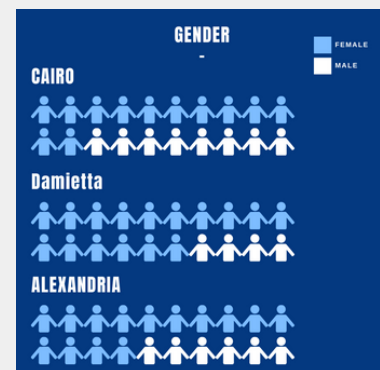
The survey was undertaken across three stakeholder groups - children, parents and teachers. The children ranged in age from 4 years old through to 17 years. Two different surveys were implemented across the children's group depending on their age - one for 4-8 year old, and another for 8-17 year old. The two different surveys for children were designed to appropriately target the language and questioning for different age groups. Syrian Field Researchers were involved in the design, testing and refining of the survey in order to ensure age-appropriateness, gender appropriateness, and cultural sensitivity of the survey questions.

The teams were predominately Syrian and mostly female. The make up of the teams in this way assisted greatly with accessibility to communities and particularly to building rapport. with Syrian mothers and their children. In order to ensure quality and consistency of research methods used, training was held with all researchers that covered the research purpose, roles and expectations, research methods, research with vulnerable groups, child protection, referral systems, informed consent, confidentiality, listening and interview techniques.



RESEARCH TEAMS

The Stage 3 Survey was undertaken by three research teams, one for each city. Each research team consisted of 20 Field Researchers, Egyptians and Syrians, men and women, and adults and children/youth. The breakdown of the research teams were as follows:



Governorate	Area	Children 4 - 17yrs	Parents	Teachers	Total no. of respondents
Alexandria	Faisal	191	92	7	290
	Miami	173	9	0	182
	Mandarah	57	5	0	62
	Sedi Beshri	43	10	0	53
	Al mamoura	24	17	0	41
	Al asafrah	66	6	0	72
	Al agami & 6th Oct.	85	27	0	112
	Burg Al-Arab	37	8	0	45
	Total in Alexandria	676	174	7	857
Greater Cairo	Al Aashir Min Ramadan	361	50	21	432
	Al Ubour	294	50	25	324
	6th October	171	20	14	205
	Al Faisal	63	32	14	109
	Al Haram	37	0	0	37
	Al Amrania	34	0	8	42
	Al Maadi	10	0	0	10
	Total in Greater Cairo	970	152	82	1,159
Damietta	New Damietta	155	32	10	195
	Ras el Bar	138	45	10	122
	Al Radwa	15	0	0	115
	Kafr Saad	10	0	0	28
	Kafr Batikh	10	0	0	38
	Izbet el Burj	49	23	8	7
	Total in Damietta	377	100	28	505
TOTALS		2,023	426	117	2,566

The numbers of respondents across the three areas are detailed in the table to the left

Child-Focused Research

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides a clear imperative for involving children in research. Children's views must be taken into account on the issues that affect them. There are three articles pertaining to children's participation:

- **Article 12 states that children who can form their own views should have the right to express those views and have them taken into account.**
- **Article 13 states that children have the right to freedom of expression, which includes seeking, receiving and giving information and ideas through speaking, writing or in print, through art or any other media of the child's choice.**
- **Article 14 establishes that State parties must respect children's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as parents' or guardians' role in their exercising this right.**

The Convention establishes that participation should be seen as both a process and an end in and of itself; that the very act of participation should be seen as contributing to the development of the children involved. This suggests highly participatory approaches to research and M&E where children are involved throughout the process.

UNICEF's Technical Note on 'Children Participating in Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation' seeks to establish some guidelines for the ethical and meaningful participation of children in research and evaluation processes. This is to ensure child protection, confidentiality, informed consent, non-discrimination, respect for children and their views, and ultimately consideration of the benefits for the children involved.

Following the guidance questions in the UNICEF Technical Note, the participation of children in this report was deemed to be beneficial, offering immediate benefits through the act of participation itself, and intended long term benefits through successful programming interventions. Some older children in Stage 3 of the assessment participated as peer researchers within the research teams, and as respondents. Children's rights were upheld through respecting children's views, allowing them the right to participate in the research, and also the right to non-participation. Children engaged in the research participated with their parents or guardians nearby, and were not taken into any situations where they were vulnerable to abuse or coercion, nor were they left alone with adult researchers. To ensure that the research had some immediate benefit for the children, the surveys were conducted within a broader program that involved games and creative activities. So that the research was not simply an extractive process, children's participation was accompanied by these recreational activities and community events. These were used to break the ice, encourage creative participation, and to give children (many of whom suffer psychosocial problems and traumas) a social event to enjoy with their peers and families.

Positive feedback was received from the children and their parents regarding their participation in the research. The parents felt that their children had taken on their roles responsibly and enjoyed the sense of importance that it gave them. The children participated with a great deal of enthusiasm and were loudly and boisterously contributing their ideas to the discussions. Children reflected that it was a new experience for them to be able to participate in interviews and putting their ideas into a research project. Children were surveyed in areas separate (but nearby) from their parents and teachers, and gathered and contributed information with a great deal of enthusiasm. Non-participation was also encouraged as an acceptable response to any question, and children at various points chose not to offer answers to questions asked.

Limitations and Constraints

Conducting research with urban refugee populations poses a challenge in terms of accessing populations. Purposive sampling was used, which aims to select cases on the basis of their applicability and relevance to the research question. This often requires accessing community members through a gatekeeper or referral service such as community centers. This has advantages in terms of accessibility and trust, but is a research limitation in so far as the sample is purposive rather than random. The degree of sensitivity surrounding support to Syrians meant that certain risks needed to be assessed, including the impact of foreigners being present at research sites. In the end, it was agreed that only Egyptian and Syrian staff on the project would attend the research sites, along with local CBO members.

REPORT TWO

FINDINGS

VULNERABILITIES

1. PROTECTION

Secure Visa Status and Residency Renewal:

The key protection challenge faced by Syrians in Egypt is the issue of residency visas. The difficulties faced in securing and renewing residency status impacts upon a number of areas of life. On a fundamental level, the lack of regularized residency status restricts Syrians' freedom of mobility. It means that people cannot go in and out of Egypt to visit relatives, to attend to business in the region, or to work in other countries. The introduction of the visa regime for Syrians in Egypt limits family reunification, and some people who were previously in Egypt remain trapped outside of the country following the changes. Refugees without a valid residency visa risk being arrested and detained, and potentially deported. Stakeholders in Damietta reported that there are long delays on processing residency applications, and during this time police may check on Syrians' status and if they find it is not in order, they will be detained in the police station for 6 hours before being released. The lack of secure residency deters Syrians from wanting to move around more than necessary within the city or within Egypt, due to fear of being detained.

Residency status deters refugees from seeking help from the police should they have any crimes perpetrated against them. This makes refugees more vulnerable to exploitation and harassment, as they are less likely to seek a response from the police. In disputes with landlords and employers, refugees usually have no contract to protect them, and due to residency status, are unable to seek justice in the event of any dispute. A lack of formalized residency status acts as a barrier to accessing other public services, which also has follow-on protection risks. The issue of residency is also linked to illegal migration - if refugees feel that their status in Egypt is not secure (in a number of aspects, including legalized status to remain in the country), they are more likely to attempt irregular migration. Irregular migration itself entails a number of protection risks, including detention (in Egypt or abroad), deportation (to their country of origin or elsewhere), and death at sea.

Irregular Secondary Migration and Detention

Irregular migration from Egypt's northern coastline continues to be a serious protection concern. While many migrants successfully make the trip to Europe by boat, there are still large numbers who are either arrested, detained and deported from Egypt, or detained in migrant detention centers in Europe, or die at sea. Egyptian migrants attempting to depart by sea are generally released and sent back to their home areas, Africans are also generally released but it may take some months in prison before this happens. For Syrians, the authorities tend to prefer to deport them. Support to refugees in detention is now far more coordinated and comprehensive than it was in "season one", which was the summer of 2013. Initially in 2013, the Refugee Solidarity Movement (RSM) was providing informal support such as clothes, meals and medical care to detainees. UNHCR then started working to provide support as well and in 2014, Caritas in Alexandria provided more than 33,000 meals to detainees between January and September 2014. PSTIC staff in Alexandria were prevented from entering the detention facilities to provide psychosocial support, as the staff are Syrian refugees themselves. We observed and noted that little can be done from an advocacy perspective for the detainees, as these decisions regarding detention and deportation rest with National Security, with whom UNHCR attempts to negotiate releases.

Children and youth are particularly vulnerable in undertaking irregular migration, either with their families or alone. They may be unable to swim, and may end up in detention in Egypt or abroad, or may survive the journey but their parents may not. Unaccompanied minors are even more vulnerable to the temptations of irregular migration. Youth and children in detention require legal support, especially if detained by the police while attempting to undertake irregular movement.

Back in 2014 UNHCR's Regional Response Plan (RRP6) specifically mentioned the concerning trend of prolonged detention of migrant children attempting to make the crossing by boat from Egypt's northern coastline. UNICEF is involved in providing case-by-case support to children in detention, as are other service providers, however there is a large gap in local authorities' knowledge and awareness in relation to child protection and refugee rights. UNHCR in Alexandria has been working with police and National Security to try to sensitise them on refugee rights in relation to detention and deportation. Migrant children in Egypt can face arrest due to their irregular migration status, which can lead to long periods of administrative detention or criminal penalties. UNHCR has limited access to most detention facilities, which is concerning especially for unaccompanied minors who may not be registered with UNHCR, so UNHCR is trying to strengthen its access to detained migrant children across the country.



Decreased Support Levels, Increasing Insecurity

The Syrian refugee crisis has put a strain on resources and service delivery for all refugee populations in Egypt. While Syrians and Sudanese have formal access to public services, they face administrative, social and economic barriers in accessing these services, while other nationalities are denied access to many services completely, particularly education. The refugee population is not well integrated into the support channels of the government and national NGOs, and as such is largely dependent on support from UNHCR and dedicated refugee service providing organisations. The scale of the Syrian refugee response has eclipsed the services and support being provided to existing refugee communities in Egypt, and the Syrian response has in fact diverted resources away from other nationalities. While many new organisations began supporting refugees in response to the Syrian emergency, funding and support has often been ring-fenced, excluding other refugee populations from many programs. UNHCR's own response to the Syrian influx diverted some staffing and resources away from programming for existing refugee populations. As the Syrian conflict is draws on, the level of funding received by UNHCR has declined, and this decline has been consistent across various funding sources.

There has been a continual drop in support for Syrians by service providers since early 2013. UNHCR and partners have recently reduced their levels of support, most notably the decrease in the value of WFP food vouchers and the absolute reduction in the overall numbers of Syrians receiving support from UNHCR under its new socioeconomic vulnerability criteria. It was mentioned many times by respondents that the reduction in food voucher value from WFP has increased overall insecurity, which again further drives the desire for irregular migration. In Cairo in particular, refugees tend to pay higher rent prices than Egyptians for similar accommodation. As a result of this prevailing insecurity, families turn to negative coping strategies such as reducing their food intake, selling their assets, and in some cases child labour and early marriage. Respondents unanimously agreed that the reduction in support and the revised target numbers for UNHCR support has had a substantial negative impact, leaving more people vulnerable and insecure. Some respondents reported that not enough is invested in the identification and outreach of the most vulnerable cases, who have exhausted their own resources, or who face specific vulnerabilities such as disability. People with disabilities are largely out of reach of many programs, and there is little awareness of their needs.

Inadequate Documentation as Barrier to Services

Syrians face frequent and prolonged difficulties in obtaining and providing the necessary documentation to access services in Egypt. Syrians are generally afraid of presenting at the Syrian Embassy for obvious reasons, however are at times required to go there to obtain necessary documentation. The Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights (EFRR) stated that Syrians are required to go to the embassy in order to obtain a death certificate for example. Syrian couples often don't have a copy of their marriage certificates, which also presents a problem, particularly in relation to their children's birth certificates. Delays in receiving the necessary documentation for their children also prevent them from enrolling in school in a timely manner. Obtaining birth certificates for children is also difficult, and constitutes a child protection issue, as it prevents children from accessing critical services. In many refugee communities, the husbands are absent – either they have been killed in conflict, are still in the country of origin, are away working, or are absent from the mother in rape cases. For any one of these reasons, the father is not present to be named on the birth certificate of the child.

Protection Risks for Female Headed Households

Female-headed households were identified as facing particular vulnerabilities and protection risks. Balancing their reproductive care workload with paid work without another adult to share either burden – the women of these households have to make difficult choices. While refugee women may secure paid employment, it is often in the domestic sphere, which carries risks of exploitation, harassment and assault. The children of female-headed households also face additional protection risks, as it is likely that without any other option for childcare, children will be left unattended at home while the mother goes out to work. This is the case for below school age children and for children who are attending school, due to the lack of after school care. Children usually finish school at 2:00pm CCT, and without adequate after school care, may go home alone or be supervised by other children. Stakeholders reported that many accidents happen to unsupervised or under-supervised children including falling off balconies, having accidents, or getting burned. Due to the absence of many refugee fathers, women are taking increasing roles as household breadwinner and sole parent. Due to the low wages, and for many women lack of employment experience, women may take on long hours, and still struggle to pay their rent and provide for their children's education. A significant risk to children is caused by the lack of appropriate pre-school and after-school care, meaning either unsupervised kids, or kids caring for other kids. In February 2014, UNHCR had registered 13,556 Syrian female-headed households. Of these cases, 4,678 women had children in their care, but no spouse. Of these households without spouses and with children, there were 673 Syrian households with someone with a disability or special needs.

Violence, Harassment and Abuse

Since 2011, harassment and discrimination against refugees and migrants has increased overall. This spiked following June 2013, particularly anti-Syrian sentiment. For all refugee populations, violence, harassment, abuse, muggings and robbery are regular occurrences. This is certainly true for African youth and children. For young women and girls, there is the particular and additional forms of gender based violence, sexual violence, and sexual harassment. Sexual harassment and assault occurs largely in public spaces, such as on the way to school or in the street, but also within schools, colleges, universities, homes and workplaces. There is also the issue of lateral violence within refugees' own communities and families. Domestic violence and intra-familial violence is a significant issue, due in part to the psychosocial pressures that individuals and communities face. Refugees facing domestic violence or intra-familial violence wanting to flee their homes are faced with limited options for emergency shelter. In Egypt, the government nor any organisation offer emergency housing or assist in relocations when necessary.

Harassment and violence is isolating and exclusionary; it affects people's mental health and also restricts their mobility within the city that they live in. Service providers reported that Syrians are very reluctant to move around far from their home neighbourhoods, even to access work or services. Feeling unsafe to move around in public space inhibits people's participation in education, activities, and in accessing services. For young women and girls, the risk of harassment is a deterrent from consistent attendance in school or university. While the majority of Syrians surveyed reported having positive or at least neutral relationships with their Egyptian neighbours, the issue of safety and security in public space and within schools remains a primary concern.

For non-Arabic and non-English speaking refugees, particularly unaccompanied Oromo and Eritrean youth, vulnerability levels are heightened, as they face difficulties navigating the city even without harassment. Not being fluent in Arabic or English makes it harder to navigate public transport, read signs in the street, ask for help or directions, and report problems or crimes. Some of these youths facing violence and harassment are referred to UNHCR as candidates for resettlement; others get relocated within the city under protection referral mechanisms.

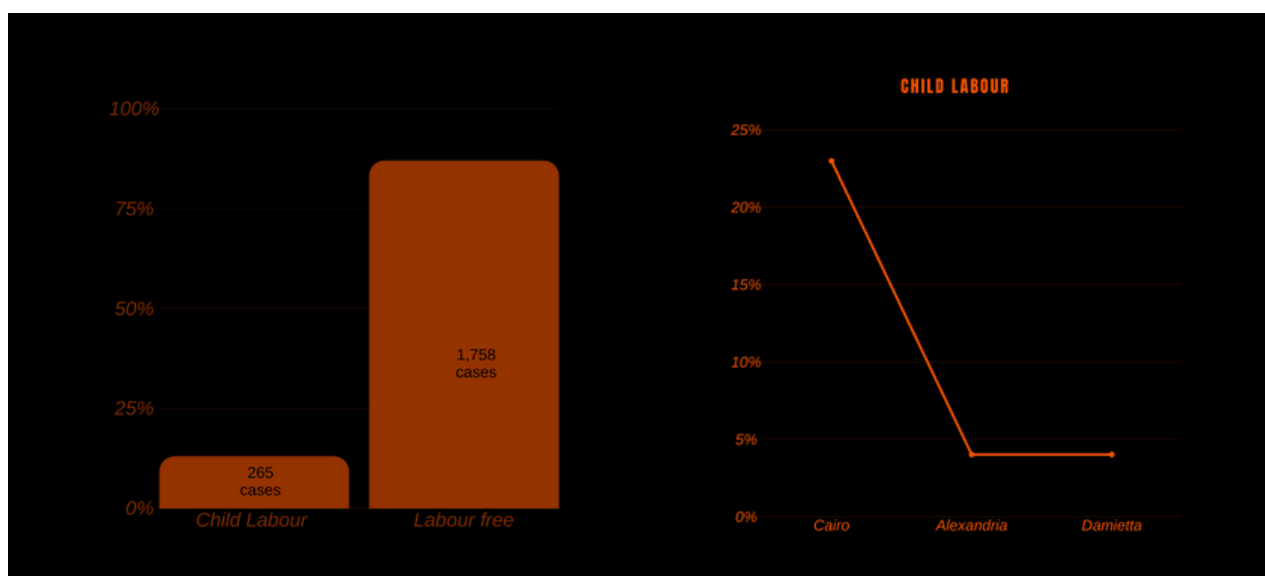
Protection Risks for Unaccompanied Children and Youth (UACY)

UACY in Egypt come from a range of countries, including Syria, and face a high level of protection risks. Unaccompanied refugee children are generally not included in the care arrangements made by the Egyptian state or NGOs, and therefore rely upon UNHCR support and informal care arrangements. UACY receive a limited allowance per month from UNHCR and is insufficient to cover rising living costs. As a result, UACY are often living in insecure or crowded housing situations, without monitoring or home visits being carried out to ascertain the level of risk posed by their living conditions. Depending upon their accommodation arrangement, these minors can be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation, particularly if they are dependent or indebted to the person providing their accommodation. Within refugee communities, UACY are seen as a potential source of money, as it is widely known that they receive a regular allowance from UNHCR. This places them at risk from people within the community.

At the same time, UACY require advocacy support and accompaniment in their dealings with UNHCR itself. Stakeholders reported that occasionally information obtained in children's Best Interest Assessments (BIA) undertaken by UNHCR is used to cross-examine minors during their Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews. BIA's are intended as a protection mechanism, and should not be used as part of RSD procedures. There is a lack of dedicated psychosocial services for unaccompanied minors, with St Andrews being the only organisation in Cairo offering a dedicated service for unaccompanied youth. Some service providers feel this is a programming gap considering the experiences and profiles of these youths. The most vulnerable UACY are those from non-English and non-Arabic speaking backgrounds. There are virtually no educational opportunities available to them, and it is extremely difficult for them to integrate into Egyptian society or even access basic services. The education deficit for these youths is therefore a protection issue. They will most often attempt to engage in irregular secondary movement, or attempt to return to their country of origin.

Child Labour and Underage Marriage

Stakeholders interviewed, particularly in Alexandria, Burg el Arab and Damietta, reported that Syrian families are increasingly relying upon children to earn an income and contribute to household expenses. As rent has increased, and charitable support levels and Syrians' own resources have decreased, families have sought to bridge the gap through children's wage labour. Of the children surveyed, around 15% (or 265 cases) of child labour were identified. The numbers of children reportedly working in Cairo (around 23%) was much higher than reported in Alexandria (4%) and in Damietta (4%).



Working children contribute to rent and other household expenses through labouring in factories and restaurants, printing houses, supermarket delivery services, carpentry workshops and restaurants (both Egyptian and Syrian ownership), or assist their parents in their family business. The children working are aged on average between 10 and 18 years, but some are as young as 8 years old. Primarily it is the boys that are doing paid work, but not exclusively. Girls also work in factories, beauty parlours, and doing home-based work like hairdressing or tailoring. Stakeholders report that children are largely not forced to work, but feel the responsibility to work. Syrian children tend to work more often in Syrian owned businesses, or in Egyptian businesses near to their home.

It was alarmingly notable in the research that NGOs seemed to view child labour as more prevalent and more concerning than what the community reported. For example, almost all NGO stakeholders interviewed in Alexandria mentioned child labour as a problem; while among the community survey, only around 4% of children reported working. This could be that the community is reluctant to admit that children are working, or it could be that NGOs have over-inflated the issue out of a concern for child protection that is disproportionate to the actual number of children working.

There has previously been a lot of media and NGO attention given to the issue of Syrian brides in Egypt. Some mosques and faith-based charities were accused of "selling" Syrian women as brides. The attention on this issue has dissipated. Nonetheless, Syrians are marrying into the Egyptian community and marrying is a strategy for ensuring security. Within the survey, children reported 106 cases of school-aged girls that they knew of being married (either to Egyptians or Syrians). It is not clear from the data however if some of these could be the same cases that are known of by a number of children surveyed, or whether these are 106 individual cases. The majority of these cases were reportedly 15-17 year old girls, although there were 4 cases reported of girls aged 14 years and under who had married.



Trafficking and Torture

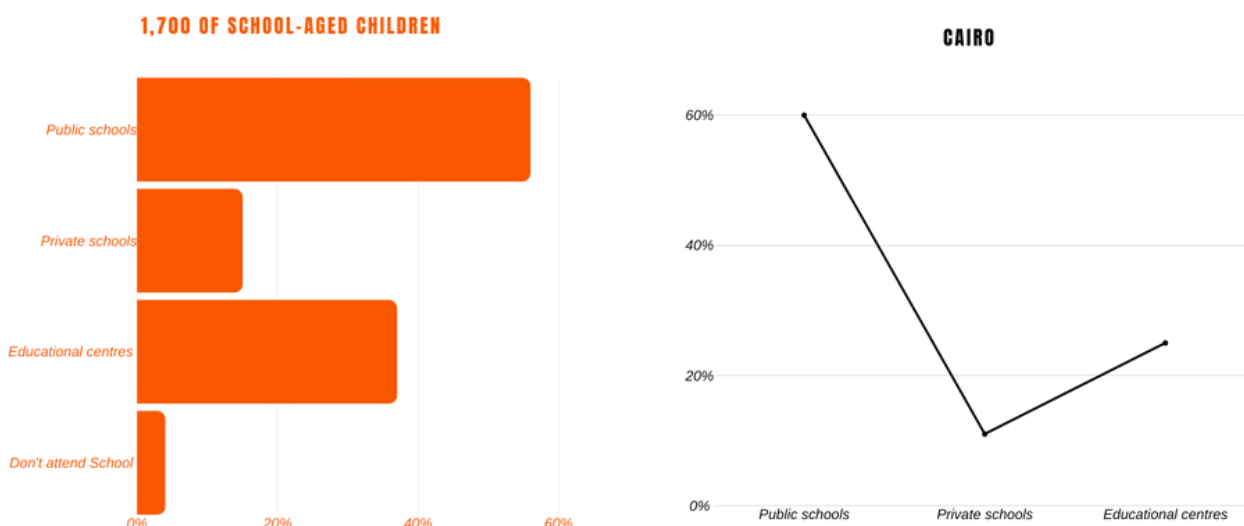
There are still cases being received by service providers in Cairo of African migrants reporting torture and rape at the hands of trafficking networks operating in the Sinai Peninsula. These victims include children and youth. Those victims who are released or escape from the traffickers and manage to avoid being detained by the police, often reach Cairo. Many victims of trafficking are registered with UNHCR and receive some support through dedicated programs. However victims do face ongoing protection concerns in Cairo, including ongoing health concerns, unwanted pregnancies, psychological trauma, and insecure accommodation.

2. EDUCATION

Lack of Access to Schooling

All refugee children have difficulties in accessing education in Egypt, due in part to a reservation that Egypt maintains on the Refugee Convention, which stipulates that refugee children should have equal access to schools. While a Ministerial decree allows Syrians at least the "paper right" to attend public schools, in reality this has not been fully realised. For many Syrians, the degree of discrimination and slow-moving bureaucracy they face, coupled with the low standard of education and the need for additional tutoring creates a preference for alternatives to public school enrollment. The protection issues pertaining to lack of access to education are different for Syrian children (who have de jure access, even if challenging in practice), and non-Syrian refugee children who cannot access public schools. These children find other forms of education, often in community schools serving African refugee communities. These schools however cannot keep up with demand and there is a need for more well-run, well-resourced refugee schools. Syrian families across all locations are demanding community schools for their children, staffed by Syrian teachers. For those refugee children who do not speak Arabic or English (such as Eritreans and Ethiopians), there are virtually no options, as the bulk of schools provide education in Arabic or English only.

Almost all Syrian parents surveyed in Stage 3 responded that their children are registered in a school. The overwhelming majority across the three cities reported being enrolled in governmental schools. In Alexandria and Damietta fewer numbers are enrolled in private schools or educational centres, whereas in Cairo these numbers were more significant. In Cairo around 60% of respondents reported being enrolled in government schools, while around 11% in private schools and 25% in educational centers. Of the total 1,700 school-aged children surveyed, only 4% said that they did not attend school. Of those attending, 56% attend public schools, 15% attend private schools, and 37% attend educational centers.



Around 50% of Syrian parents across the three locations expressed concerns about sending their children to school in Egypt. The concerns were notably greater in Cairo and lowest in Damietta. In Cairo, almost all parents felt the nearest school is far from their house, with the majority of students taking public transport to reach their school. In Alexandria, around 60% felt the school is far from their house, however the majority of students surveyed are still able to walk to school from home. In Damietta, only 40% felt that the school is far from their house and the majority walk to school. In all locations, parents' key concern is the lack of security, particularly children's safety on the journey to and from school, which is exacerbated if the school is far away. The second concern was the ill treatment of Syrian students, including violence, harassment, insults, and discrimination from fellow students, teachers, and school staff.

Another area of concern for parents is the overall quality, cleanliness and safety of the school environment, with parents commenting on the behavioral problems in Egyptian schools, including drug use, vulgar language, truancy, presence of thugs, use of knives and other small weapons, and overall social and material condition of the schools. Parents were afraid that their daughters might be kidnapped, harassed, or otherwise treated poorly by Egyptian male students. In addition, the low educational standards due to over-crowding and the practice of delaying Syrian students were mentioned as important concerns for parents. In terms of gendered access to education, around 85% of Syrian parents said they do not have a preference for boys' education over girls' and believe that both boys and girls should be educated. The handful that said they would prioritize boys' education was largely on the basis of their safety concerns for girls attending school.

Teachers mentioned that there is a level of absenteeism among Syrian students, which they attribute to inability to pay the tuition fees, a perception that the school is not satisfactory, a lack of adequate transport, and parental neglect. However, around 75% of teachers reported holding periodic meetings with Syrian parents and feel that the parents give adequate moral and material support to their children. There were 29 teachers who mentioned that they have Syrian children in their classes who are unaccompanied or separated from their parents and being cared for by relatives or other guardians.

Enrollment Challenges and Delays

For Syrians, even though officially allowed to enroll in schools, they routinely face long delays and administrative processing problems when trying to enroll. Often they are beholden to government officials who may not provide them with the necessary documents in a timely manner. Delays in issuing documents means that Syrians miss the time-frame for enrolling and their education becomes further delayed. For many who have fled Syria, they did not bring with them all of the necessary documents, and some of these are very difficult to obtain in Egypt. Advocacy is needed on a case-by-case basis to assist Syrians through the often-tedious enrollment process.

In Damietta and Alexandria, Syrian parents reported less problems in enrolling their children in school compared to Cairo. In Cairo around 85% of parents faced problems with enrollment, while in Damietta and Alexandria it was around 25-30%. The main problems cited were primarily difficulty with the complex bureaucratic procedures, poor treatment by the school administration staff, schools and officials requiring bribes, and the practice of placing children new to Egypt at a grade two years behind their level. Another key barrier to enrollment mentioned is the prohibitive cost of tuition, transport and educational materials, particularly the high fees of private schools and educational centers. The lack of places for Syrian students due to the overcrowding in public schools was cited as another obstacle to education. Finally, the practice of private lessons, particularly when offered by the school teacher, was often forced upon students through a combination of bullying (by the teacher) and extortion. The internal migrations of Syrian families within Egypt in search of work and cheaper rent further interrupts student's schooling and makes enrollment difficult in the middle of the year. The nature of the problems faced in enrollment was consistent across the three locations.

Differences in the Education System – Dialect, Curriculum & Quality of Teaching

The differences between the Syrian education system and the Egyptian education system create a range of formidable challenges to Syrian enrollment, retention and advancement in Egyptian public schools. The Egyptian dialect is difficult for many students to understand, particularly younger children. Children feel that the dialect is difficult for them to understand, and explanations and lessons are not supported by any materials or demonstrations to help them to understand. To deal with the difficulties in dialect, children ask teachers to repeat the information, try to speak the Egyptian dialect to improve their understanding, ask for their parents' assistance, or go and register with Syrian educational centers instead. In many cases, they just sit and accept that they cannot understand some of the information.

The curriculum is also unfamiliar to Syrian students. These two factors impact severely on Syrian students' attendance and progress in Egyptian public schooling. For Syrians, the standard of teaching and learning in Egyptian schools is comparatively low. Around 60% of Syrian parents surveyed reported not being happy with the education their children are receiving. The main reason given is that teachers do not perform adequately in the classroom. Parents feel that teachers do not adequately explain concepts, the standards of teaching and learning are comparatively low, there is a lack of care and attention towards students' development, and as a result, students are not progressing.

Around 65% of parents reported that their children faced difficulty in particular subjects, most commonly English, Maths and Social Studies. Children also specifically mentioned struggling with these same subjects. The majority of children felt that they need special lessons and additional support – both teaching and materials in order to keep up. However these lessons are costly, and in the case of the governmental strengthening groups, are usually attended by force, extortion or threat from teachers. The majority of teachers surveyed agreed that Syrian students are facing problems with the Egyptian curriculum and dialect. They are aware that the curriculum and the learning environment are different to what Syrian students are accustomed to. Teachers stated that particularly in government schools, this poses a huge challenge in teaching Syrian students in the classroom. In order to respond to Syrian students who are struggling to perform well, teachers are trying to encourage students to attend strengthening training, provide intensive support, use creative methods like entertainment and art, and work with families to support students. Children reported that due to a lack of space in their homes and noise and crowding from other siblings and relatives, it is difficult for them to study at home. Teachers acknowledged that there are large disparities between students, and that ideally classes would be better divided to reflect different levels of the students.

The poor quality of education leads Syrians to not want to send their children to public schools. The majority of complaints received by service providers in relation to schools are about the different education systems and standards. Central to this is the expectations that parents have of the teacher. The relationship between teachers and parents, and teachers and students is reportedly very different in Egypt compared with Syria, and as such parents are not satisfied with the treatment their children receive from the teacher. The most striking example of this is the routine use of corporal punishment in Egyptian schools. Syrians are not accustomed to teachers hitting students and find it unacceptable. This corporal punishment is also often interpreted as specifically targeting Syrians. Syrian students also face discrimination and verbal abuse by teachers.

Informal Parallel Systems

The system of private lessons supplementing regular schooling is completely entrenched in Egypt. Private tuition is expensive and perceived by Syrian parents as an unnecessary parallel system that enables ineffective public education in schools. The after-school strengthening groups run by governmental teachers often use extortion to force students to enroll and thereby increase the payment made to the teachers. All students enrolled in public schools expect to take private lessons outside of school and then attend the exam at school at the end of the semester. Private lessons have proliferated, and one stakeholder mentioned that some 40% of Egyptians' disposable income is spent on private tutoring. This practice of private lessons is difficult for Syrians to afford, so they have started their own unregistered educational centers (community schools) with Syrian teachers, students and no formal exams. In Alexandria, UNHCR reported that these unregistered centers are not licensed and recently the government has shut down many of them. In Damietta, respondents reported fewer difficulties in enrollment in schools, however the majority of Syrians do not actually attend the school they are enrolled in. Instead, they attend lessons at the Syrian community centers and then sit for exams in the public school.

Educational Costs

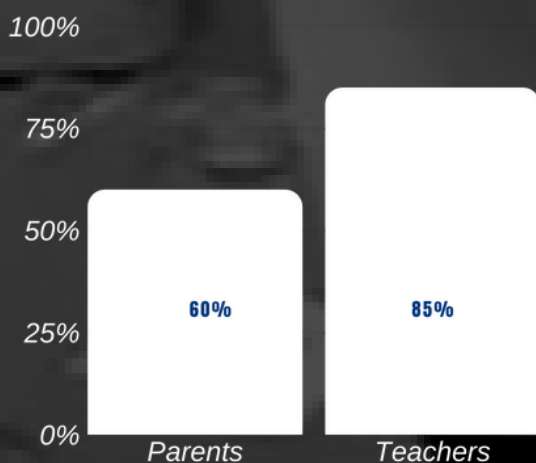
In the context of an overall drop in support from service providers, including UNHCR, many Syrian families struggle to find the resources to cover educational costs. While families may wish to send their children to private schools in the hope of finding better quality education than in public schools, they cannot afford to do so. In public schools, the schools are so ill equipped that students need to buy all of their own supplies. In addition to educational materials, families need to cover transportation costs and meals. Since the Egyptian system generally requires that students take additional private tuition outside of school as the mainstay of their education, children's education becomes very costly, even at the primary school level. Given these costs, children who are attending school in the morning, may be working in the afternoons and evenings.



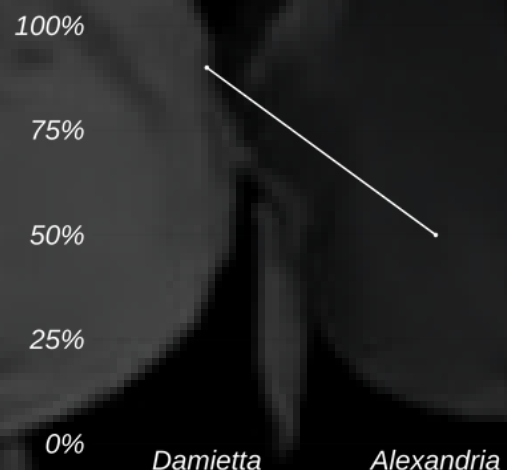
VIOLENCE, BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

A major issue for Syrians is the violence and harassment that they face in schools. While African refugees face a high amount of violence and harassment in the streets and public space, in schools they are somewhat protected as they attend refugee schools with other African students. In Egyptian public schools however, Egyptian students and teachers are unaccustomed to having any foreigners present. Syrians therefore are singled out and targeted within schools, and on the way to and from school. Girls in particular suffer gender-based and sexual harassment by other students or youth in the street, which acts as a significant deterrent in attendance. In addition to children facing corporal punishment from teachers, stakeholders reported children beating one another, and Syrian children even being beaten by other school staff. Stakeholders in Burg el Arab mentioned that many Syrian mothers have complained about their children being exposed to drugs and a culture of drug taking at school. In Damietta, children are mainly associating with other Syrian children only, rather than Egyptians, out of fear of harassment and violence. While Syrian families initially restricted the mobility of their children in order to keep them safe, now that the situation has normalized a little (since the peak of anti-Syrian sentiment in 2013), they are being given a little more mobility and independence. Around 60% of all Syrian parents mentioned that their children had complained of discrimination against Syrians in school. In Damietta, this figure reached 90%, while in Alexandria it was much lower, at around 50% of parents. Teachers also mentioned the levels of harassment faced by Syrian students, with around 85% of teachers reporting having witnessed harassment of Syrian students inside the school. Around 6% of parents felt that their children had been targets of corporal punishment on the basis of being Syrian. Almost 20% of parents said their children had experienced a lack of acceptance from teachers, discrimination against them, teachers ignoring Syrian students, and teachers cursing Syrian students or making them sit at the back of the classroom. A small number of parents felt they had been deprived of educational materials or asked to pay more for them on the basis of being Syrian.

REPORTED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHILDREN



DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SYRIANS IN SCHOOLS



INADEQUATE SPACE AND FACILITIES IN SCHOOLS

Classrooms in Egypt are densely overpopulated, with as many as 75 – 90 students in a classroom. This is not just due to the influx of Syrians - Egyptian schools are generally grossly overcrowded. This overcrowding exacerbates tensions between Syrians and Egyptians, as Egyptian students and parents often feel that there was not enough space even before the Syrians arrived and placed additional pressure on the schools. Schools have very limited resources, not just classrooms but the overall facilities. There is a lack of chairs, lack of sports facilities, and a lack of materials. Infrastructure in schools is poor and deteriorating, in some cases to the extent of being potentially lethal for students. For teachers, who exist on a meagre salary, running parallel systems of tutoring has become a means of survival and additional income. This practice by teachers however exacerbates problems for students; as teachers then don't consistently attend regular school lessons, and so neither do students.

About the school facilities, 80% of Syrian parents said their children (male and female) are not comfortable entering the bathrooms at school. The majority of these (87%) cited the lack of cleanliness of the bathrooms as a barrier to students using them. Other deterrents are fear of harassment or bullying inside the bathroom and also the fear of encountering drug use by students in the bathroom. The majority of teachers reported that bathrooms are cleaned regularly, there are dedicated male and female toilets, the doors close properly from the inside, and water and soap is always provided. However, more than three quarters of children felt that the bathrooms are not clean, and more than 50% said at times there is no water and/or no soap. More than 60% of students felt that the bathrooms do not offer adequate privacy, with a higher number of girls registering this complaint compared to boys. When asked about physical changes in their bodies, the majority of older girls said that their mothers had oriented them about the developmental changes taking place. A smaller number had learned from their teachers or the school curriculum about these physical changes. Girls reported using sanitary products provided by their mothers or other relatives.

Teachers themselves noted the lack of adequate resources and facilities within the school. Around 75% of teachers stated that the school facilities are not adequate for the number of students in the schools. Teachers felt that they lack the necessary explanatory tools and aids in order to demonstrate concepts and stimulate students. They mentioned a lack of scientific laboratory equipment such as physics and chemistry equipment, lenses and microscopes, explanatory tools and aids, maps, edutainment tools and games, computers, as well as basic primary materials. They also lack educational aids to demonstrate adolescent and personal development concepts. Notably, teachers did not feel as strongly that the classrooms are overcrowded compared to the observations of parents and students. Around two thirds of teachers surveyed felt the classroom space was adequate, while one third felt it was inadequate and overcrowded. Children mentioned the lack of space in classrooms and play areas, the lack of space for prayers and the lack of cleanliness in the school as reasons why they do not like their school. They also mentioned broken chairs, cold classrooms, theft within the school, and things being dirty.

Around 37% of the children surveyed said that they are provided with a meal at school. Around 25% receive it from the school itself, however a large number of these students said the biscuits they receive are not edible. Others receive food from their families, buy food from a school cafeteria, or in the educational centres volunteers provide food.

Lack of Pre-school and After-school Facilities

As mentioned earlier in relation to female-headed households, there is a serious shortage of pre-school and after-school facilities. According to UNICEF, the total number of Syrian children aged 3-5 years enrolled in pre-primary education in September 2014, was just 310, against the sectoral target of 7,425. Respondents in all locations mentioned a prevailing lack of early childhood facilities, as well as after-school care. In Damietta, there are 3 public kindergartens that provide activities for younger children, but Syrians do not attend these and there is no alternative pre-school service for Syrians. Syrians reportedly find the public kindergartens to be overcrowded, unsanitary and difficult to enroll in. Respondents in Cairo reported that there are no service providers working on Early Childhood programming for refugees in a dedicated and comprehensive way. Many studies suggest the importance of early childhood years as a determinant for achievement later in life. Saint Andrews runs a small early childhood program for 16 non-Arabic non-English speaking children, which is successful, but over subscribed, and in need of funding to meet a much larger demand.



3. PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES

Stakeholders working with refugee children mentioned the educational impact of the psychological pressure placed upon refugee children. They often struggle to arrange their ideas and face educational difficulties resulting from the intense psychological and material hardships of the refugee experience. Around 60% of parents have noticed changes in their children's behaviour since coming to Egypt. Parents in the survey cited a large number of different behavioural changes. The most common ones were learning vulgar language and bad habits, increased aggressiveness, hostility and violent tendencies, and experiencing general psychological pressure. Children have become more depressed, negative, fearful, afraid of the society, and engage in lower levels of activity than normal. Girls in particular do not go out or play in the streets as they used to. The overall standard of living has changed for children. Children are vulnerable to continue thinking about the war in Syria, and in 9 reported cases (all in Cairo) children have allegedly attempted murder. There are a number of other cases cited by teachers where students have been found carrying sharp weapons at school. Around 20% of children reported that their experience of violence is the reason that they do not like their school. Around 20% said that they dislike everything about their experience of going to school in Egypt.

Just over half of the teachers surveyed reported behavioral problems among Syrian students. Their observations can be divided into three broad comments:

- **Syrian students are experiencing psychological disturbances**
- **Syrian students are violent and/or aggressive**
- **Syrian students are reclusive/passive**

Syrian students show signs of having experienced trauma, with many demonstrating a fear of planes (even hiding under the table when a plane is passing overhead), a fear of loud sounds like fireworks, a fear of closing the door and not being able to get out, fear of strangers, and a tendency to draw scenes of war. Students also exhibit a fear of harassment from other students. In response, teachers try to reassure the students that they are safe and try to calm them down. Teachers reported that these psychological problems impact upon Syrian students' learning. Around 85% of teachers reported that Syrian students suffer an inability to focus. Around 85% of teachers mentioned that Syrian students show a tendency towards violence and revenge and their thoughts have been affected by war.

Students expressed a desire to return to Syria and fight in the conflict and a desire to take revenge on Syrian ruler Bashar al Assad. Teachers attempt to deal with this by a combination of offering psychological support and attempting to discharge this energy through exercise and play. Other strategies for dealing with psychosocial problems among Syrian students are trying to reassure them that they are safe and secure, refer them to psychological support services and alert their parents. However many schools do not have counseling or psychological support services within the school, and are not connected to such services externally.

More than 40% of children surveyed mentioned that they feel afraid from something. Their fears (in order of most popular responses) are:

fear of mugging and theft - fear of cats and dogs - fear of tuk-tuks - fear of kidnapping - fear of bombs - fear of loud voices in the street - fear of walking in the street and facing incidents including mugging and kidnapping - fear of bullies and thugs - fear of ghosts and evil spirits - fear of God - fear of the devil - fear of animals - fear of the police - fear of fireworks - fear of never returning to Syria - fear of war - fear of Assad - fear for the future

Around one third of children reported that they had witnessed something traumatic in Syria, which included events of the war, seeing bodies and blood, seeing someone killed in front of them, seeing missile strikes and bombings in Syria destroying buildings and property, witnessing the death of loved ones, the detention of family members (particularly fathers and uncles), abduction of sisters, and being separated from their mothers when leaving Syria.

Around 12% of the children reported that they cannot sleep properly and around 400 of them reported experiencing nightmares. Other reasons for sleeplessness were anxiety, fear of the dark, noise from the street, fear of thieves, remembering Syria, and feeling the need to stay alert and keep watch. Of the 400 children experiencing nightmares, the main features of the nightmares are violent events of war, dreaming of Al-Assad, the Syrian army and death, dreaming of falling off a high tower, dreaming of people being shot, and dreaming of being kidnapped.

When asked what makes children happy, the vast majority said games, gifts and toys, trips and outings, picnics, safe places for children's gatherings, clubs and entertainment activities such as drawing and playing on the computer. In addition to this, many parents mentioned giving attention to children's talents and attending to their educational needs and achievements also makes them happy. A large number said that returning to Syria is the only thing that would make them happy. Syrian children also find happiness in meeting other Syrians, seeing their relatives, and attending Syrian schools and education centers. Finally, meeting basic needs, feeling safe, having new clothes, and having their educational and health needs met also makes children happier according to their parents. Some refugee children may not have adequate food to sustain their educational activities, and without proper sustenance and nutrition they have trouble with attendance, concentration and exam performance. Service providers have found that providing a daily cooked meal as part of a feeding program has sustained attendance of students and relieves refugee families by providing children with at least one nourishing meal per day.

When children were asked what makes them happy at school, around 30% reported they liked their teachers, around 15% said the school environment, almost 30% said their colleagues at school, and another 30% said the games and break time. A large number reported that they don't like anything. Those who liked the teachers and teaching approach tended to be those in Syrian educational centers and schools. Children specifically mentioned liking games, friends, food at school, prayer time, drawing, and the Holy Quran. When asked what they do not like at school, 27% said they do not like their teachers, 17% said they do not like the school environment, 20% said they do not like the other students, and 12% said they do not like games and break times. These variations reflect the different experiences of studying in Syrian schools and educational centers compared with Egyptian public schools, but also reflect different individual experiences.

When asked what they missed about Syria, children mentioned (in order of most common response):

Their house, their relatives, their friends, outdoor activities and hiking trails, "everything Syrian", their school, their games and toys, their computer, safety and security, their family car, their family farm, Syrian soil, Syria's streets, the rain, a sense of dignity, the sound of bullets, and people they knew who had died. Children said that if they were able to return to Syria, they would want to go to their house, see relatives, see friends, go to school, play games, play outside, go on picnics and hikes, play the computer, kiss the Syrian soil, complete their schooling, study in university to become doctors and engineers, build a house, visit their families graves, play in the snow, develop the nation, and kill Bashar.

4. LIVELIHOODS

Lack of Income

Refugee communities in general suffer from unemployment and underemployment. Refugees are employed almost entirely in the informal sector. Many African migrants work as domestic workers, cleaners, and other menial labour roles. For Syrians, many are employed in the food sector, textile industries, factories, furniture production and woodworking, or running their own small enterprises such as catering services, restaurants, sweets shops. Many refugees struggle to find employment that is secure, and if they do, it is often below the wages of Egyptians and they have to work long hours. There is no scope for choice when it comes to employment as refugees struggle to pay their rent and meet their basic living expenses. Syrians employed in factories are working illegally as they don't have a work permit, so are vulnerable to exploitation and dismissal due to their lack of legal documentation. Those working in the food industry tend to be more secure as they are mostly working for other Syrians. Detained refugees cited the lack of employment opportunities and insecure livelihoods as the number one reason they had attempted to depart Egypt by irregular migration, followed by the lack of educational opportunities.

Lack of NGO and Governmental Support

There has been a drop in support from refugee service providers (particularly those providing for Syrians) since 2013. Particularly hard hitting was the recent reduction in food voucher value by WFP. This was mentioned universally by stakeholders interviewed. While WFP has reduced the value of its vouchers, the supermarkets continue to increase their prices. UNHCR has also changed its assessment process and criteria for determining who receives cash assistance. The agency now relies upon a home-based socioeconomic assessment conducted on an electronic tablet, allowing visual verification of TVs, fridges, bills etc. This new assessment process uses a points based system to determine vulnerability. While the assessment criteria aims to identify the most vulnerable from a socioeconomic perspective, there has been an overall absolute reduction in numbers receiving monthly financial assistance through UNHCR partners. This reduction in financial assistance functions directly as a push factor driving irregular migration. Many families had been dependent on the cash assistance they were receiving as well as the food voucher program. Service providers in Damietta reported that families who were cut off from the cash assistance are now dependent on receiving food and assistance from other Syrian families.

Compounding this, there is a lack of inclusion of refugees into assistance programs by the Egyptian state. However, refugees face many of the same problems – lack of employment, poor access to services, poor quality of services, inability to meet basic needs as their Egyptian neighbours. The needs for assistance are similar for both refugees and the host community. In recognition of this, the 3RP (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016) now aims to target both refugees and host communities with a focus on resilience.

Housing Insecurity, Increased Rent and Expenses

While there has been a reduction in support and cash assistance, rent and the cost of basic living expenses has continued to rise. According to UNHCR Community Centre volunteers in Alexandria, rent has increased on average from around 700 LE up to an average of around 900 LE. This places a financial burden upon Syrian families. Interviewees in Damietta described rent as a 'catastrophic' issue for Syrians, where they pay around 650 LE for an unfurnished property or 900 LE with furniture. In Cairo, Egyptian landlords tend to treat Syrians as foreigners rather than as refugees and therefore charge them inflated rental prices, up to 1,500 LE per month. For a family earning 2,000 LE in a month, paying 1,500 in rent leaves them with a shortfall for living costs. In general, housing is more and more difficult to find and secure. The main challenge for Syrians with housing currently is meeting the rent, rather than discrimination by landlords based on being Syrian. However refugees seeking housing still need to find a trustworthy landlord, as many cases have been reported where landlords exploit the refugees by keeping their deposit and evicting them, or changing the terms of the agreement after refugees move in. For single refugees, it's even more difficult as landlords generally do not want households of young men living together, do not want to rent to young women living alone, and at the same time also do not want young men and women living in mixed groups either.

Female-Headed Household Insecurity

Women who are household heads do not earn substantially enough as the sole breadwinner in order to support themselves and their households. Widows and divorcees with large families need secure housing, to pay educational and health costs, and cover all living expenses, despite receiving low wages and working long hours. This poses a protection risk to the women themselves, as they may end up in exploitative situations with their landlord or employer. Children of female-headed households are also at risk due to the risk of being unsupervised while their mother is at work.



5. HEALTH CARE

Of the parents surveyed, almost 40% reported that someone in the family was suffering from chronic disease. By far the greatest numbers of these cases were high blood pressure and diabetes, followed by heart disease. Far less common were other illnesses such as asthma and rheumatism. All other conditions cited, such as thyroid problems or kidney problems, were just suffered by one or two people. The main places to receive treatment in Cairo are Mostafa Mahmoud Hospital in Mohandiseen and AlHossari Center in 6th October, and many people reported attending to their local pharmacy, local doctors, Syrian medical centers, and other local health clinics. In Alexandria, most people attend Almarraa Hospital in Alaasafraa, Sharq Almadina Hospital, Okba Ibn Nafaa Hospital, Mar Murquis Hospital, as well as local medical centers, doctors, and pharmacies. In Damietta, people reported receiving treatment from the Medical Center, the Islamic Center, Al-Azhar center, Gemessaa Hospital, and receive referrals through the NGO Resala. The cost of medical treatment varies widely depending on the nature of the treatment and the hospital. Around 30% of respondents reported paying between 20 LE to 400 LE, while another 30% reported paying between 400 LE and 1,000 LE. Others reported various amounts ranging from token contributions through to around 50 LE.

Almost 60% of those parents surveyed said they are not happy with the level of health care that they receive in Egypt. The overwhelming reason given was the poor quality of the treatment provided. People lack confidence in the doctors, feel that they are not delivering a high standard of medical treatment, that they don't give adequate care and attention, are inexperienced and not specialised, and they don't undertake adequate examination. Others mentioned uncooperative customer service from medical staff, unclean hospitals, and long waiting time. A smaller number of people cited the lack of availability of specialised health centers, specialised medical care, and a lack of dental clinics. The primary complaints therefore are not so much about accessibility or availability, or even about the cost necessarily, but largely about the quality of the treatment provided by the doctors and medical staff.

COPING STRATEGIES

Against the prevailing vulnerabilities in relation to protection, education and livelihoods, refugees have adopted a number of coping strategies.

Employment:

Employment for refugees is completely limited to the informal sector, due to the restrictions on refugees' work rights. While many Syrians operate their own businesses (which distinguishes them from other refugee communities who do not usually have such start-up capital), they legally have to be in partnership with an Egyptian in order to do so. Syrians are primarily working in the catering and food industry. This ranges from owning or working in medium to large restaurants, working in Syrian pastry and sweets shops, specialty shops selling Syrian olive oils, pickles and cheeses, or very informal mobile stalls selling Syrian bread, cheese or olive oil. Syrians also produce ready-made or partially made meals and snack items in the home and provide informal catering services or sell their wares in the street. The food sector is considered relatively safe and secure for Syrians to work in, particularly as the majority of establishments where Syrians work are Syrian owned and staffed. Even children working in this sector are perceived to be less at risk, as they are working within their family or extended family networks. For Syrian businesses, an Egyptian co-owner is needed in order to legally regularise the business.

Outside of the food industry, Syrians also work in factories, particularly in U'bour, Burg el Arab, and Alexandria, producing a range of items from clothing, furniture, textiles, glassware, and cleaning products. Syrians prefer to work for other Syrians, but some do work for Egyptians. Syrians working in factories owned by Egyptians usually take lower wages and work longer hours, and more likely to face routine inspections from authorities regarding their legal status. In Damietta, there was an established history of linkages and economic relationships with some Syrian cities and industries, particularly woodworking and furniture production. As such, a concentration of Syrians have chosen to live in the city, working in sweets and pastries, restaurants, and the furniture industry. Damietta also has a lower cost of living and less demographic pressures than Cairo.

For Syrian women, it is generally not culturally acceptable to work outside of the home, however as the situation grows more dire, an increasing number of women do so. In Alexandria, Syrian women are working in beauty centers, embroidery, handicrafts and food production and catering. Some Syrian women are now accepting work as cleaners and domestic help out of desperation. This would have been previously unheard of at the beginning of their displacement to Egypt. Other Syrian women are teaching, either at community centers and community schools, or giving private tuition at home. As mentioned earlier, increasing numbers of Syrian children are now working in order to supplement family incomes and cover expenses. Some Syrian families would prefer to send a young boy to work before they would send the mother of the family. This practice is exacerbated by the fact that alternative childcare arrangements do not exist for supervising younger children if the mother went to work.

Migration:

International migration, both regular and irregular, is increasingly a strategy being used by desperate migrants and refugees, particularly Syrians but also Palestinians, Syrian Palestinians, and some Africans. Those who have money, or who can find money, are taking boats to Europe or leaving to Turkey, on the assumption that the conditions, opportunities and treatment there would be better than in Egypt. People's livelihoods and living conditions in Egypt are highly insecure, and for this reason they are willing to take the risks of irregular migration. We noted that the number one reason detainees give for attempting to flee is lack of livelihoods options, and the second reason is educational opportunities for their children. Without responding to these issues and improving the quality of life for Syrians and other refugees in Egypt, deterrence campaigns will never be effective. There is some evidence of internal migration within the country, but this has largely slowed down in comparison to earlier days when Syrians were still arriving in Egypt. There have been minor flows of people moving from Damietta and Alexandria towards Cairo in hope of work; while others shift from Cairo to smaller cities like Damietta in the hope of making their resources stretch further with cheaper living costs. Internal migrations like this impact upon school enrollments for children, often leaving them out of step with the academic year and unable to enroll at the new school.

Acceptance/Lowering Standards:

One of the hardest coping strategies to articulate, yet often mentioned by stakeholders was the sense that refugees just "adjust" or "get used to it" over time. When trying to identify what this meant in practice, it basically boils down to a sense of resignation or acceptance of their situation, which allows them to lower their standards and try to get by. This resignation or acceptance is something engrained into better established African refugee communities in Cairo, but something that Syrians have struggled with. To some extent, Syrians are becoming more accepting of the reality of their situation as refugees in Egypt, and more resigned to the idea that they will have to remain in Egypt for some time. Syrians have registered with multiple support services to try to maximise the assistance they receive from NGOs.

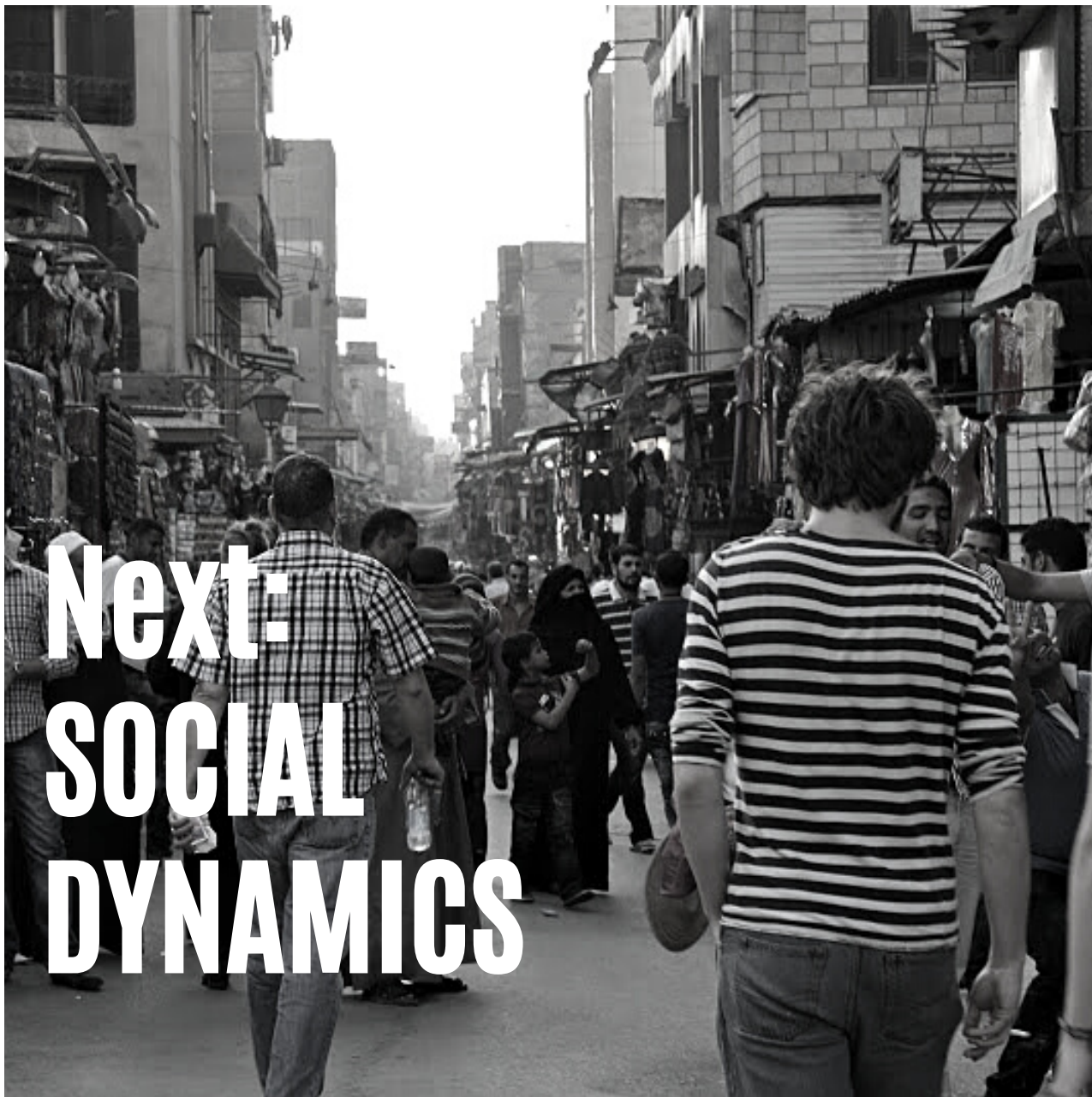
After initially refusing UNHCR registration, following 2013 the majority of Syrians are now registered and integrated into some form of support services, and are trying to establish themselves in businesses, jobs, and developing community centers and CBOs. As part of this, Syrians have had to lower their standards and expectations regarding housing, employment and education. People are therefore being less selective about work opportunities, more prepared to take work that is menial, exploitative, or that they are overqualified for. They are also shifting into cheaper housing as a strategy to cover their expenses, or multiple families are sharing one apartment to reduce rental costs. Syrians are also marrying into Egyptian families in order to have greater economic and social security. This is perhaps also indicative of taking a longer-term view about life in Egypt. In this way, Syrians are finding both positive and negative coping strategies through this process of acceptance and resignation.

Community Support:

There are varying accounts of how much mutual support Syrian community members extend to one another. Syrians with money are providing some assistance to those without money, but this is a limited and interim measure. Syrians are also providing loans to each other, and offering to share their housing with relatives. A primary form of support that Syrians provide to other Syrians is through offering them employment. It is clear that there was a large degree of support from the Egyptian public extended to Syrians prior to June 2013, but this has almost all dried up. There is still occasional support and donations given at the time of Eid, but in general there is little material support from the Egyptian public.

Remittances:

There is some evidence of overseas remittances being received from the Syrian community in Egypt. The most common circuit is Syrians in Egypt receiving money from relatives in the Gulf States. However, this remains a far more common practice among African refugee communities, particularly Somalis, rather than Syrians. Notably, many service providers were under the impression that Syrians do not receive remittances from abroad at all, whereas Syrians themselves disclosed to our field researchers that they do in fact receive remittances. It is difficult to assess the scale to which remittances are being received, especially when Syrian refugees may be reluctant to disclose this information to service providers for fear of losing support.



SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Given the levels of anti-Syrian sentiment at its height in 2013, there has justifiably been a lot of concern around the social dynamics between Syrian refugees and the Egyptian host community. Generally, the anti-Syrian sentiment is far lower now than it was before, and specific incidents targeting Syrians occur less frequently. The degree of coexistence and integration of Syrian refugees varies from place to place. There are moments of increased exchange and generosity, such as during Eid. There are also a number of examples across programmatic interventions of Syrians and Egyptians participating together in sports and recreational activities.

Around 60% of parents surveyed reported that they and their families have Egyptian friends. Of those that said they do not have relationships with Egyptians, many declined to give any reason. The reasons that were given included: wanting to keep a distance and maintain only formal relationships in order to avoid any problems, different cultures and practices, and a sense of mutual dislike/distrust. The respondents in Alexandria appeared to have more close relationships with Egyptians than those in Cairo and Damietta.

Despite around 40% not necessarily having friendships with Egyptians, almost 80% of those surveyed felt that they had positive relationships with their neighbours. Most people said that they had no problems with their neighbours. Of those who didn't feel they had positive relationships, the majority said they had no relationship with their neighbours, rather than a negative one. Those who felt they had a negative relationship said that their Egyptian neighbours' lives appeared untidy and disorganised and they were afraid/reluctant to deal with them.

In schools, around 30% of Syrian children surveyed said they had not communicated with any of their Egyptian colleagues in school. Around 22% said they communicate with some of them, while 33% said they don't face difficulties and are able to communicate with Egyptian colleagues. In dealing with Egyptian peers, Syrian students mentioned the dialect differences as a problem, an Egyptian perception that Syrians are criminals, fear of being beaten and harassed, and the sense that Egyptians deal very coarsely with Syrian girls. Almost 600 of the 1,700 students surveyed said they knew of cases of mistreatment of Syrian students. There were hundreds of cases mentioned of Syrian students being beaten by other students and by teachers, more than 150 cases of discrimination against Syrians, hundreds of cases of physical and verbal harassment, including sexual harassment. 37 children mentioned extortion, fraud, theft, and threats of theft. In Alexandria 10 children mentioned knowing of kidnapping cases. In Alexandria and Damietta, more than 50% of the children felt safe in the areas that they live in, while in Cairo conversely more than 50% felt unsafe in the areas that they live in.

2,023 CHILDREN



In this sense, there is a notable difference in the Egyptian/Syrian social dynamics reported by parents within the home neighbourhood environment, compared to their children within the school environment. Syrian children are much more likely to face problems, harassment and discrimination against them within the school environment, compared to adult Syrians within the neighbourhood. At the same time, parents fear greatly for their children's safety in making the journey to and from school. While there may be a perception among parents that they have a positive relationship with their neighbours, public space is still felt to be unsafe for children and young people, particularly girls. Adding to this, the school (particularly public schools) emerges as a place of notably higher levels of discrimination and harassment for Syrians.

At the same time, social dynamics need to be understood as more complex than a polarised dichotomy between Egyptians and Syrians. Among poor communities, there are always tensions based on a shortage of resources, a sense of competition and jealousy. This does not pertain only to outsiders, but towards anyone who is seen to be competing for scarce commodities and services, or people who seem to be receiving support from charities, or are able to secure decent jobs. This creates resentment and competitiveness. While there is no longer the kind of anti-Syrian sentiment that peaked in 2013, there are still tensions that manifest occasionally due to a shortage of resources.

In this vein, there does exist resentment from African refugee communities and community based organisations towards the allocation of ring-fenced resources towards the Syrian response. The Caritas Facebook page for example, has received a number of complaints from African community members regarding the distribution of resources to Syrians. Syrians have been receiving WFP food vouchers, which other communities do not receive, and this contributes towards feelings of resentment. African refugee communities and service providers have seen an influx of new organisations and new funding directed towards refugee assistance, however the bulk of this is assigned for Syrians. This type of ring-fenced funding and programming does not help the integration of Syrians into the Egyptian host community, nor does it assist Syrians to integrate within the refugee community and the existing structures of long standing networks and organisations.

The lack of funding that has traditionally plagued dedicated refugee service provider organisations prior to the arrival of Syrians has resulted in creative coping strategies and community support mechanisms within more established refugee communities. Among African refugee communities, stakeholders and service providers report that there are much stronger and more well established community based support mechanisms than what exist in the Syrian community. Service providers reflected that there are high levels of mistrust within the Syrian community, which makes mutual cooperation difficult. An example given was the ease with which service providers can find temporary or permanent care for unaccompanied children within the African refugee communities, whereas with Syrians, this would prove very difficult. Given the long duration that African refugee communities have been living in Cairo, the formal and informal community structures are very well established and strong. There is an opportunity here to look closely at some of these models and learn how they function effectively and what might be replicated.

PART THREE

RECOMMENDATIONS

PART III: RECOMMENDATIONS

FIRST: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government of Egypt should lift the entry restrictions it has imposed on Syrian citizens.
- Donor countries to the Regional Response Plan for Syrians particularly the United States, the European Union, and its member states should specifically direct more resources to the United Nations Refugee Agency's operations in Egypt.
- Donor countries and development agencies should do more to support the country's public services in areas where refugees are living.
- The government of Egypt should allow already-registered international and local non-governmental organizations to expand their programming to include new projects for Syrian refugees. This should include permission for transfer of international funds for the NGOs.
- Countries with resident Syrian populations should permit and facilitate family reunification for Syrians.

SECOND: IN REGARDS TO ARBITRARY DETENTION OF REFUGEES

SOHRI urges the Egyptian authorities to:

- Release all refugees held without charge and despite prosecutors' release orders. Pending their release from detention, separate unaccompanied children from unrelated adults and ensure that conditions of confinement correspond to international standards;
- Investigate which security officials orders the arbitrary detention of refugees and hold them accountable;
- Compensate those who have been arbitrarily detained under article 9(5) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Stop coercing refugees to leave Egypt, particularly to Syria; and
- Allow UNHCR to bring Palestinians from Syria under its protection mandate.

THIRD: POSITIONING INTERNATIONAL FUNDS / GRANTS / ORGANISATIONS / STAKEHOLDERS IN EGYPT

Despite the wide range of issues faced by refugees and the number of gaps in service provision, our research and assessment revealed fairly consistent results about what essential needs funds and service providers would be well placed to respond to. Most notably and importantly working in education, with a particular focus on Early Childhood. Our research also revealed the importance of each organisation working on its own areas of expertise in coordination with other stakeholders in order to avoid duplication and deliver effective programs.

Beneficiary Selection

UNHCR's 3RP suggests that inclusion of host communities into refugee programming is increasingly seen as preferred practice in relation to Syrian displacement. Other service providers have had positive experiences of incorporating Syrians into their existing programming with African refugee communities, and opening their facilities and programs for all communities in the area. While Syrians need to be more mainstreamed into host community services, at the same time Syrians need to be also mainstreamed into the refugee service provision, rather than the provision of dedicated funds and services for Syrians only. Having Egyptians, Syrians and other refugee communities in programs together is itself positive advocacy for coexistence. Working across different refugee communities (including Egyptians) also helps pave the way for government approval and support for projects.

In terms of targeting, many stakeholders (including UNHCR) suggested an area-based approach that is grounded in the realities of local neighbourhoods. UNHCR's 3RP has a focus on mainstreaming, meaning involving the local government entities and the impacted host communities in programming for Syrian refugees. In this way, it makes sense to take an inclusive approach, rather than a ring-fenced approach for particular communities. While refugees are UNHCR's ultimate mandate, an area-based approach means that everyone at risk in that area is benefiting. In this way, people and programs are not separated from the nuanced context that they live in.

Throughout this report, a number of particularly vulnerable groups have been identified. These are female-headed households with children, female-headed households with children and a family member with a disability, unaccompanied minors, and non-English non-Arabic speaking refugees such as Eritreans and Ethiopians. Palestinian Syrians are highly vulnerable, particularly to detention and deportation, and receive an overall lack of support. Caritas has managed to find some dedicated funding from the French Embassy to support Palestinian Syrians in health and educational needs. Integration and outreach is needed to identify and support refugees with disabilities. For many service providers, people with disabilities were not really mentioned or prioritised, which may mean that they might be off the radar for support and are not accessing adequate assistance. Refugee youth should also be considered a vulnerable group, given their high unemployment rates, difficulties in finding accommodation if they are not with their family, and the lack of places to exercise and socialise.

Partnerships and Coordination

The issue of positioning should be given great consideration in entering into working in the refugee sector in Egypt. The challenge of the mainstreaming approach is how to balance an integrated and inclusive approach, whilst recognising and maintaining the specificity of the refugee experience. Refugee protection in Egypt occurs in a parallel space, within which refugee networks and service providers operate. Refugee organisations would refer to UNHCR and other refugee organisations as a rule, and would very rarely turn to the government representatives. Non-refugee specific organisations need to be alert to the specificity of refugee referral networks, and the protection measures that these entail. Therefore, an integrated approach is required, but with attention to the issue of refugee particularity.

The relationship to government is another critical issue of positioning to consider in designing interventions into the refugee sector. Organisations working with refugees do not usually have these kind of relationships, so there is an opportunity available to build relationships with the different Egyptian Ministries in order to integrate and mainstream refugees into programming, and therefore into the relationship with government. In this way, there is an opportunity for very slow "baby steps" in advocacy with the government around refugees' equitable access to services.

Yet, the close relationship to government provides both opportunities as well as potential risks that need to be examined. Working with refugees (and particularly Syrians) can be a highly politicised area, which is why many refugee organisations tend to operate in a parallel protection space, where UNHCR functions in a quasi-governmental role. Refugee service providers have a very different relationship to the state, and to National Security. Due to the protection risks, refugee dedicated services operate within a parallel sphere of service provision. It would be worthwhile to analyse the potential protection risks to refugees by mainstreaming them into programming where government figures are closely involved at a case level. This is particularly worth considering given that some branches of the Egyptian state are seriously breaching their protection obligations towards refugees and are violating their rights under the Refugee Convention by detaining, deporting, and at times attacking refugees (including children).

FOURTH: PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational Support to Schools, Students and Teachers

There is a need to address the medium to long-term reality that Syrian refugees will be in Egypt for the foreseeable future, which for many people means years. Quality of life for refugees needs to be improved and education is key to improving families' prospects and wellbeing in Egypt, and a key deterrent from undertaking risky irregular migration.

Community Schools:

Syrians are not satisfied with their experience of education in Egypt, and many prefer to attend Syrian community schools. Support is needed for these community schools to ensure their longevity and their quality of education. These schools are currently funded by the community themselves, primarily through fee contributions by parents but need assistance to become recognised and established. The Egyptian government has closed a number of community schools due to their lack of registration. One option could be to support these schools to be registered and able to offer recognised qualifications. These schools could teach the Syrian curriculum by Syrian teachers, in the way that African refugee schools often teach the Sudanese curriculum. There are many educated people among the Syrian community, and indeed many qualified teachers. These teachers could be employed in these community schools, and in addition a network of trained private tutors could be formed from among the Syrian community to provide extra support. Community schools also need financial support and capacity building to deliver sports and recreation activities, language and computing classes, and psychosocial services.

Public school teacher training:

Given the problems that Syrian students face in the Egyptian public schools, particularly the difficulties with the poor quality of teachers and teaching, investing in teacher training could help support Syrian and Egyptian students in the classroom. This training needs to entail both pedagogical aspects as well as anti-discrimination and social inclusion strategies. One of the most common difficulties for Syrians in Egyptian school, as revealed in this report, is the teaching and treatment by teachers.

Private bridging lessons:

As well as training public school teachers, the support to the provision of private lessons through an after school program which helps to translate the Egyptian curriculum into a friendly format for Syrian students could offer a helpful bridge between the Egyptian public education system and Syrian students. These private lessons could be taught by Syrian teachers who have been trained in the Egyptian curriculum. This could be provided as programs through after school care centers, which would offer a space for Syrian children to do their homework and undertake additional lessons to help them progress in the Egyptian curriculum.

Educational grants:

In order to support families struggling to meet their basic needs, it is essential to provide educational grants to support families to cover educational costs. Given the overall reduction in cash assistance and relief, grants would be highly useful for families with school-attending children. In addition, basic educational materials such as notebooks, stationery, school clothes and schoolbags can be provided to vulnerable families. Families also struggle to pay tuition fees for college and university, which is a key issue for Syrian youth in Egypt. While Syrians should be considered as local students, many college and universities have been charging them as international students with hefty fees imposed since 2013.

After School Care

The provision of After School Care (ASC) could support refugee parents who are working and avoid the situation of having children unsupervised or being supervised by other children. The provision of ASC is therefore a protection issue, as well as an education issue. An ASC program could be developed that builds upon the lessons learned in the existing Child Friendly Spaces (CFS). Many stakeholders expressed to our researchers that CFS have not been very effective, have few children attending them, and lack structure in their programming. Many parents do not want to send their children to a CFS which is far away, or where children would have to walk there or travel there alone. To this end, ASC programs should have a proper registration system, expected attendance times, organised transportation, and provision of meals. Many refugees surveyed expressed a desire for more activities for children and youth, particularly those that build their skills as well as contribute to psychosocial wellbeing. Activities such as sports, computer training, and language study are all beneficial activities that could be suited to an after school program. The provision of regular after school care and activities relieves pressure on refugee parents, allows children to develop social relationships, and provides safer spaces for children and youth, thus reducing protection risks. After School Care should be open to all communities within a dedicated area – Egyptians, Syrian and other refugee children and youth. It is important to note that stakeholders felt that the reason some CFS have effectively been a failure, is that the programs are ill conceived in considering the space itself the program. There needs to be a structured and organised program, not just a space or a centre. After school care centres could also host private bridging lessons that are Syrian-friendly, taught by Egyptian and Syrian teachers, and help to translate and make intelligible the Egyptian curriculum for Syrian students. This would require investing in teacher training for Syrian teachers to ensure they are familiar with the Egyptian curriculum.

Early Childhood Development Programming

There is a serious lack of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programming across the refugee sector in Egypt. More and more reports suggest that early childhood development is critical to later successes in life. The refugee sector is increasingly recognising the need to invest more in ECD programming. UNHCR's 3RP 2015-2016 states specific targets in relation to Early Childhood education in order to increase the enrollment rates of pre-school children moving into kindergartens. As such, UNHCR will support partners in Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta to develop community nurseries. One of the indicators for success in UNHCR's educational strategy is the number of children aged 3-5 years enrolled in Early Childhood education. Various international stakeholders could contribute to ECD by supporting a number of community centres to train refugee teachers in Early Childhood education methodologies, including responding to children with special needs. Also, support the community centers to run structured daily programs of early childhood care and education. Early Childhood Care is an essential aspect of child protection. Early Childhood Development programming should include children from all backgrounds, with particular outreach to those from non-English and non-Arabic speaking backgrounds. Educationally, these are the most vulnerable children, as they are unable to access any education programs in Egypt due to the language barriers. By focusing on language development in Arabic and English from an early age, these children can be prepared to enter primary schools in Egypt. Pre-schools need to reach out to vulnerable families and children at risk in order to feed them into primary schooling. One challenge in teaching these children is their unwillingness to learn Arabic – many of them feel that they hate Egypt and Egyptians and are reluctant to invest in learning a very difficult language when they do not want to imagine a future in Egypt at all.

Advocacy with Schools, Colleges and Universities

Given the discrimination faced by Syrians, despite the fact that they are meant to have the same access as nationals, it is essential to offer assistance by carrying out advocacy with secondary schools, colleges and universities to ensure that Syrians are not facing discrimination in enrollment and tuition fees.

**“REFUGEES ARE MOTHERS, FATHERS, SISTERS,
BROTHERS, CHILDREN, WITH THE SAME HOPES AND
AMBITIONS AS US—EXCEPT THAT A TWIST OF FATE
HAS BOUND THEIR LIVES TO A GLOBAL REFUGEE
CRISIS ON AN UNPRECEDENTED SCALE.”**

— KHALED HOSSEINI

ENDNOTES

- <https://midgaan.wordpress.com/page/2/>
- <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/142979.pdf>
- <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- http://www.africanchildforum.org/clr/Legislation%20Per%20Country/Egypt/egypt_children_2008_en.pdf
- <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486356.html>
- <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/sudanese-refugees-shot-dead-egypt-israel-border-151115141929932.html>
- [cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html)
- fsi.fundforpeace.org/rankings-2015
- <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/somalia/alldocuments>
- Yehia Zakareya, Testimony, 18 November 2015
- Al Jazeera Mubasher, 20th November 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4eYzU9A1dU>
- 'unTill the Picture is Complete', November 23 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5cT6sBgGNI&feature=youtu.be>
- Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations on the combined seventeenth to twenty-second periodic reports of Egypt, December 2015,
- http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/EGY/CERD_C_EGY_CO_17-22_22498_E.pdf
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
- <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CAT.aspx>
- African Charter on Human and People's Rights, http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/achpr/banjul_charter.pdf
- Egyptian Constitution 2014, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Egypt_2014.pdf
- Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officers,
- <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/UseOfForceAndFirearms.aspx>
- International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination,
- <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>
- Egypt: Govt Files Complaint with UN over Egypt Elections' in All Africa, 25th November 2015,
- <http://allafrica.com/stories/201511260301.html>
- Nourhan Elsebahy, 'Sudan files complaint against Egypt at UN Security Council' in Daily News Egypt, December 6 2015,
- <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/12/06/sudan-files-complaint-against-egypt-at-un-security-council/>
- 'Egypt: Govt Files Complaint with UN over Egypt Elections' in All Africa, 25th November 2015,
- <http://allafrica.com/stories/201511260301.html>
- 'Egyptians Harrass Sudanese with Dollars' in All Africa, 20th Novemeber 2015,
- <http://allafrica.com/stories/201511201568.html>
- 'Egypt-Sudan Crisis 'Runs Deep'' in All Africa, 29 November 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201511301296.html>
- El Nadeem Center, November Archive, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2-QqOchi4gFZS1DLWZKODBXRWs/view>
- MEE staff, '4 Egyptian police officers charged with fatal torture' in Middle East Eye, Friday 4 December, 2015,
- <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/4-egyptian-police-officers-imprisoned-charged-fatal-torture-custody-923849130>

“ The only way we'll get freedom for ourselves is to identify ourselves with every oppressed people in the world. ”

- Malcolm X



“IT IS HARD TO LIVE HERE”

As of 2022, Egypt hosts more than 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers. Estimates by local NGOs and groups working with refugees and asylum seekers suggest that the current number could be as much as twice as high. Since 2011, many of these refugees have been Syrians fleeing the civil war. By 2013, more than half of Egypt’s refugee population was made up of Syrian nationals. Unfortunately, Egypt lacks an effective civil society which can ensure that the human rights of refugees are respected, as well as the rule of law.

Index: MDE 1/11/2022
Nov. 2022

sohri.org

sohri
Swedish
Observatory
المركز
السويدي