



The Middle East

Operational highlights

Bahrain
Egypt
Israel
Iraq
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Syrian Arab Republic
United Arab Emirates
Yemen

- Overall, most countries of the Middle East were generous in hosting refugees.
- The violence in Iraq and the massive internal and external displacement of Iraqis dominated events in the region. Almost four million Iraqis were displaced, with some two million having fled to Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), Lebanon, Egypt and further afield.
- A less visible emergency has been developing in Yemen, which in 2006 saw no let-up in arrivals from the Horn of Africa, across the Gulf of Aden. Meanwhile, the situation in Lebanon remained volatile.
- UNHCR re-established communications and dialogue with Sudanese communities in Egypt after the deaths in December 2005 of 28 Sudanese demonstrators who were demanding more assistance and resettlement.
- UNHCR strengthened its representation in Israel to help the Government receive Sudanese and other asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan Africa.
- The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council demonstrated increased interest in partnership with UNHCR. The Office organized training workshops and conferences to provide a better understanding of its role and operations.

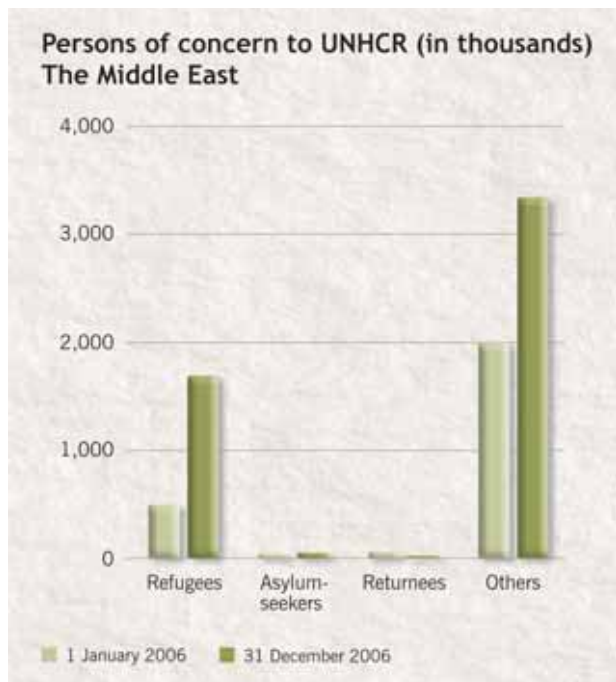


Working Environment

The humanitarian crisis in Iraq continued unabated. Massive displacement became visible both internally and externally, following the bombing of the Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra in February 2006. By the end of the year, nearly two million Iraqis were displaced internally and some two million others had sought refuge in neighbouring States, the majority in Jordan and the

Syrian Arab Republic. Onwards flows continued from the immediate region to other countries further afield.

Tolerance towards Iraqis in the neighbouring States declined as their numbers increased and the prospect of return in the foreseeable future diminished. Furthermore, the humanitarian situation for displaced Iraqis inside Iraq and in neighbouring countries deteriorated dramatically, prompting UNHCR to shift its focus from reintegration and rehabilitation in Iraq to protection and assistance for the most vulnerable Iraqis outside the country.



Following the conflict which started on 12 July 2006 in Lebanon, UNHCR responded rapidly to an unexpected and fast evolving humanitarian crisis which displaced up to one million people. The cessation of hostilities on 14 August 2006 triggered the massive return of both internally displaced people and refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and beyond. This required a quick reorientation of the operation in order to assist returnees along the way and upon arrival home. UNHCR emerged as one of the main actors in the UN inter-agency relief effort. In Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, new partnerships were formed with government bodies and NGOs, and joint needs assessments provided the basis for humanitarian relief.

More than 25,000 new arrivals entered Yemen after crossing the Gulf of Aden from the Horn of Africa. As no additional support has been forthcoming to help the Government to increase absorption capacity, there are signs that the protection climate is becoming fragile.

Achievements and impact

UNHCR protected and assisted the most vulnerable among the increasing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and non-Iraqi refugees inside Iraq, as well as Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries.

During the Lebanon crisis, UNHCR provided emergency protection and assistance to some 150,000 IDPs, refugees and returnees in country, and to more than 20,000 Lebanese refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic. Assistance to 30,000 of the most vulnerable displaced people and returnees who were not able to access basic services on an equitable basis was strengthened during the early-recovery phase.

UNHCR continued to encourage the Syrian Government to accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as to the two conventions on statelessness. It also offered to assist the Government in drafting a national asylum law and in finding a solution for stateless people. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic continued to maintain an open-door policy towards Arabs seeking refuge in the country.

Kuwait ratified the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its two protocols, one on the trafficking of women and children and the other on the trafficking of immigrants.

UNHCR made efforts to consolidate and institutionalize its relations with leading NGOs in the Gulf region, both bilaterally and in the context of the Gulf NGOs Network established in Riyadh in 2001. As part of these efforts, UNHCR met with individual organizations and attended regional conferences organized by members of the network, such as the Organization of Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies in Abu Dhabi and the Eid Charitable Establishment in Doha, Qatar.

In Egypt, UNHCR reached out to the refugee communities in Cairo through a multi-functional team of community services, protection, resettlement and repatriation staff. This improved communication with the refugee communities who are dispersed throughout Cairo. During regular community meetings, participatory assessments were conducted, which enabled UNHCR to better identify refugees' needs, prioritize interventions and make adjustments to its programmes as necessary.

Constraints

The conflict and unresolved situation in the Horn of Africa has contributed to an increase of new arrivals in Yemen, resulting in gaps in protection and humanitarian assistance. The Lebanon crisis tested the Office's capacity and preparedness to respond adequately. Nonetheless, UNHCR had pre-positioned stocks in the

region, and its intervention in Lebanon was timely and successful.

Operations

UNHCR's operations in **Yemen, Iraq** and the **Lebanon** situation are described in separate country chapters.

The Gulf Cooperation Council Member States (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) are neither party to the 1951 Convention nor to the 1967 Protocol nor do they have any legislative or administrative provisions governing refugees. UNHCR focused on strengthening the Gulf countries' adherence to the principles of refugee law and broadening the institution of asylum as steps towards the goal of promulgation of domestic refugee laws and accession to the 1951 Convention. UNHCR's efforts in this respect have led to an increasing understanding of international protection principles and the Office's mandate among governments and NGOs. This has also helped UNHCR to gain access to an increasing number of asylum-seekers and to ensure better respect for refugees' basic rights.

The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council continued to demonstrate increased interest in partnership with UNHCR. The Office organized a workshop on asylum and security with Naif University in Riyadh in April 2006, which was attended by 68 participants from 12 Arab League member States.

In **Egypt**, UNHCR continued to receive and register asylum-seekers and determine their refugee status, 50 years after the Office established its presence in the country. As socio-economic opportunities are limited for refugees and many of them have special needs, many remained dependent on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs. UNHCR continued to provide assistance and training opportunities aimed at increasing refugees' self-reliance.

UNHCR has established a fully-fledged presence in **Israel**. The office in Jerusalem helped the Government to process asylum claims and develop legal and practical mechanisms for the protection and welfare of asylum-seekers and refugees. Some 200 Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from temporary protection, as did some 500 Ivorians and Congolese. Government authorities and NGOs continued to provide basic humanitarian assistance to the refugees in the country.

The situation in **Jordan** was also characterized by the increased flows of Iraqis into the country. As in the Syrian Arab Republic, the vast majority of Iraqis were living in the capital city. UNHCR observed an increase in sexual and gender-based violence, as well as violence



Denied entry into the Syrian Arab Republic, Palestinian refugees fleeing death threats in Baghdad have been stranded in no-man's-land since May 2006.

against children. Iraqis are affected by their precarious legal situation, lack of income, exploitation and discrimination, loss of family and friends, and traumatic experiences in Iraq.

One of UNHCR's objectives for 2006 was to close Ruwayshed refugee camp at the Iraqi border, which hosted some 480 Palestinian and Iranian refugees. Although the Office resettled more than 350 of them, over one hundred remained in the camp, where living conditions were deplorable and they had no freedom of movement.

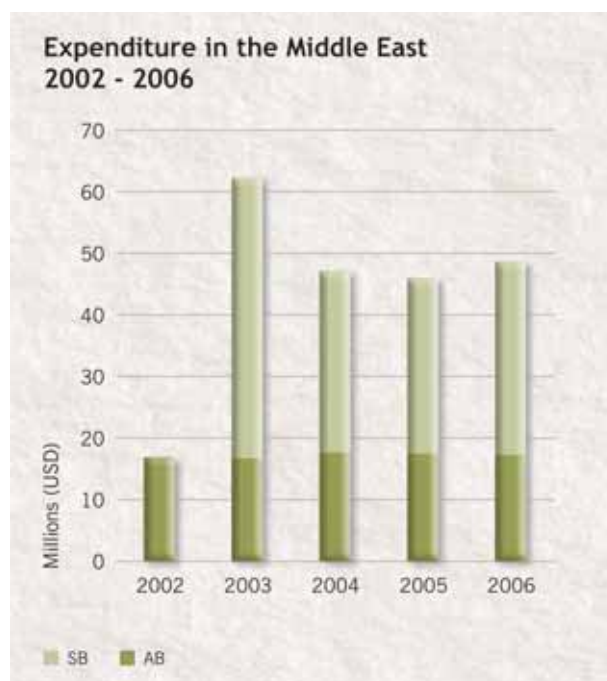
Both the Lebanon crisis and the Iraq situation affected the **Syrian Arab Republic**. Although, the Country maintained an open border policy for Iraqis, their large number – more than one million – severely strained local capacities, especially in the health and education sectors. Based on the UNHCR/WFP/UNICEF joint needs assessment of Iraqis in March 2006, UNHCR developed both institutional and targeted individual support programmes. UNHCR's community services and protection staff managed to reach several refugees who had to resort to prostitution or child labour for survival and assisted them with the help of implementing partners. The vast majority of Iraqis were concentrated in the Damascus area, and their number continued to rise through the year. In addition, the Syrian Arab Republic accepted some 300 Palestinian refugees who were transferred to El Hol refugee camp.

Financial information

In 2006, in spite of the overall budget capping which reduced UNHCR's budget by 20 per cent, the Office's

operations in the Middle East were generally well funded, especially the Lebanon emergency and Iraq supplementary programmes. However, due to funding shortfalls, UNHCR had to scale down its assistance and reduce its staff in some countries, such as Egypt and Yemen.

Over the last five years, expenditures under UNHCR's annual programme have remained stable. In 2003, UNHCR started a supplementary programme to address displacement in and from Iraq. Expenditures under this supplementary programme were highest in 2003 due to major procurements and stockpiling of non-food items required at the start of the operation.



Budget and expenditure (USD)

Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	AB	SB ¹	Total	AB	SB	Total
Egypt	5,910,384	1,160,081	7,070,465	4,383,062	116,903	4,499,965
Iraq	2,562,465	18,952,834	21,515,299	1,260,055	15,732,733	16,992,788
Israel	232,138	0	232,138	219,801	0	219,801
Jordan	2,278,593	3,084,070	5,362,663	1,627,292	1,729,313	3,356,605
Lebanon	3,066,729	8,663,765	11,730,494	1,588,264	4,382,149	5,970,413
Saudi Arabia	3,341,680	0	3,341,680	1,940,632	0	1,940,632
Syrian Arab Republic	2,441,632	1,502,202	3,943,834	1,703,102	1,058,990	2,762,092
United Arab Emirates	323,049	0	323,049	149,240	0	149,240
Yemen	4,689,993	0	4,689,993	4,393,755	0	4,393,755
Regional activities ²	0	9,794,891	9,794,891	0	8,462,616	8,462,616
Total	24,846,662	43,157,843	68,004,505	17,265,203	31,482,704	48,747,907

¹ Does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

² Includes reintegration and repatriation or Iraqi refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR and emergency assistance to internally displaced people in the Middle East.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)

Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
Middle East			
	Australia for UNHCR	0	79,629
	Canada	0	884,956
	Denmark	0	841,751
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe E.V.</i>	0	191,327
	Estonia	0	40,760
	European Commission	0	1,916,536
	Finland	0	1,389,562
	France	0	1,275,510
	Germany	0	318,878
	Japan	0	500,000
	Japan Association for UNHCR	0	134,199
	Luxembourg	0	318,878
	Norway	0	1,121,490
	Online donations (Headquarters)	0	15,790
	Private donors in Austria	0	3,467
	Private donors in Brazil	0	1,945
	Private donors in Canada	0	102,753
	Private donors in Greece	0	157,910
	Private donors in Italy	0	66,617
	Shinnyo-en Foundation (Japan)	0	50,000
	Spain	0	1,020,284
	Sweden	2,512,563	1,103,448
	United States	3,587,575	4,200,000
	USA for UNHCR	0	16,547
Sub-total		6,100,138	15,752,236
Egypt			
	Denmark	34,247	0
	European Commission	545,174	0
	Netherlands	99,175	0
	United States	1,370,000	0
Sub-total		2,048,596	0

Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
Iraq			
	Australia for UNHCR	0	299,958
	Ireland	0	658,762
	Japan	0	500000
	Japan Association for UNHCR	0	16,164
	Norway	0	1,597,444
	Switzerland	0	165,289
	UNDG Iraq Trust Fund	0	1,972,000
	United Kingdom	0	265,905
Sub-total		0	5,475,521
Jordan			
	Germany	329,381	0
	Sweden	565,955	0
	United States	36,158	0
Sub-total		931,493	0
Lebanon			
	Al Walid Ben Talal Foundation (Saudi Arabia)	0	100,000
	Australia for UNHCR	3,756	0
	<i>España con ACNUR</i>	31,896	0
	Germany	0	159,439
	Ireland	0	251,256
	Japan Association for UNHCR	46,963	0
	Lebanon	68,000	0
	Norway	194,558	0
	Private donors in Greece	2,086	0
	Private donors in Italy	36,256	0
	Private donors in New Zealand	688	0
	Saudi Arabia	0	1,000,000
	United States	308,563	0
	USA for UNHCR	3,460	0
	World Assembly of Muslim Youth (Saudi Arabia)	0	5,000
Sub-total		696,226	1,515,695
Syrian Arab Republic			
	Germany	329,381	159,439
	Norway	17,306	0
	Sweden	565,955	0
	Switzerland	0	78,740
	United States	25,525	0
Sub-total		938,166	238,179
Yemen			
	European Commission	232,641	0
	Japan	200,000	0
	Norway	17,306	0
	Red Crescent Society (United Arab Emirates)	4,995	0
	United States	18,872	0
Sub-total		473,813	0
Total		11,188,433	22,981,631