



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



CYPRUS

Protecting Refugees





Cyprus

Contents

Our mission -----	3
Who is a refugee? -----	3
Why do refugees need protection? -----	4
Who protects refugees? -----	4
UNHCR and the 1951 Convention -----	5
Where we work -----	6
UNHCR in Cyprus -----	7
Early years -----	7
Present focus -----	8
10 Priorities -----	10
Asylum trends -----	25
Frequently asked questions -----	28

OUR MISSION

UNHCR - The UN
Refugee Agency

Protection lies at the heart of the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Protection, simply defined, is a responsibility entailing restoration of the most basic of rights to the people affected: not least the right to life, to not suffer torture or discrimination, to ensure respect for one's human dignity and to the preservation of one's family. Protection is also about the creation of an enabling environment so that these and other rights have a reasonable chance of being enjoyed, pending a lasting solution to the problems at issue.

UNHCR was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1950 to help millions of refugees in the aftermath of World War II. Since then, as refugee problems spread across the globe, UNHCR has assisted in solving refugee problems on every continent, earning two Nobel Peace Prizes in the process – in 1954 and 1981. Today, UNHCR's most important function is international protection – making sure that refugees are not sent back to the country they fled, and that their basic rights are respected.

WHO IS A REFUGEE?

According to Article 1A of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is someone who:

“is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.”

WHY DO REFUGEES NEED PROTECTION?



Governments normally guarantee the basic human rights and physical security of their citizens. When governments are unwilling or unable to do so, individuals may suffer such serious violations of their human rights that they have to leave their homes, their communities and their families,

to find safety in another country. Since, by definition, refugees are not protected by their governments, the international community steps in to ensure the individual's rights and physical safety.

WHO PROTECTS REFUGEES?

Protecting refugees is the primary responsibility of States. Countries that have signed the 1951 Convention are obliged to protect refugees on their territory and treat them according to internationally recognized standards. UNHCR's main role in pursuing international protection is to ensure that States are aware of, and act on, their obligations to protect refugees and persons seeking asylum. However, UNHCR is not a supranational organization and cannot be considered as a substitute for government responsibility. UNHCR's role thus complements that of States and it contributes to protecting refugees by:

- Promoting accession to, and effective implementation of, refugee conventions and laws;
- Ensuring that refugees are treated in accordance with internationally recognized standards of law;
- Ensuring that refugees are granted asylum and are not forcibly returned to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened;
- Promoting appropriate procedures to determine whether or not a person is a refugee according to the 1951 Convention definition and/or other definitions found in regional instruments;
- Seeking durable solutions to the plight of refugees.

UNHCR AND THE 1951 CONVENTION

UNHCR serves as the guardian of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Signatory States are expected to cooperate with UNHCR in ensuring that the rights of refugees as defined in the Convention are respected and protected. These include:

- The right not to be returned to persecution or the threat of persecution (the principle of non-refoulement);
- The right not to be discriminated against in the grant of protection;
- The right not to be penalized for unlawful entry into or presence in the country where asylum is sought, given that persons escaping persecution cannot be expected to always leave their country and enter another country in a regular manner;
- The right not to be expelled, except in specified, exceptional circumstances to protect national security or public order;
- The right to minimum, acceptable conditions of stay, which would include: freedom of movement, the right to education and to gainful employment or self-employment, access to public relief and assistance including health facilities, the possibility of acquiring and disposing of property and the right to obtain travel and identity documents.
- Contracting States to the Convention are also expected to facilitate naturalization of refugees by reducing legal and administrative barriers to citizenship and to actively support family reunification for refugees.

CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES

PREAMBLE

THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES,

CONSIDERING that the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved on 10 December 1948 by the General Assembly have affirmed the principle that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination,

CONSIDERING that the United Nations has, on various occasions, manifested its profound concern for refugees and endeavoured to assure refugees the widest possible exercise of these fundamental rights and freedoms,

CONSIDERING that it is desirable to revise and consolidate previous international agreements relating to the status of refugees and to extend the scope of and protection accorded by such instruments by means of a new agreement,

CONSIDERING that the grant of asylum may place unduly heavy burdens on certain countries, and that a satisfactory solution of a problem of which the United Nations has recognized the international scope and nature cannot therefore be achieved without international co-operation,

EXPRESSING the wish that all States, recognizing the social and humanitarian nature of the problem of refugees, will do everything within their power to prevent this problem from becoming a cause of tension between States,

NOTING that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is charged with the task of supervising international conventions providing for the protection of refugees, and recognizing that the effective co-ordination of measures taken to deal with this problem will depend upon the co-operation of States with the High Commissioner,

HAVE AGREED as follows:

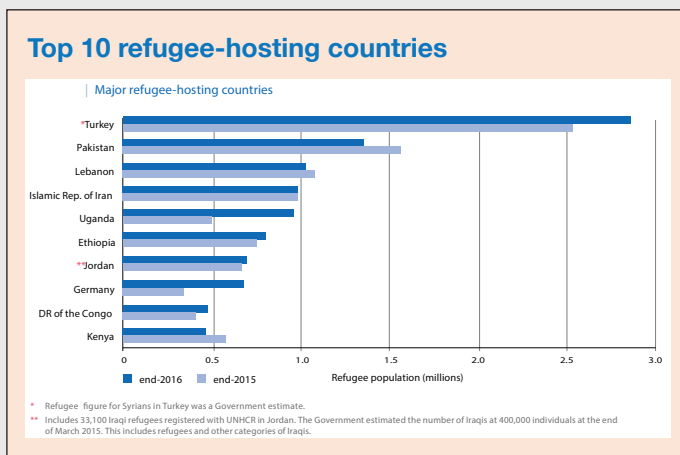
WHERE WE WORK?

At present, an unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from home, the highest level of displacement on record. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. In a world where nearly 20 people are forcibly displaced every minute as a result of conflict or persecution, our work at UNHCR is more important than ever before.

There are also 10 million stateless people who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement.

UNHCR employs nearly 11,000 staff members in 130 countries around the world, from major capitals to remote and often dangerous locations, in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. Just over seven per cent of staff are based at UNHCR's Geneva headquarters. A massive 87 per cent of staff are based in the field, assisting the most vulnerable victims of displacement.

Wherever refugees arrive, UNHCR works closely with governments to ensure the 1951 Refugee Convention is honoured.



UNHCR IN CYPRUS

EARLY YEARS



UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadruddin Aga Khan, visits Kythrea during his mission in Cyprus. ©UNHCR/Y.Nagata/September 1974

On 20 August 1974, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, announced the appointment of the UN High Commissioner at the time, Sadruddin Aga Khan, as coordinator of the humanitarian assistance for Cyprus. Within a couple of days following the appointment, the High Commissioner and two UNHCR staff members arrived on the island to make a first-hand assessment of the most urgent relief

requirements. An initial appeal was made by the High Commissioner in September for \$22million to cover emergency accommodation needs, food and for domestic and community equipment. By December 1974 the \$22million target was exceeded with the total value of contributions reaching \$23.4million. Only in the first three years of its emergency operation in Cyprus, UNHCR disbursed over \$83million in humanitarian aid for the displaced populations in both communities. Funds for the assistance programmes were mainly provided by the US government and the European Economic Community also offered food in kind.

What the international community expected would be a short-term involvement for UNHCR lasted for over 23 years.

UNHCR's humanitarian assistance to displaced Cypriots gradually evolved from emergency assistance to strengthening of institutions and infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, which were overstretched by population movements (e.g. schools, hospitals), and eventually to bi-communal projects meant to serve as a bridge of communication and dialogue with a view to improving mutual trust and confidence among the two communities.

By 1998, the need for relief assistance for the internally displaced Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots had declined and UNHCR handed over the work to other UN agencies responsible for development projects.

In 1998, boats started to arrive on the island carrying asylum-seekers and migrants in larger numbers. There was also a significant increase in the number of asylum-seekers as a result of the war in the former Yugoslavia. In the absence of national asylum legislation and the requisite institutional arrangements and capacity, UNHCR had to assume the responsibilities for registering asylum-seekers arriving on the island and processing their applications. Gradually, the Government also started developing its legislative framework and the procedures and capacities for a refugee protection system in accordance with international standards. In the lead-up to EU accession, the Republic of Cyprus with the technical assistance of UNHCR adopted its first national refugee legislation and asylum procedures in 2000, and in 2002 took over from UNHCR the responsibility for asylum adjudication.

PRESENT FOCUS

At present, UNHCR's fundamental business in Cyprus is to assist the Government to further refine and improve its asylum legislation and the procedures and capacities for a refugee protection system fully in line with international standards. This would require that existing gaps and weaknesses in the national asylum legislation and practice are addressed; migration management policies incorporate protection safeguards; the refugee status determination procedures are further reformed to make them both fair and efficient, and programmes are put in place to help refugees find a durable solution by way of local integration. To achieve these objectives, UNHCR undertakes a number of activities:

- Monitoring and promoting respect for refugee rights and the standards of treatment of asylum-seekers, particularly as regards access to asylum procedures, reception conditions and detention.
- Influencing legislation affecting refugees and asylum-seekers by providing expert advice and comments on relevant draft laws to ensure compliance with international and EU standards.

- Providing technical assistance, legal advice and other forms of support to assist the authorities to further strengthen their refugee status determination procedures and ensure quality decision-making.
- Monitoring and advocacy to ensure that unaccompanied and separated children have effective access to the national child protection system with respect to accurate and timely identification; registration and documentation; guardianship and legal representation; adequate care and supervision; tracing and family reunification. Central to these actions is a best interest determination.
- Training of key stakeholders from the government and civil society on basic protection issues, including refugee rights, reception conditions for asylum-seekers, durable solutions and child protection.
- Promoting good practices in relation to policies and measures that support the effective integration of refugees into the social, economic and cultural fabric of Cypriot society, including advocacy for naturalization, long-term residence permits and family reunification.
- Promoting accession to the UN statelessness conventions.
- Strengthening and broadening public information, education, awareness-raising and sensitization activities through media work, school activities, special campaigns, seminars and constituency-building.
- Strengthening partnerships with NGOs and other civil society actors involved in refugee protection.



Better reception conditions for asylum-seekers

The reception of persons who may be refugees and their living conditions are of direct interest to UNHCR. A fair and effective reception policy should have, as its principal objective, humane, rights-respecting treatment that ensures that the life of an asylum-seeker is in all circumstances one of viability and dignity. Such a policy should be premised on an understanding that asylum-seekers are capable – if provided with the tools of language, skills development and employment opportunities – of assuming responsibility for their own affairs and contributing towards the financial cost of their reception. UNHCR also considers that the effectiveness of the government's reception policy should be judged not only in relation to the immediate material needs of the asylum-seekers, but also in terms of the real prospects it offers for the future – whether for the integration of those who will be recognized as refugees, or the return and re-integration of the unsuccessful ones.



The sole State-run reception centre, located in the remote village of Kofinou some 40–50km from Nicosia, was expanded in 2014 to have a 400-bed capacity (it could previously only accommodate up to 70 persons). The centre operates at present at

full capacity. The centre has limited transport facilities to town and there are very few on-site activities to make the daily lives of the residents as enjoyable and productive as possible. There are also limited social services and psychosocial counselling to address the needs of vulnerable persons and ensure their smooth transition from the centre to the community, including upon the granting of international protection. The centre is certainly not suitable for all asylum-seekers, especially persons with specific needs, such as mobility, medical, or psychological.

There is also a 350-person capacity tented shelter located in Kokkinothrimithia, on the outskirts of Nicosia. The tented facility, established in 2014 with EU funding to help deal with increased arrivals from Syria, was envisaged only for short-term emergency accommodation. It is certainly not suitable to house people for longer periods or during cold or hot weather conditions. In addition, the facility lacks gender- and age-appropriate activities.



Given the limited capacity of the Kofinou Reception Centre, the vast majority of asylum-seekers live in rented private accommodation. They are particularly vulnerable because they can only work after a six-month waiting period from the lodging of their application, and then only in certain sectors such as agriculture, livestock and fisheries, regardless of their academic qualifications or professional experience. This type of employment is typically at the lower end of the pay scale and often requires constant separation from dependants, as it is carried out in remote areas which do not provide on-site sleeping arrangements. If they cannot work or find work, they are provided State social assistance through vouchers and a small amount of cash to be used for utilities and other expenses. The total amount provided is less than 50 per cent of the amount payable to unemployed citizens, refugees and other third country nationals under the Minimum Guaranteed Income scheme from which asylum applicants are excluded.

Meeting specific needs

The following groups of asylum-seekers and refugees are generally considered to have specific needs: girls and boys at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children; persons with serious health conditions; persons with special legal or physical protection needs; single women; women-headed households; older persons; persons with disabilities, and persons with a diverse sexual orientation or gender identity. It is essential to identify systematically such individuals immediately upon their arrival, analyse the specific needs they have, and respond immediately and adequately to those needs. Measures to be taken include ensuring that services and infrastructure in Kofinou, for example, are physically accessible to those with limited mobility; establishing effective referral systems to ensure that persons with specific needs have access to relevant service providers; providing a fast-track processing of their accommodation needs, registration, refugee status determination and other responses; putting in place appropriate systems to prevent and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse; ensuring persons with specific needs have access to information about programmes that concern them. If groups or individuals with specific needs are not identified at an early stage, they may face heightened protection risks over time.

The protection and care of unaccompanied children

Ensuring and maintaining children's access to quality mainstream education, with additional State support for their swift integration into the school environment, remains at the top of UNHCR's priorities. To be fully achievable, this requires greater inter-departmental collaboration to ensure that:

- (i) children are promptly enrolled in schools shortly upon arrival;*
- (ii) their progress is regularly monitored, and (iii) that their domestic environment is up to acceptable standards.*

Cyprus has a generally functioning national child protection system. UNHCR's role is to ensure that unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking and refugee children have effective access to the national system with respect to accurate and timely identification, registration and documentation; guardianship and legal representation; education; adequate care and

supervision; tracing and family reunification. For these children, education is crucial. Participation in primary, secondary, tertiary, catch-up, accelerated and other types of formal and non-formal education programmes can foster social cohesion, address psychosocial needs, and offer a stable and safe environment for those who need it most. Education increases opportunities for self-reliance and provides a sense of purpose, normalcy and continuity in otherwise unsettled environments. Educated children and youth stand a greater chance of becoming adults who can participate effectively in civil society in all contexts.

The protection of refugee women

The protection of refugee women and girls is a core activity and an organizational priority for UNHCR. Becoming a refugee is always an ordeal, but for most women being a refugee is a double jeopardy. UNHCR seeks to closely work with the government to ensure that the specific needs of refugee women are met by building upon their own resilience and strength, and helping them to overcome barriers to education and employment, access opportunities and improve their lives, as well as those of their children and families by promoting their active participation and empowerment. The prevention of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and responding to the needs of survivors within the wider framework of gender equality mainstreaming and empowerment remains UNHCR's priority area of work. This requires systematic outreach activities to increase awareness and improve knowledge among refugees and asylum-seekers on the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence. Similar efforts are also required to strengthen response capacity at both national and local levels for protecting and enforcing the rights of refugee women and girls.

Quality asylum procedures

Access to fair and efficient asylum procedures is one of the key elements of the international legal regime for the protection of refugees. The principal objective of such procedures is to ensure the proper and timely identification of persons in need of international protection. This task requires qualified, trained and impartial decision-makers. The decision-makers should have sufficient expertise in refugee and asylum matters, adequate knowledge of the human rights situation in asylum-seekers' countries of origin, and skills in cross-cultural communication.

A refugee status determination procedure that is fair, that respects the rights of asylum-seekers, and enables the State to undertake an efficient, effective and expeditious examination of asylum claims will achieve two positive results. On the one hand, people in need of protection do not have to be subjected to lengthy periods of uncertainty and insecurity about their status. On the other hand, there would be fewer opportunities for the misuse of the asylum system by non-refugees who are able to take advantage of procedural delays.

The integration of refugees

Due to the forced nature of their flight and their experiences, refugees - compared with migrants - will often have specific needs that have to be met in order to support their integration into the host society. They will often be one of the most vulnerable groups in society, while also being the most resilient. It is therefore important that the special needs of refugees are recognised in national integration policies and practices, including those of specific groups such as women and children.



World Refugee Day Celebrations 2017, Larnaca, Cyprus

UNHCR considers that, though there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to integration, there are a number of broad goals of integration that apply across countries. These include efforts to enable refugees to reach and develop their full potential, to protect their human rights,

reduce their marginalization, and foster social cohesion and harmonious coexistence. Access to education, to employment, to decent housing, to family reunification and to public services on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way are the key ingredients of integration in any society. There is also evidence that participation in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, supports the integration of refugees. To be successful, integration has to be pursued not only across different policy areas but also within an inter-agency framework that brings together all concerned societal actors: the refugees, relevant State institutions, civil society organizations, business leaders, refugee community associations, faith-based organisations and the media. And the importance of mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services cannot be over-emphasized.

Family reunification

People who flee persecution often arrive in their asylum country without their spouse or children. Once recognized as refugees, they can apply to bring their immediate family members to join them. However, they frequently remain separated for prolonged periods or indefinitely, due to policies and practices that block or delay family reunification. Long delays increase risks to the family members remaining behind, who may be in conflict zones or refugee camps; families are often subject to the same risk of persecution that caused their spouse or parent to be granted protection in an asylum country. Long separations also bring a heavy psychological toll. Prolonged family separation has its most dramatic impacts on children.

A narrow definition of “family” that does not take into account the different cultural contexts is one of the major barriers to family reunification. While extended family structures have become less central to family life in western countries, in most non-western nations, a wider network of relationships are recognized as integral to what is considered to be family. UNHCR therefore has long advocated for respecting culturally diverse interpretations of family members, as long as they are in accordance with human rights standards.

Another impediment to the enjoyment of family life is the different treatment afforded to persons granted subsidiary protection, which is the case for nearly all Syrians who have sought asylum in Cyprus. The Cyprus Refugee Law denies them the right to bring and live in dignity with their family members. UNHCR believes that persons in like situations should be treated in a like manner. A child, woman or man accorded subsidiary protection is not any different from one with refugee status when it comes to their need to be with their family members.

Protection of the family is not only in the best interests of the individuals concerned, but it is also in the best interests of the State. Families facilitate economic adaptation and promote social adjustments in a new environment. Families have better prospects for achieving self-sufficiency by pooling their resources together. Families can also play a positive role in recovery from physical and emotional stress caused by flight. Conversely, family separation can have debilitating psychological impacts that can hamper integration.

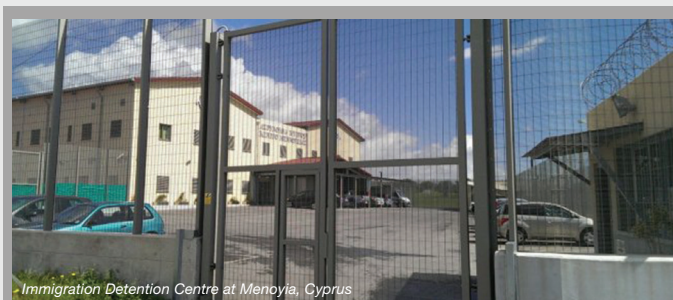
Naturalization

The 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees requires States to facilitate the naturalization of refugees and, in particular, make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings and to reduce as far as possible the charges and costs of such proceedings. Most European countries are clear about the criteria for naturalization and have indeed shown a good record in granting their citizenship to refugees who meet the criteria. In the last ten years, Cyprus has granted citizenship to 242 international protection beneficiaries.

UNHCR attaches great importance to the naturalization of refugees because the acquisition of citizenship is the most significant measure of integration into the economic, social and cultural fabric of the host society. It allows them to become full members of society and enjoy all the same rights as nationals, including the right to vote in national and EU elections. Some of the difficulties refugees face in their everyday life, ranging from restrictions on access to a number of social schemes, such as subsidised housing and scholarships, to obstacles with travel abroad for study or employment purposes, are attributable to the lack of citizenship. The lack of proper, internationally recognized travel documents is one of the main problems international protection beneficiaries in Cyprus encounter.

Alternatives to detention

Seeking asylum is not an unlawful act, and as such, international refugee and human rights law standards protect from penalization even those who have entered or remained in the territory of a State without authorization, including penalization in the form of detention or other restrictions on their movement.



International law requires that, in view of the serious short- and long-term psychological and physical harm it causes to individuals and families, the detention of asylum-seekers and refugees must be an exceptional measure of last resort after all other options have been shown to be inadequate in the individual case.

It follows that detention can only be applied where it pursues a legitimate purpose and has been determined to be both necessary and proportionate in each individual case. Alternatives to detention should therefore always be sought first, and there are many of them ranging from the least intrusive to the most enforcement-oriented. Indeed many States around the world have been able to manage their asylum systems and their immigration programmes without recourse to detention, for example, through the use of bonds and reporting requirements, or residence at open or semi-open reception centres.

The protection of stateless persons

The international community has long recognized that every individual anywhere in the world should hold a legal bond of nationality to a State. Yet, there are today over 10 million people in the world without a nationality of any State; Europe alone has over 600,000 stateless persons. Some people are

**UNHCR estimates that globally
A CHILD IS BORN STATELESS
EVERY 10 MINUTES**

born stateless; others become stateless over the course of their lives mainly because of discriminatory laws and policies based on

ethnicity or religion. In some countries women cannot pass their nationality on to their children. Statelessness often means that leading a life like others in society is just not possible, for example, working legally, attending school, owning property or opening a bank account. Stateless people are easy prey for labour or sexual exploitation.

UNHCR, as the UN agency entrusted by the United Nations General Assembly with the responsibility to support States to prevent and reduce statelessness and to protect stateless persons, has recently launched a 10-year campaign to eradicate statelessness by the year 2024 through the collaborative efforts of States, civil society and international organizations. A first step in these joint efforts is for States that are not parties to the 1954 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness to accede to these Conventions.

Cyprus is one of the four remaining EU countries that are yet to accede to the 1954 and 1961 UN Conventions on statelessness. UNHCR believes that Cyprus' accession would represent a major contribution to UNHCR's efforts to increase the global reach of these Conventions. It would also serve as encouragement to the few remaining EU Member States that have not yet acceded to follow suit. It is UNHCR's strong belief that Cyprus will only gain from joining multilateral efforts to prevent people from becoming stateless, to protect the human rights of those who are stateless and to promote lasting solutions for their predicaments.

Sixty-three years ago, the world agreed to protect stateless people. Now it is time to end statelessness itself.

The 10 Actions to end statelessness

- Action 1:** *Resolve existing major situations of statelessness.*
- Action 2:** *Ensure that no child is born stateless.*
- Action 3:** *Remove gender discrimination from nationality laws.*
- Action 4:** *Prevent denial, loss or deprivation of nationality on discriminatory grounds.*
- Action 5:** *Prevent statelessness in cases of State succession.*
- Action 6:** *Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization.*
- Action 7:** *Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness.*
- Action 8:** *Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it.*
- Action 9:** *Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions.*
- Action 10:** *Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations.*

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

The Government of Cyprus is UNHCR's key partner in its mission to ensure the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in accordance with international and European Union standards. Over the years, UNHCR has strengthened its partnership with various Government ministries, especially those of the interior, foreign affairs, justice, education and labour and social affairs. UNHCR has also established constructive working relations and mutual co-operation with the relevant Parliamentary committees, the Ombudsman and the Child Commissioner.

NGOs and civil society: UNHCR has forged useful links with a number of local NGOs and other members of civil society. At present, UNHCR has a special partnership agreement with two NGOs:

- **Cyprus Refugee Council**, which provides free legal and social advice to asylum-seekers and refugees in the Republic of Cyprus.
Address: 9 Stasandrou Street, Flat 401, 1060 Nicosia
Tel.: +357 22205959 Fax: +357 22205960
E-mail: info@cyrefugeecouncil.org
Website: www.cyrefugeecouncil.org
- **SOS Children's Village**, a Turkish Cypriot NGO helping UNHCR address the protection needs of asylum-seekers arriving in the northern part of the island.
Address: Dr. Fazıl Küçük Bulvarı, Lefkosa
Tel.: +90 392 225 33 47 Fax: +90 392 225 33 45
E-mail: info@soscocukkoyu.org
Website: www.soscocukkoyu.org

Other organizations involved in refugee support work include:

- **Agapi** is a voluntary organization in Limassol that supports people in need, including refugees and asylum-seekers in Cyprus. The group operates a Migrant Centre and a Charity Shop in Limassol and provide food and clothes to 200 families monthly. They also offer free language, sewing, computer, and arts and crafts lessons.
Facebook: St.Catherine's 'Agapi' Limassol Cyprus

- **Association of Recognized Refugees (Cyprus)** aims to promote the cause of refugees in Cyprus and provide a platform in which they can present their skills and raise public awareness on how they can contribute to Cypriot society.
Facebook: Association of Recognized Refugees in Cyprus
- **Caritas Cyprus Migrant Centres**
Caritas provides legal and social advice, counselling and assistance to migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees.
Address: 8 Saint Maron Street, Flat 4, Pafos Gate, 1010 Nicosia
Tel.: +357 22662606 Fax: +357 22662656
E-mail: administration@caritascyprus.org
Website: www.caritascyprus.org
- **Cyprus Red Cross Society** offers humanitarian assistance and support as well as medical, psychosocial and other services to vulnerable migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees.
Address: 3 Kypriakou Erythrou Stavrou Street, 2063 Strovolos, Nicosia
Tel.: +357 22 666955 Fax: +357 22 666956
E-mail: admin@redcross.org.cy
Website: www.redcross.org.cy
- **Cyprus Stop Trafficking** is a humanitarian organization that provides aid and assistance to victims of trafficking.
Hotline: +357 97 853767
Info. Line: +357 22 771063 or +357 22 750108
E-mail: cyprus.stop.trafficking@gmail.com
Website: www.cyprusstoptrafficking.webs.com
- **“Hope for Children” CRC Policy Centre** works for promoting and protecting the rights of children. The organization runs a reception centre for asylum-seeking unaccompanied children in Nicosia in collaboration with the State Social Welfare Services.
Address: 75 Limassol Avenue, 2nd Floor, Office 201, 2121 Nicosia
Tel.: +357 22 103234 Fax: +357 22 104021
E-mail: info@uncrcpc.org
Website: www.uncrcpc.org

- **KISA** provides free information, support, advocacy and mediation services to migrants and refugees, as well as victims of trafficking and racism. KISA also offers free of charge legal representation in very specific cases.
 Address: 48 Arsinoes Street, 1010 Nicosia
 Tel.: +357 22 87818 Fax: +357 22 773039
 E-mail: info@kisa.org.cy
 Website: www.kisa.org.cy
- **Kofinou We Care - Volunteers' Support** is dedicated to helping the community of the Kofinou Reception Center through various actions and initiatives with other willing groups and individuals, including the mothers and babies room and the better organization of the distribution center for donations.
 Facebook: Kofinou We Care - Volunteers' Support
- **mi-HUB Migrant Information Centers** help vulnerable migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees across Cyprus to feel protected, safe, informed and supported so that they are able to move forward with their lives. With offices in the four major towns, mi-HUB staff can offer advice on a wide range of issues.
 Tel.: +357 22 080350 Fax: +357 22 842222
 Website: www.mihub.eu
- **OASIS** is a voluntary community group in Larnaca that supports refugees and asylum-seekers in Cyprus. They offer Greek language and English language classes for free, as well as food baskets on Mondays. In addition they have a Social Café meeting every Wednesday morning.
 Tel.: +357 24 002266
 E-mail: administration@oasisprojectcy.com
 Website: www.oasisprojectcy.com

- **Saint Paul's Anglican Church** in Nicosia offers material and community support to individuals and families in need, including refugees and asylum-seekers.
Address: 2 Grigori Afxentiou Street, 1096 Nicosia
Tel.: +357 22 080350 Fax: +357 22 842222
E-mail: stpauls@spidernet.com.cy
Website: www.stpaulsnicosia.com

UNHCR has also developed partnerships with other stakeholders including sports and learning institutions:

- **Cyprus Olympic Committee** is a member of the International Olympic Committee. It frequently organizes events and activities to support refugees through sports.
Address: 21 Amfipoleos Street, 1687 Nicosia
Tel.: 22 449880 Fax: 22 449890
E-mail: cypnoc@cytanet.com.cy
Website: www.olympic.org.cy
- **Special Olympics Cyprus** is part of a global sports organisation for people with disabilities and committed to supporting and empowering refugees and asylum-seekers.
Address: 21 Amfipoleos Street, 1687 Nicosia
Tel.: 22449848/9 Fax: 22449850
E-mail: info@specialolympics.com.cy
Website: www.specialolympics.com.cy
- **University of Nicosia (UNIC):** UNHCR and the University of Nicosia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen cooperation and benefit refugees in Cyprus and elsewhere through collaborative efforts.
Address: 46 Makedonitissas Avenue, 2417 Nicosia
Tel.: +357 22 841 528
Website: www.unic.ac.cy
E-mail: admissions@unic.ac.cy

ASYLUM TRENDS

57,800

Asylum applications received in the government-controlled part of the country from 2002 to mid-2017. Of these, 2,351 obtained refugee status and 6,887 subsidiary protection; 44,376 applications were refused or otherwise closed; 3,812 are pending a decision.

112

Refugees currently residing in the northern part of Cyprus that is outside the effective control of the Government. They are mostly Syrians and Palestinians.

62

Refugees at the British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) who arrived in 1998 and have since been living there in a legal limbo.

The forgotten refugees

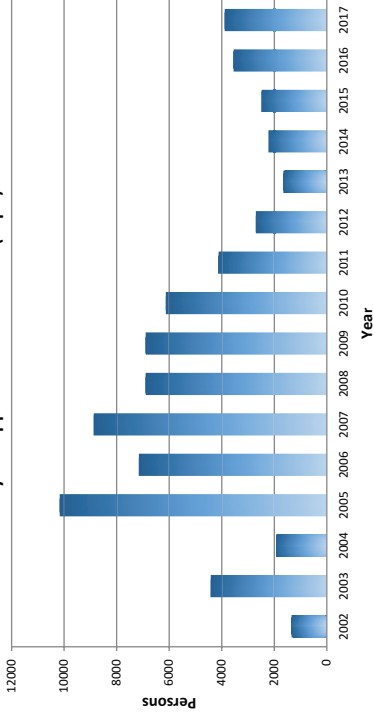
On 10 October 1998, a boat which had departed from Lebanon with a group of 75 persons on board (47 adults and 28 children) accidentally landed at Akrotiri, in the British Sovereign Base Areas on the south coast of Cyprus. Their arrival prompted discussions between the Republic of Cyprus and the UK regarding the interpretation of the 1960 Treaty. It also raised the question of the applicability of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to the SBAs.

Another 74 asylum-seekers arrived at the SBAs in late 2000 and at the beginning of 2001. This led to increased efforts between the UK and the Republic of Cyprus to hammer out a deal on responsibilities for asylum-seekers and migrants showing up at the SBAs. The negotiations led to a Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries, signed in February 2003 and came into force on 1 May 2004 upon the accession of Cyprus to the EU.

According to the MoU, the UK through the SBA would have responsibility for asylum-seekers who arrive directly on the Bases, but the Republic of Cyprus would have a delegated authority to determine their asylum applications on behalf of the SBA. The Republic also undertook to ensure the refugees and asylum-seekers access to the national welfare scheme, health care, education and work, with the UK indemnifying the government for the incurred cost. There is also a provision in the MoU committing the SBA to seek resettlement in other countries for the recognized refugees.

The 2003 MoU does not cover those who arrived at the SBA before its entry into force in 2004. As a direct result, the first group of refugees who arrived on the SBA in 1998, and their family members who joined them or were born in the meantime, have found themselves caught up in a legal limbo for nearly two decades. These refugees have been trapped in this forgotten situation for far too long, eking out a meagre existence and dependent on others to find solutions to their plight. They have, albeit unsuccessfully so far, repeatedly appealed to the UK authorities and tried several legal challenges before the SBA and UK courts to secure their admission to the UK as the only viable solution to their predicament. Their case is presently before the UK Supreme Court.

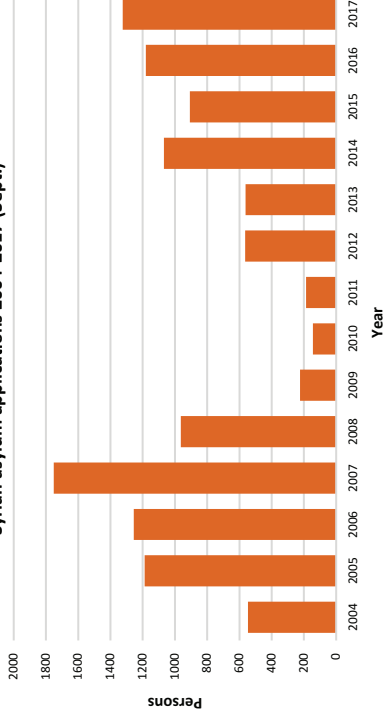
Asylum applications 2002-2017 (Sept.)



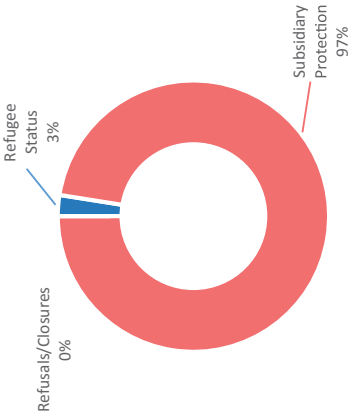
Asylum applications 2017
Top 10 nationalities

1. Syria
2. India
3. Viet Nam
4. Bangladesh
5. Egypt
6. Pakistan
7. Somalia
8. Sri Lanka
9. Cameroon
10. Philippines

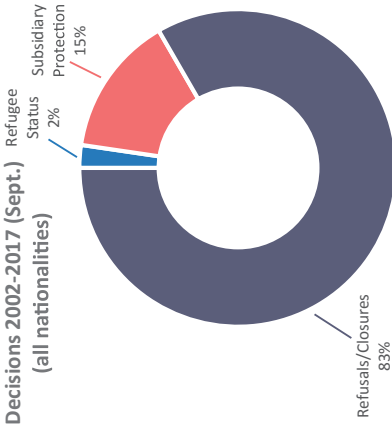
Syrian asylum applications 2004-2017 (Sept.)



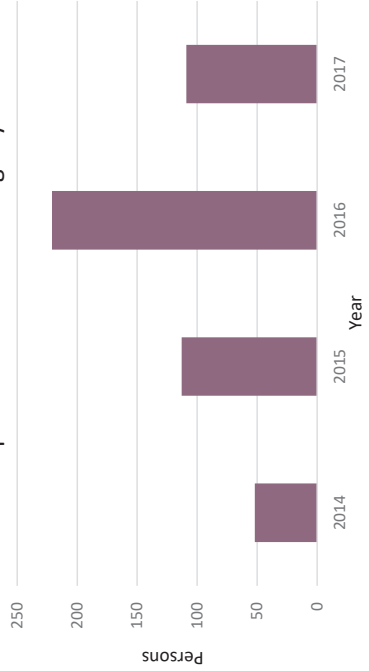
Decisions Syrians 2017 Sept.



Decisions 2002-2017 (Sept.) (all nationalities)



Unaccompanied children seeking asylum



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Who is an asylum-seeker?**

When people flee their home country to seek protection in another State, they often have to individually apply for asylum under the national asylum procedure. While their case is pending a final decision, they are known as asylum-seekers. Not every asylum-seeker may ultimately be recognized as a refugee (or given another form of protection), but every refugee is initially an asylum-seeker.

- **Who decides who is a refugee?**

Governments establish asylum procedures to decide whether or not an asylum-seeker qualifies for refugee status, or should otherwise be granted a complementary form of protection in accordance to their national asylum legislation and practice and in compliance with the norms and standards of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. UNHCR may offer advice as part of its mandate to promote refugee law, protect refugees and supervise the implementation of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The agency advocates that governments adopt a rapid, flexible and liberal process, recognizing how difficult it often is to document persecution. UNHCR's Executive Committee sets non-binding guidelines that may be useful in this respect and the agency's "Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status" is an authoritative interpretation of the 1951 Convention.

- **Are the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' interchangeable?**

No. Although it is becoming increasingly common to see the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' used interchangeably in media and public discussions, there is a crucial legal difference between the two. Confusing them can lead to problems for refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as misunderstandings in discussions of asylum and migration matters. Migrants are fundamentally different from refugees and, thus, are treated very differently under international law. A migrant normally leaves a country voluntarily in search of a better life. Should the migrant elect to return home, he/she would continue to receive the protection of his/her government.

Refugees, on the other hand, are forced to flee to save their lives or preserve their freedom and cannot return safely to their homes in the prevailing circumstances. They therefore need international protection.

- **Don't migrants also deserve protection?**

The reasons why migrants may leave their countries are often compelling, and finding ways to meet their needs and protect their human rights is important. Migrants are protected by international human rights law. This protection derives from their fundamental dignity as human beings. For some, failure to accord them human rights protection can have serious consequences. It may result in human rights violations, such as detention, forced labour, servitude, or highly exploitative working conditions. In addition, some migrants, such as victims of trafficking or unaccompanied or separated migrant children, may have particular needs for protection and assistance, and have the right to have those needs met. UNHCR fully supports approaches to migration management that respect the human rights of all people on the move.

- **Can a country refuse to admit to its territory a person seeking protection?**

A refugee seeking protection must not be prevented from entering a country. Nor can a refugee be forcibly returned to his/her home country or any other country where he/she could face persecution. The principle of non-refoulement – barring the return of a refugee to a territory where his or her life or freedom would be threatened – is binding not only on States that have acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, but even on those that are not signatories to these treaties.

- **What is the difference between a refugee and a stateless person?**

Stateless persons and refugees are both in need of international protection. They find themselves in a precarious situation because the link with the State has been broken. Both, therefore, enjoy a special yet separately defined status under international law.

A key element of the definition of a refugee is that he or she has a well-founded fear of persecution. Being stateless does not necessarily signify persecution. Additionally, to be a refugee, a stateless person must also be outside of his or her country of habitual residence. Yet most stateless persons have never left the country where they were born. However, statelessness is often a root cause of forced displacement. When stateless persons are also refugees, they are covered by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and international law.

- **Is a country obliged to protect criminals and terrorists who apply for asylum?**

No. The 1951 Refugee Convention protects only persons who meet the criteria for refugee status. Certain categories are deemed not to be deserving of this protection, including persons who have committed a crime against peace, a war crime, a crime against humanity or a serious non-political crime outside the country of refuge; or those guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

- **What rights does a refugee have?**

Refugees have rights, flowing generally from the fact of their humanity and, more directly and specifically, from their predicament. Human rights apply to all persons. And asylum-seekers and refugees are not different from anyone else when it comes to basic standards of treatment provided for by international human rights law. They are entitled to benefit from the basic protections in place in any society, regardless of the fact that they are not linked, by nationality or by habitual residence, to that society. Given the very specific predicament in which refugees find themselves, there is, in addition to the general human rights instruments, a specific rights framework for refugees embodied in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. These rights are also enshrined in EU law and policy.

- **What obligations does a refugee have?**

Refugees are required to abide by the laws and regulations of their country of asylum as well as measures for the maintenance of public order.

- **What is subsidiary protection?**

Subsidiary protection is a form of protection complementary to refugee status and that is granted to persons who, although not meeting the 1951 Convention criteria, nevertheless need international protection. This may include persons fleeing, for example, the indiscriminate effects of armed conflicts or generalised violence. UNHCR is of the view that measures to provide subsidiary protection should be implemented with the objective of strengthening, rather than undermining, the existing global refugee protection regime. UNHCR also advocates that the standard of treatment accorded to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection should provide for the protection of basic civil, political, social and economic rights on equal footing with those granted refugee status under the 1951 Convention.

- **Is there a widespread abuse of States' asylum systems?**

States have a legitimate interest in ensuring that their asylum systems are not misused. The challenge is to establish and maintain asylum procedures that strike a proper balance between the protection needs of refugees and the legitimate interest of States in preventing their asylum systems from being misused as a de facto immigration channel. Fair and efficient asylum procedures offer the most appropriate mechanism for addressing the issue of misuse of the asylum system. Tightening up the procedures or downgrading the requisite safeguards is not the proper response to misuse. Nor can the level of misuse of the asylum system be measured by the proportion of people denied refugee status at the end of the procedure.

- **What is the link between UNHCR and the 1951 Refugee Convention?**

UNHCR serves as the guardian of the 1951 Convention and its Protocol. States are expected to cooperate with UNHCR in ensuring that the rights of refugees, as defined in the Convention, are respected and protected.

- **Is the 1951 Refugee Convention still relevant today?**

Yes. The Convention was originally adopted to deal with the aftermath of World War II in Europe and growing East-West political tensions. In the intervening decades, refugee problems have become more widespread and countries of origin more diverse, encompassing virtually all corners of the globe. Other recent changes concern the multiplicity and increasing complexity of the causes of flight. There have also been significant changes in the patterns of refugee movements, with a disproportionate shift of the burden towards the developing nations and regions least able to receive and care for refugees. If these are the basic changes that have marked the global refugee situation in recent years, they do not in any way put into question the relevance and validity of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Indeed the Convention has proved remarkably resilient in helping to protect tens of millions of people in all types of situations. As long as persecution of individuals and groups persists, there will be a need for the Convention.

- **Is refugee status forever?**

The situation of being a refugee is not or should not be permanent. The refugee should either return voluntarily to his or her home country when conditions permit return in safety and dignity, or find a solution within a new community either in the country of first asylum or in a third country. Most exiled populations naturally desire to go back to their homeland as soon as they can. When, however, voluntary repatriation is not feasible, the protection objective will call for the local integration of refugees in their country of first asylum or, in other circumstances, resettlement in third countries. In these cases, the 1951 Refugee Convention calls upon Contracting States to facilitate the naturalisation of the refugees.

- **Can someone who used the services of a smuggler be a refugee?**

Using a smuggler to get to a country does not indicate whether a person is a refugee or not. It shows only desperation and a lack of viable options to reach safety. While smuggling in human beings in violation of a State's immigration laws for the purpose of financial or material benefit is a criminal offence, it is not a crime to risk one's life fleeing war, conflict or persecution in search of protection in another country. The 1951 Refugee Convention, in its Article 31, recognizes that there is a valid justification for a refugee's unauthorized entry or presence on an asylum country. In fact international law protects any smuggled person, whether a refugee or not, against criminal liability.

- **Is it not better to protect refugees in their region of origin?**

In principle, yes. People who are fleeing war and persecution should be able to find a safe refuge and enjoy acceptable living conditions in locations that are as close as possible to the borders of their own country. This would avert the need for refugees and asylum-seekers to make difficult, dangerous, and costly journeys to distant parts of the world. However, international law does not require a person who is in need of protection to apply for asylum in his/her own region of origin or, for that matter, in the first country he/she has reached. The primary responsibility for receiving and deciding on an asylum claim rests with the State where a person applies for asylum. However, effective arrangements for equitably sharing this responsibility is essential because, as expressly acknowledged in the Preamble to the 1951 Convention, "the grant of asylum may place unduly heavy burdens on countries, and that a satisfactory solution of a problem of which the United Nations has recognised the international scope and nature cannot therefore be achieved without international cooperation."

- **What is the Dublin Regulation?**

This is a European Union law which determines the country that is responsible for receiving and deciding on asylum applications based on agreed criteria.

The Dublin Regulation establishes a binding mechanism among the 28 Member States of the European Union and four associated countries (Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) for the identification of a single responsible State for adjudicating asylum claims and the (re)admission obligation incumbent upon that State. The apportionment of responsibility is based on a hierarchy of formal criteria, including the presence of immediate family members having refugee status, possession of a residence permit or a valid visa issued recently by a Member State, or lax control of external borders. The Dublin Regulation operates on the assumption that, as the asylum laws and practices of the EU States are based on the same common standards, they allow asylum-seekers to enjoy similar levels of protection across the EU. In reality, however, asylum legislation and practice still vary widely from country to country, causing asylum-seekers to receive different treatment. In the absence of complete harmonisation, therefore, the Dublin system will continue to be unfair both to asylum-seekers and to certain Member States on the external border regions of the EU.

- **What is temporary protection?**

States at times offer ‘temporary protection’ when they face a sudden mass influx of people and their regular asylum systems become overwhelmed, as happened during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. In such circumstances people can be speedily admitted to safe countries, but without any guarantee of permanent asylum. Thus ‘temporary protection’ can work to the advantage of both governments and asylum-seekers in specific circumstances. However, it only complements and does not substitute for the wider protection measures offered by the 1951 Refugee Convention.

- **Who is an internally displaced person (IDP)?**

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are persons forced to flee their homes because of man-made (e.g. war) or natural disasters but, unlike refugees, have not crossed an international border remaining instead inside their home countries. UNHCR’s original mandate does not specifically cover IDPs. However because of the agency’s expertise on displacement, it has for many years been protecting and assisting millions of the internally displaced. At the end of 2016, there were 40.03 million IDPs worldwide.

Now more than ever, we need to stand #WithRefugees



The world is witnessing unprecedented numbers of people forced to flee their homes.

To escape the violence, persecution and human rights abuses, they leave behind everything.

This is a time that refugees need us more than ever.

Do you want to help refugees but you don't know how? It's possible to do small, practical but meaningful things...

Volunteer your specific skill

www.helprefugeeswork.org

Hold awareness and fundraising events

Donate and support our work

Intern with UNHCR

Help refugees to integrate into a new culture
help.unhcr.org

Join
World Refugee Day Activities

For more ideas, visit our websites
www.unhcr.org www.unhcr.org/cy

Follow us on Facebook & Twitter
[@UNHCR](https://www.facebook.com/UNHCR); [@refugees](https://twitter.com/refugees); [@unhcrCyprus](https://twitter.com/unhcrCyprus)



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