

SYRIA REGIONAL CRISIS RESPONSE UPDATE 81

18 November 2014



16-31 October 2014 | Issue 81

HIGHLIGHTS

On 28 October, UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl addressed a conference in Berlin on the Syrian refugee situation, hosted by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In his address, Mr. Krähenbühl emphasized the unique vulnerability of Palestine refugees in Syria and neighbouring countries. To read the full speech, please click [here](#).

On 29 October, Deputy Commissioner-General Margot Ellis visited Syria. During her visit, she inaugurated the re-habilitated Alma-Yarmouk School in Qabr Essit Camp in Sayeda Zeinab on the outskirts of Damascus. The school had been severely damaged by conflict after the majority of the camp's 25,000 residents were forced to seek refuge in safer areas. Sitting amidst considerable destruction, the school is now a symbol of hope and of UNRWA dedication to restoring services to Palestine refugees throughout Syria. To read more about the visit, please click [here](#).

More than half a million Palestine refugees continue to be affected by the conflict in Syria. UNRWA aims to preserve the resilience of Palestine refugees by continuing to provide critical services and humanitarian assistance. For a more detailed overview of the latest news and UNRWA interventions for Palestine refugees from Syria, please visit the [Syria crisis page](#).

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Displacement. In Syria, approximately 560,000 Palestine refugees are registered with UNRWA. It is estimated that over 50 per cent of Palestine refugees are displaced within

Syria, with a further 12 per cent displaced to neighbouring countries. Sixteen UNRWA installations across Syria house 6,164 internally displaced persons (IDPs), of whom nine per cent are Syrians. A further 6,925 Palestinians are hosted in other UNRWA-managed installations.

In Lebanon, 44,000 Palestine refugees from Syria have been recorded with UNRWA; in Jordan 14,690 and in Gaza 860 Palestine refugees have requested assistance from UNRWA. The Agency has received reports of around 4,000 Palestine refugees in Egypt and smaller numbers in Libya, Turkey and East Asia.

Funding. The total pledged amount against the 2014 Response Plan stands at US\$ 197.8 million, including US\$ 33.6 million pledged in 2013 for implementation in 2014. This amount is equivalent to 48 per cent of the total budget of the 2014 Syria regional crisis response required for January-December 2014 (US\$ 417 million). For a complete overview of funding, please visit the Agency's 2014 Syria regional crisis response page.

Inter-agency. OCHA published a draft Humanitarian Needs Overview for Syria, the first product of the new 'Whole of Syria' approach, which covers both operations within Syria and cross-border operations in neighbouring countries. The Strategic Response Plan (SRP), the Refugee Resilience Response Plan (3RP) and the UNRWA Syria Regional Crisis Response Plan will be launched in mid-December.

Media. The Syria crisis media narrative shifted from refugees seeking asylum via the Mediterranean in the first half of October, to the mounting pressure Syria's neighbouring countries face with the influx of refugees and associated financial and social repercussions. This theme was widely covered during the Berlin conference on 28 October, where officials from Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey described the pressure on infrastructure, health services, education facilities and employment, and a lack of financial support to shoulder the burdens. The poor socio-economic situation of refugees, particularly in the camps in these countries, inflames the situation.

In the same period, Lebanon confirmed closing its borders to all refugees. In Lebanon and Jordan, reports covered bullying, harassment and social unrest. Syrian and Palestine refugees from Syria are being blamed for accepting jobs at lower pay than Lebanese, Palestine refugees from Lebanon and Jordanian citizens, and thus increasing unemployment rates. Lack of access to education for Syrian refugees was covered in an [article](#) in the Brown Political Review.

Advocacy campaigns. The UNCHR campaign to end statelessness, '[I belong](#)' (including articles in Foreign Policy Journal, [The Economist](#) and The Guardian) highlighted the ongoing plight of Palestinians alongside the issue of Syria refugees facing statelessness due to lack of papers, expired passports and destroyed identity documents.

SYRIA

Yarmouk. UNRWA was able to access Yarmouk for a total of eight days over the reporting period, during which UNRWA staff distributed food parcels and hygiene kits to 1,600 families. In addition, medical staff were able to provide health services to

1,477 patients in Yarmouk, including 124 patients with non-communicable diseases. The Agency also completed the distribution of textbooks and stationery for students in grades 5-9; 1,512 students now have access to national curriculum textbooks for the year and to alternative learning space, where they are taught by 11 UNRWA teachers and 50 volunteers from the local community. UNRWA nevertheless remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Yarmouk. The Agency is liaising with authorities and urging for the restoration of continuous UNRWA support to reach over 4,000 civilian families inside Yarmouk.

Education. Throughout Syria, approximately 40,000 students are currently attending 83 UNRWA and UNRWA-run schools. This year, psychosocial support is integrated into the services provided to Palestine refugee students. In an aim to address the effect of years of conflict and violence, 55 psychosocial counsellors have been trained to provide children with basic psychosocial support, including recreational activities.

Health. UNRWA participated in Syria's National Immunization Day on 24 October 2014. Throughout Syria, health clinics provided 10,023 vaccinations against polio to children aged up to five-years-old. Polio vaccinations were also provided to 623 children living in the besieged area of Yarmouk. Polio is a potentially deadly infectious disease caused by a virus, which can cause paralysis through infection of the spinal cord and the brain. Before the start of the conflict, Syria had not recorded any cases of polio for over a decade. The first suspected polio cases in Syria were reported in October 2013, resulting in at least 13 cases of children paralyzed by polio by the end of 2013.

Relief and Social Services. UNRWA has opened kindergartens in Khan Danoun and in Haifa shelter for children aged up to five-years-old. The kindergartens are intended to provide a recreational area for children to play in a relatively safe environment. To prepare families for the upcoming winter, UNRWA is positioning blankets and mattresses ahead of winter, in addition to regular distribution of food parcels to 19,474 families throughout Syria. Cash assistance was provided to 27,982 beneficiaries and 728 special hardship cases (including female headed-households, minors and other vulnerable persons).

Protection. Two Family Support Offices (FSOs) provide legal, social and psychological support to Palestine refugee men and women in Damascus and Dera'a, both of which are areas that continue to be frequently affected by conflict. Lawyers working in the FSOs receive on-going training to be better equipped to respond a range of protection issues, including early marriage and domestic violence.

Engineering. The rehabilitation of a school and a community centre in Qabr Essit camp were completed. The Alma-Yarmouk School was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner-General during her visit to Syria on 29 October 2014. As part of the rehabilitation plan, students of various vocational training centres manufactured 400 desks for the students of Alma-Yarmouk. 1,200 students will benefit from the rehabilitated school, with approximately 600 girls in the morning shift, and 600 boys in the afternoon. A rehabilitated school was also re-opened in Neirab Camp.

Vocational Training. Unemployment remains prevalent throughout Syria, and only 16 per cent of those who registered with TVET as job seekers in the past year are currently in employment. In order to improve the employability of young adults, UNRWA runs a large vocational training centre in Damascus, which is also hosting approximately 1,200 displaced Palestine refugees. In addition, the programme has opened satellite centres in Homs and Dera'a. These centres provide a variety of courses, focusing on trades and jobs in demand as per the latest UNRWA market survey. The Agency aims to increase its outreach to young adults in Lattakia over the course of next year.

SYRIA SECURITY OVERVIEW

Staff and the conflict. UNRWA has lost 14 staff members in conflict-related violence since the outbreak of the conflict. In addition, 26 UNRWA area staff members are currently detained or have been reported missing. A further 26 UNRWA area staff members have been injured during the course of the conflict.

Area	Name	Access from outside	Description
Damascus	Jaramana (official camp)	Accessible	The situation remains tense with sporadic clashes reported in wider Jaramana. UNRWA facilities are operational.
	Khan Danoun (official camp)	Accessible	Sporadic clashes take place in surrounding areas.
	Khan Eshieh (official camp)	Not accessible	The situation inside the camp is reported to be calm, but hostilities in the surrounding areas have made the camp inaccessible.
	Qabr Essit (official camp)	Accessible	The camp has remained calm and some UNRWA facilities are operational.
	Sbeineh (official camp)	Not accessible	The vast majority of Palestine refugees have left the camp, none have so far been

	camp)		permitted to return, and all facilities remain closed.
	Yarmouk (unofficial Not accessible camp)		Yarmouk experiences regular clashes and shelling, which have disrupted distribution. Access remains heavily limited.
	Hama (official Accessible camp)		The camp has remained calm and all facilities are operational.
Central area	Homs (official Accessible camp)		Despite sporadic clashes in surrounding areas the camp has remained calm and all facilities are operational.
	Lattakia (unofficial Accessible camp)		The camp has remained calm and all facilities are operational.
	Ein el Tal (unofficial Not accessible camp)		Residents were forcibly displaced by armed groups in April 2013 and have not been allowed to return. Access to the camp remains blocked.
North area	Neirab (official Accessible camp)		The camp has remained relatively calm and all facilities are operational.
	Dera'a (official Not accessible camp)		Sporadic incidents remain and the immediate vicinity continues to experience armed clashes.
South area			

LEBANON

Winterization. To address the needs of PRS families during the coldest winter months, UNRWA is working to mobilize resources and coordinate with partners to provide winterization assistance for PRS who have been recorded with UNRWA. UNRWA winterization assistance this year will build on last year's assistance in coordination with humanitarian partners. As many of the PRS beneficiaries have resided in Lebanon for over a year, they were recipients of in-kind assistance in 2013-2014, which included non-perishable items such as blankets, clothing and heaters. Consequently, in the 2014-2015 winter period, UNRWA will provide its basic package of cash for fuel to the PRS population in Lebanon, where resources are available. Winterization assistance will be provided through the existing UNRWA ATM distribution system.

UNRWA has reached an important agreement with partners for maximizing assistance to PRS. All PRS in the Beqaa, and over 500 million countrywide, will be assisted by ICRC through UNRWA ATM cards. This will include fuel for five months at US\$ 100 per month and a one-off US\$ 50 for replacement of winterization goods, amounting to a total package of \$550 per family. UNICEF is also providing US\$ 30 per child for clothing through UNRWA ATM cards and fuel for schools. Other organizations will be providing winterization assistance to PRS families and have been coordinating their efforts with UNRWA. UNRWA is struggling to meet the winterization needs of the remainder of the PRS in Lebanon and is urgently seeking the help of donors to ensure adequate assistance to all beneficiaries during this winter period. UNRWA needs US\$ 1.8 million to support 8,650 PRS families across Lebanon who remain at risk this winter.

Protection, legal status and advice. The restrictions imposed by the Lebanese government in early May 2014 continue to result in the denial of entry to the majority of PRS fleeing Syria for safety in Lebanon, including many seeking unification with close family members already in Lebanon. Even PRS transiting through Lebanon to a third country or entering for embassy appointments in Beirut often face obstacles and long delays at the border.

The Lebanese authorities announced on 25 September that PRS with expired visas could renew their visas free of charge for one time only. UNRWA is closely monitoring the implementation of the circular including the time required for PRS to obtain the three-month visa and the implications on the ability of PRS to complete civil registration procedures, including birth registrations. Furthermore, UNRWA is actively engaging in dialogue with the GSO to clarify future implications on the status of PRS in the country after the three month visas expire.

Humanitarian assistance. Since February 2014, cash assistance for PRS has been distributed on a monthly basis. In October, 41,000 beneficiaries were credited (totaling US\$ 1.22 million for food and US\$ 1.12 million for housing). In July 2014, UNRWA conducted a vulnerability needs assessment and headcount to transition from status-based to vulnerability-based assistance. The majority of PRS remains eligible for UNRWA cash assistance and will continue to be eligible to receive monthly assistance allocated on

the basis of US\$ 30 per person for food and US\$ 100 per family for housing, pending availability of funds. All PRS continue to have access to core UNRWA programmes. Unaccompanied and separated minors (fewer than 150 as of August 2014) receive assistance in hard cash, rather than via an ATM card, following an assessment by the UNRWA protection team.

In August, UNRWA and the World Food Programme (WFP) signed an agreement for WFP to fund 50 per cent of UNRWA monthly food crediting. The agreement came into effect for August, September and October food crediting. UNRWA has been working closely with its partner bank and headquarters to fully automate the crediting process, and further streamline crediting.

Environmental health. During October 2014, various interventions took place in camps to enable camp infrastructure and on-going activities to cope with the increasing demand on camp utilities. These covered rehabilitation of the sewerage network in Burj Barajneh camp and improvements and rehabilitation for the water supply systems in Ein El Hilweh, Rashidieh and Beddawi camps. UNRWA faced technical difficulties with some of its compactor trucks during this period and as a result, additional interventions were carried out to enable disposal of refuse from Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi camps. Environmental health promotion activities were carried out by environmental health promoters in all camps, including the distribution of hygiene kits.

Health. UNRWA, in partnership with UNICEF, provided polio vaccinations to children (aged one day to five-years-old) at UNRWA health clinics, kindergartens and door-to-door from 15 to 21 October. Administration of a second round of vaccines is planned for November.

Thanks to generous contributions from donors, UNRWA is covering the cost of primary health care services for PRS, including medical consultations and free medications through its 27 health centres located throughout the country. The health programme is also covering the costs of secondary, and contributing towards tertiary hospitalization for emergency and life-threatening conditions. Additionally, UNRWA provides financial support for Emergency Room Services at Palestine Red Crescent Society hospitals and partially covers these services at UNRWA contracted hospitals. Since April 2013, UNRWA has also supported PRS patients suffering from critical health conditions, providing financial support to patients with costly medical procedures.

Education. Around 6,600 PRS students are enrolled in 60 UNRWA schools in Lebanon for the 2014-2015 scholastic year. Through generous donations from the EU and UNICEF, the distribution of Back to School Kits was completed during October 2014. UNRWA has merged classes in six of 14 schools so that PRS students who had been attending special afternoon classes have joined PRL classmates in regular morning classes. UNRWA has recruited additional PRS teachers to continue to support the increased number of students and to provide supplementary services for these students.

JORDAN

In Jordan, 14,690 PRS and their families have approached UNRWA, an increase of 48

since the last reporting period. Most PRS in Jordan live in poverty and their precarious legal status creates difficulties for civil processes, access to services and employment. Along with approximately 200 Syrians, 183 PRS are held in Cyber City, a government facility near Ramtha.

Education. As of 30 September, 2,317 children from Syria were enrolled, including 183 new enrolments. Children enrolled include 994 PRS and 1,323 Syrian children. While in previous years, admission to UNRWA schools in official and unofficial UNRWA camps has been open to both PRS and Syrian children, for the 2014/5 academic year, Jordan Field Office (JFO) has had to limit new enrolments to PRS children only. There are approximately 800 Syrian children who are not currently enrolled in UNRWA schools who require access to education. Considering critical funding shortfalls, JFO has not been able to accommodate these new Syrian children, but is working with its partners - including the Government, other UN Agencies, the donors and the Education Department in UNRWA Headquarters - to see how it can assist them.

UNRWA received a contribution of 2,982 school bags from UNICEF, of which 1,520 were distributed to students in UNRWA schools the second half of October.

Health. UNRWA continues to provide PRS with free primary health care in its 23 clinics across the country, dental care in four mobile clinics, as well as hospital referrals for emergency and life-saving care with almost full coverage. In the second half of October 2014, PRS received approximately 594 consultations at UNRWA health clinics. Overall, PRS have good access to health care, with 98 per cent reporting they receive medical care when they need it.

Emergency relief. A total of US\$ 212,581 was distributed as regular cash assistance (for food and NFIs) to 435 vulnerable PRS families (1,763 individuals). An additional US\$ 20,043 was distributed as one-time emergency cash to 85 families (342 individuals) who had experienced a major shock.