

**UNHCR**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés**UNHCR Canberra
Fact Sheet - 2004****Questions and Answers on Resettlement from Egypt****1. How many refugees are in Egypt?**

Egypt hosts an estimated 90,000 refugees living in urban areas. This figure includes approximately 70,000 Palestinian refugees and some 21,000 refugees mainly from Sudan and Somalia.

2. Is Egypt a signatory to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees?

Yes. Egypt is also a party to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa. For further information see UNHCR's website: www.unhcr.ch.

3. Where is the UNHCR office in Egypt located?

| UNHCR CAIRO | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|---|
| <i>Street</i> | 8 El Fawakeh Street | <i>Telephone</i> | 20 2 762 1750 |
| <i>Address</i> | Mohandissin Cairo | | 20 2 762 1751 20 2 762 1572 20 2 762 1573 |
| <i>Mailing Address</i> | P.O.Box 1844, Cairo | <i>Fax</i> | 20 2 762 1576 |

4. What is UNHCR's role in Egypt?

- To ensure the admission of refugee applicants to Egypt's land, airport and port borders;
- To receive and register all refugee applicants coming to Egypt;
- To provide documentation to all recognised refugees;
- To assist the government in ensuring the protection of refugees by carrying out refugee status determination (first instance and review stages);
- To seek access and secure the release of any refugee applicant or refugee detained for illegal stay in Egypt;
- To assist the neediest refugees by providing them with living expenses, education, medical assistance, vocational training and some limited income-generating activities. (Owing to the increased number of refugees recognized under UNHCR's expanded mandate and the simultaneous diminishment of UNHCR's budget, assistance is now only provided to vulnerable cases and even then amounts to less than \$20 US per refugee per month);



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- To promote or facilitate the voluntary repatriation for those willing to return to their countries of origin;
- To facilitate resettlement to third countries for those refugees who meet UNHCR resettlement criteria. Current resettlement processing capacity is approximately 4000 refugees per year. With more reliance upon group submissions –and consistency with HQ and regional policy-- it is hoped that UNHCR can sustain this number.

5. How does a person get referred for resettlement from Egypt?

Firstly, the person must be determined to be a refugee under UNHCR mandate (and usually meet the 1951 Convention as this is the definition relied upon by most resettlement countries in their adjudication of UNHCR referrals). Secondly, the refugee must not be ineligible owing, for example, to irregular movement or polygamy, and must meet UNHCR's resettlement criteria.

The most common criterion for resettlement referral is lack of local integration prospects.

6. In short, what are the criteria for determining refugee status under UNHCR mandate?

The term "refugee" applies to any person who has fled his/her country of origin due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to that country. In addition, any person who meets the definition of the OAU convention may be of concern to UNHCR under its mandate. The OAU convention defines a refugee as a person who, *"owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his habitual place of residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality"*.

7. How does a person obtain refugee status in Egypt?

UNHCR is currently responsible for the determination of refugee status on behalf of the Government of Egypt. To apply for refugee status, the individual must present his/her refugee claim in an interview with UNHCR in Cairo. When the person first approaches UNHCR Cairo, he/she is registered and receives a yellow card which indicates to Egyptian authorities that the person is an asylum-seeker and offers some protection against deportation. The claimant, if from anywhere other than Sudan, is given an interview date.



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If the person is recognized as a refugee after the interview, he/she is given a blue Refugee Identification Card, on which the Egyptian authorities (Ministry of Interior - Mogamma building) stamp a six month renewable residence permit.

Sudanese asylum seekers are currently registered as asylum seekers but not individually determined for recognition as refugees. A six month suspension of individual refugee status determination (RSD) was initiated on 1 June 2004. A decision on whether to resume individual determination will be taken on or about 1 December 2004. Please note that under the current arrangement, ALL asylum seekers are registered and provided a yellow asylum seeker card which entitles them to residence and protection against refoulement as well as an increasing number of community-based services, such as health and education assistance.

8. How long will it take to determine refugee status?

The average time between the date the person initially approaches the UNHCR office and the refugee status determination decision is approximately 3 weeks (note above however that Sudanese asylum seekers are not presently scheduled for individual interviews). After a person is interviewed, it will usually take two weeks until a decision is notified. For vulnerable cases and urgent family reunion cases (including those of Sudanese asylum seekers otherwise subject to the individual RSD suspension), the refugee status determination process is completed faster, often within two weeks. Once a week, the file numbers and results of the week's decisions are posted with NGO partners. No names are posted.

9. Can a person appeal a denied application for refugee status?

Yes. Every denied applicant has the right to appeal within 30 days after issuance of the first decision. All pending Sudanese asylum seeker appeals have been disposed of. Currently, therefore, there is no meaningful backlog of appeal decisions.

10. If a person is found to be a refugee, will he/she be resettled?

As set out above, refugees will be resettled if they were recognized under an instrument relied upon by resettlement countries, meet UNHCR's criteria for resettlement and are otherwise not ineligible.



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11. How can a refugee in Egypt apply to UNHCR for resettlement?

All recognized refugees are automatically considered for resettlement. Those recognized under the 1951 Convention or who are vulnerable are given individual durable solutions interviews. At the interview, a determination is made whether the refugee meets UNHCR's criteria and is not otherwise ineligible (e.g. is not in a polygamous relationship, did not irregularly move etc.). Single males must have a ground of referral in addition to Lack of Local Integration. Families can still be referred on Lack of Local Integration alone provided they have been in Egypt for two years.

12. Is there an appeal process for a negative UNHCR resettlement assessment?

There is no formal appeal process for a negative assessment. However, if the refugee's situation changes, he/she can submit a letter explaining the new situation. On the basis of the new information, the UNHCR officer will decide if an additional durable solution interview is required. Decisions on these inquiries are made weekly and the results posted in writing at UNHCR's NGO partners' premises.

13. What happens after UNHCR determines a refugee to be in need of resettlement?

UNHCR will refer eligible persons to one of several resettlement countries (Australia, Canada, Finland, USA, etc). Each country of resettlement has its own policies, criteria and practices that a refugee must follow before he or she can be resettled. The final decision on resettlement will be made by a resettlement country, not by UNHCR.

14. What is the process for refugees who are referred to the Australian and New Zealand programs?

Once the UNHCR office in the country of asylum decides that a person is in need of resettlement in Australia or New Zealand, the case is referred to either the local Australian Embassy or to the New Zealand Government via the Regional Office in Canberra.

The Australian and New Zealand Government make the final decision on whether the refugee will be resettled according to their criteria, not UNHCR. Further information on the Australian criteria can be obtained from the DIMIA website (www.immi.gov.au). The New Zealand Government generally follows the UNHCR criteria.

UNHCR cannot guarantee that a resettlement referral will be accepted.



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15. I have been told I need to pay money for resettlement to Australia/New Zealand, is this correct?

Absolutely not. Neither UNHCR nor the Australian or New Zealand Resettlement Programs charge a fee for resettlement interviews or decisions. Anyone asked to pay fees is encouraged to report this to UNHCR through its Complaints Procedure.

17. Where can I obtain more information about resettlement?

The best sources for information on Australian and New Zealand resettlement are their Immigration Departments websites (www.immi.gov.au for Australia, and www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/ for New Zealand) and the UNHCR regional office in Canberra.

18. Are there any other ways to help my family members to reunite with me in the Australia or New Zealand?

Australia and New Zealand both maintain special programs with a broader definition of persons eligible for consideration than through UNHCR referrals. Information on these programs is available on the Immigration websites at www.immi.gov.au for Australia under the Special Humanitarian Program, and www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/ for New Zealand under the Refugee Family Quota in the Family Sponsored Stream.
