



**Inter-Agency
Coordination**
Lebanon



FEBRUARY UPDATE

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- **Resettlement: a much-needed lifeline for Syrian refugees in Lebanon**
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Photo: ©UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

Syrian refugee Abdel Moein and his wife Fatima prepare to leave their house in Lebanon on the day are resettled to the United States.

FUNDING

Agencies and the Government of Lebanon have requested USD 2.48 billion in the 2016 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). As of December 2016, over USD 1.12 billion has been allocated in support of the LCRP, almost 50 per cent of the plan's requirements

REGISTERED SYRIAN REFUGEES

A total of 1,011,366 individuals are currently registered with UNHCR in Lebanon

FEBRUARY DEVELOPMENTS

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi on second official visit to Lebanon

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi was on an official visit to Lebanon on 3 and 4 February 2017 to take stock of the situation of Syrian refugees and host communities, and to meet with Lebanese officials. The High Commissioner's visit to Lebanon followed a visit to Damascus, Homs and Aleppo in Syria, where he witnessed first-hand the level of destruction and called for accelerated and immediate humanitarian assistance for the millions of people trying to rebuild war-shattered lives.

In Lebanon, the High Commissioner met with a range of government officials: the President of the Republic, H.E. Michel Aoun, the Speaker of the Parliament, H.E. Nabih Berri, the Prime Minister, H.E. Saad Hariri (in the presence of Minister of State for Displaced Affairs H.E. Mouin Merhebi), the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, H.E. Nouhad Machnouk, the Minister of Education and Higher Education, H.E. Marwan Hamadeh, and Major General Abbas Ibrahim of the General Security Office.

During these meetings, the High Commissioner praised the Lebanese hospitality and the protection Lebanon has offered to Syrian refugees. Discussions touched on the situation inside Syria, the need for more support for both Lebanese and refugees in Lebanon, and the issue of residency renewal for Syrian refugees.

The High Commissioner also conducted a field visit to Syrian refugees in the Bekaa, together with the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for International Development, Ms. Priti Patel. During their joint visit, where the delegation met with refugee families who spoke about their worries and concerns, the High Commissioner and the UK Secretary called for urgent international support to Lebanon and Syrian refugees.

"The humanitarian situation for Syrian refugees in Lebanon remains very serious," said Mr. Grandi while at an informal settlement in Zahle, central Bekaa. "They are stretched to breaking point, and so are the Lebanese communities that have unconditionally welcomed and hosted them," he added. "The international community needs to redouble its support to Lebanon during this critical time and share responsibility for refugees and host communities."

The delegation also discussed the needs of the Lebanese education system with the Minister of Education during a visit to a public school in Taalabaya where 600 Syrian refugee students are enrolled in the morning and afternoon shifts.

The General Security Office announced that Syrian refugees in Lebanon will be granted a residency permit free of charge

UNHCR ExCom Chairperson Rosemary McCarney visits Lebanon

Ambassador Rosemary McCarney, Chairperson of UNHCR’s Executive Committee (ExCom) and Canadian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, visited Lebanon for the first time in February 2016 in order to see first-hand the situation of Syrian refugees and affected Lebanese communities in Lebanon.

During her field visits, Ambassador McCarney was accompanied by Canadian Ambassador in Lebanon, H.E. Michelle Cameron, and Lebanese Minister of State for Displaced Affairs, H.E. Mouin Merhebi.

Residency renewals for Syrian refugees in Lebanon: a step forward

The General Security Office (GSO) announced on its website the introduction of changes to the residency renewal process for Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Lebanon.

The announcement explained that Syrian refugees in Lebanon who were registered with UNHCR before 1 January 2015, or those who have previously been granted a temporary residency during the years of 2015 or 2016 based on the UNHCR certificate, can now renew their residence permits free of charge, for a period of six months, renewable. This excludes, among others, Syrians who obtained residency through pledge of responsibility by a Lebanese sponsor, while their spouses and minor children are entitled to the fee waiver.

The announcement was welcomed by Syrian refugees, humanitarian agencies, and the international community at large. Before this announcement by the GSO, every refugee above the age of 14 had to pay USD 200 in order to renew residency – a prohibitive requirement at a time when more than 70 per cent of refugees live below the poverty line and with onerous debts.

According to surveys conducted by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, over 50 per cent of Syrian refugees did not have valid residency permits in 2016. The lack of valid residency has led many refugee families to adopt negative coping strategies such as sending their young children to work, has limited their freedom of movement and access to justice, has made them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and has hindered their ability to register marriages and births.

UNHCR and partner agencies have long advocated for the waiving of residency renewals fees and continue to work closely with the Government of Lebanon on this issue as it remains one of the biggest challenges faced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

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RESETTLEMENT: A MUCH-NEEDED LIFELINE FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

Resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from an asylum country to a third country which has agreed to admit them

UNHCR refers only the most vulnerable refugees to countries for possible resettlement

Apart from UNHCR screening, resettlement countries have their own screening procedures

Many refugees around the world cannot go back home because of continued conflict, war, violence and persecution. Many also live in perilous situations or have specific needs that cannot be addressed in the country where they have sought protection. In such circumstances, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, helps resettle refugees to a third country.

Resettlement programmes are also important ways governments and communities around the world can help share responsibility for the global displacement crisis, especially since the vast majority of refugees are hosted by countries neighbouring conflicts.

What is resettlement?

Resettlement is the careful selection by governments of vulnerable refugees who can neither return to their home country nor continue to live in neighboring countries. It involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a country in which they have sought protection - like Lebanon - to a third country which has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement.

The status provided by the resettlement country ensures protection against refoulement - the forcible return of refugees or asylum seekers to a country where their lives and freedom can be at risk - and gives resettled refugees and their families or dependents access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals.

How do refugees get resettled?

The selection process

UNHCR refers only the most vulnerable refugees to countries for possible resettlement. Refugees cannot themselves apply for resettlement, and they do not choose their country of resettlement. Resettlement countries have their own screening procedures in place and take the final decision on whether or not to accept UNHCR's referral.

UNHCR identifies refugees who have resettlement needs through its own records and verification exercises and/or assessments of vulnerabilities during home visits by UNHCR and partners.

Only recognized refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental rights are at risk in the host country are considered for resettlement. Refugees are referred for resettlement based on protection vulnerabilities and needs. These include:

- Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs
- Survivors of Torture and/or Violence
- Medical Needs
- Women and Girls at Risk

- Family Reunification
- Children and Adolescents at Risk
- Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions.

Less than 1 per cent of refugees worldwide are ever resettled

UNHCR estimates that 10 per cent of Syrian refugees need to be resettled

Over 24,300 refugees were submitted for resettlement from Lebanon in 2016

Some 40,000 refugees were submitted for resettlement from Lebanon between 2011 and 2015

The above-mentioned criteria are enlisted in the Resettlement Handbook, which can be accessed [here](#). Resettlement is not based on the religion or level of education of the individual.

The screening process

Once a refugee is identified as a potential candidate for resettlement, they go through a screening process to ensure that they are willing to relocate to a third country, to confirm their vulnerability, and to ensure they meet the admissibility criteria of the receiving country. After these steps are completed, UNHCR submits the case to a resettlement country for consideration.

Apart from UNHCR screening, resettlement countries have their own screening procedures. After thorough review, the countries will decide if they accept the refugee or not. The process can take up to two years.

For illustration, this [factsheet](#) demonstrates refugee resettlement facts and the U.S. vetting process.

Resettlement in numbers

About 140,000 total resettlement spaces were made available by governments in 2016 for refugees around the world. That represented less than one per cent of the 16 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate worldwide, while the Agency estimates that at least eight per cent of the global refugee population is in need of resettlement. UNHCR estimates, however, that at least 10 per cent of Syrian refugees need to be resettled due to the scale of the Syrian crisis.

More than 30 countries around the world currently accept refugees for resettlement. The most updated list of resettlement spaces per country can be found [here](#).

Over 24,300 refugees were submitted for resettlement from Lebanon in 2016.

Between 2011 and 2015, some 40,000 refugees were submitted for resettlement from Lebanon while some 20,550 departures have taken place during that period.

ABDEL MOEIN'S STORY



Abdel Moein Al Abed, his wife Fatima, eight-year-old twins Mohamad and Jomaa, and daughter, Shahd, five, prepare to leave Kahlouneye, Lebanon, for resettlement to Tampa, Florida. © UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

The Al Abeds were among hundreds of Syrian refugees whose lives were put on hold after an executive order temporarily suspended U.S. resettlement.

“We were so happy, all of us. I was mostly happy for my children,” said Abdel Moein, recalling the moment last year he got the call from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, telling him his family was being considered for resettlement to the United States. “I want them to have good education, a good future.”

Now preparing to start over in Tampa, Florida, the family were among hundreds of Syrian refugees whose lives were put on hold last month, when their entry to the United States was temporarily suspended. Having waited for years to have a chance to rebuild their lives, the news was devastating.

But a week later, the family’s hope was restored. “They called me again on the 5th of February and told me that I can now travel. ‘The ban was revoked and you can now travel’, they said.

Abdel Moein and his wife Fatima anticipate some initial challenges settling in, but say they are determined to integrate as quickly as possible into their new lives. “Everything will be different there. It will be hard at first, and we all need to learn the language. But we will work hard, and we will adapt,” said Abdel Moein.

“I want to present something positive. I want people to think of me as a Muslim who has something positive to give. This will help change the perception they have about us.”

The family is now in the United States.

Read the full story and watch the video [here](#).

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DONORS

Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America.

Contributions have also been received from the Emergency Response Fund (ERF), UN Action against Violence in Conflict and from private donors.

This report is compiled by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) based on information provided by agencies working on the Syrian refugee response in Lebanon.

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