

Djibouti—Update on the Somali Situation

October 2017

Operational Context

Refugees began fleeing Somalia in the 1980s after tribal tensions flared up in the South and Central regions. Then massive influxes began in the early 1990s at the onset of the civil war. Moreover, in the subsequent years after the conflict, a series of droughts and famine menaced the country, which prompted more people to seek better living conditions elsewhere. Since the war, over 975,000 refugees have fled and displaced over 1 million. Neighboring country, Djibouti has been welcoming them and providing a safe haven from the turbulence back home. The Government of Djibouti possesses a strong political will to take in refugees and provide a good environment for them to thrive. It is a collaborative partner to the UNHCR and actively supports our protection mandate.

As of August 2017, there are approximately 27,771 registered refugees in Djibouti, of which 13,333 are Somali. They live mainly at the Ali Addeh and Holl-Holl camps in the southern part of the country. Some refugees have lived in Djibouti since the Ali Addeh camp was established in 1992. They have been recognized as refugees on a prima facie basis since 1992.

UNHCR Djibouti pledges to work together with its partners to effectively respond to the protracted situation in ensuring the safety and protection of Somali and other refugees, providing for their needs, and fostering livelihoods activities as a means of establishing long-lasting and durable solutions.

Response

Over the years, UNHCR has been safeguarding the well-being of the Somali refugee population in Djibouti. The agency's multi-sectoral approach to protecting and advocating for their basic rights and providing for their needs has given this population of concern shelter, food, potable water, NFIs, as well as access to healthcare and education. Protection is also provided through programs like hygiene and waste management campaigns as well as SGBV prevention and counseling.

UNHCR counts on solid partnerships to help in improving the quality of life for the Somali refugee population. Recently, IGAD, for example, through the Nairobi Declaration, has taken special interest in advocating for refugee assistance and stability in the home countries of not only Somalia but the greater East and Horn of Africa region.

When conditions are safe and stable, UNHCR facilitates resettlement and voluntary repatriation. Since this year alone, 528 Somali refugees have been repatriated in safety and dignity.

The Way Forward

Some refugees have been in the camps for decades. UNHCR, with the cooperation of the local government, recently made progress in achieving the issuance of birth certificates for refugee children born since 2013. While, UNHCR remains committed to providing for their needs, it also aims to wean them off assistance and be their own agents of change in establishing self-sufficiency. One of UNHCR's chief priorities under the refugee response is

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achieving socio-economic inclusion and integration through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

Recognizing local integration as a pathway for durable solutions, UNHCR advocates for livelihoods and skill development. A livelihoods consultant is currently developing a strategy to not only build the competencies of the refugees, but also help them integrate into society and contribute to their host communities through those acquired skills.

As conflict occasionally flares up in Somalia, UNHCR Djibouti continues to monitor those situations and muster up resources and expertise to effectively respond to the steady influx of refugees into the country. UNHCR stands prepared to mobilize resources and coordinate assistance to address emergencies in addition to day-to-day operations.