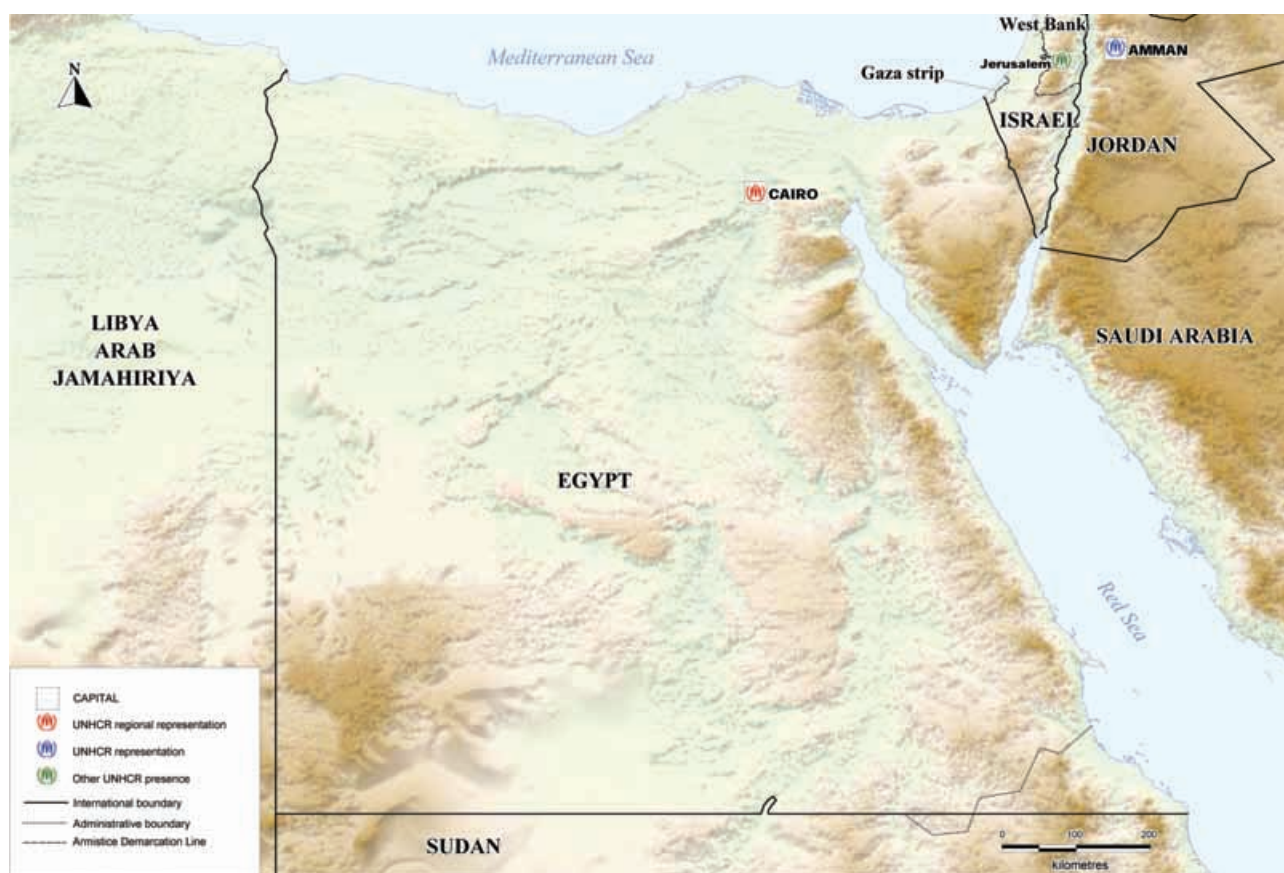


# EGYPT



## Operational highlights

- An increase in irregular movements to and through Egypt, with many migrants and asylum-seekers attempting to enter Israel illegally, raised concerns among the Egyptian authorities and affected the country's traditionally hospitable attitude towards refugees and asylum-seekers. Consequently, many refugees and asylum-seekers were subject to arrest and detention. UNHCR made considerable efforts to reach these people to examine their claims to asylum.
- UNHCR's outreach activities were geared towards enhancing community participation in protection and assistance programmes, supporting communication within refugee communities and with partners, and addressing the specific needs of refugee groups.
- In an effort to increase the Government's capacity to provide refugee protection, the Office conducted training activities that targeted some 440 government officials, including immigration officials, police and security officers, judges and prosecutors. Refugee law courses were conducted at three universities in Cairo.
- In 2008, UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of a total of 1,300 refugees, mainly from South Sudan and Iraq. Another 925 refugees were submitted for resettlement to third countries, while some 197 refugees departed for resettlement.

## Working environment

Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1969 OAU Convention governing specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa. However, the country has not yet adopted national refugee legislation or established domestic asylum procedures. Under a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Government of Egypt in 1954, UNHCR registers asylum-seekers, provides them with documentation and conducts refugee status determination (RSD).

The situation of refugees and asylum-seekers in Egypt is characterized by difficult socio-economic conditions, poverty and a sensitive security environment. The country's restrictions on refugees' access to employment, education and medical facilities, combined with a sharp increase in the cost of living, made life hard for refugees in 2008. The difficult social and economic environment has hurt the poorest among both the local population and persons of concern to UNHCR. In this regard, UNHCR's life-sustaining assistance programme was crucial in meeting the basic material, medical and educational needs of people of concern.

The traditionally generous attitude of the Government of Egypt toward asylum-seekers and refugees, including those entering the country illegally, was seriously affected by a surge in mixed migration movements. Attempts by significant numbers of migrants and asylum-seekers to enter

Israel illegally through the Sinai desert raised concerns on the part of both governments. The Israeli authorities returned several asylum-seekers without giving UNHCR a chance to assess their protection needs. Furthermore, the Office received reports of hundreds of persons of concern, mainly from Eritrea and Ethiopia, who were detained or forcibly returned from Egypt, again without UNHCR having an opportunity to assess their asylum claims.

With the exception of some 180 individuals in a prison in Aswan, UNHCR's efforts to obtain access to the detained Eritrean asylum-seekers in Egypt were unsuccessful in 2008. The Office also received reports about the forcible return of some 30 people to Southern Sudan.

## Achievements and impact

### Main objectives

In 2008, UNHCR's main objectives in Egypt related to cooperation with the Egyptian authorities to ensure protection and prevent *refoulement*. The Office provided documentation and conducted registration and RSD; provided life-sustaining assistance to the neediest refugees; and strengthened refugees' and asylum-seekers' access to public health care and educational services. It also enhanced refugees' self-reliance; intensified the search of durable solutions by facilitating voluntary repatriation and the strategic use of resettlement; and encouraged partners to take on more responsibilities for refugees.

### Protection and solutions

In 2008, UNHCR continued to register those who approached the Office and determined their protection needs. The registration served as a basis for issuance by the Government of residence permits valid for six months and renewable. Some 4,100 asylum-seekers were registered, the majority from Iraq. Some 7,700 refugee and asylum-seeker identification documents were issued or renewed in 2008.

UNHCR's mandate status determination was largely respected by the Government. With a few exceptions, people registered with UNHCR enjoyed protection from *refoulement*. The Office had discussions with the Egyptian authorities on the status of detention cases, particularly of those attempting to enter Israel illegally.

UNHCR conducted 16 workshops and five academic courses in Cairo, Alexandria and El-Arish on refugee law

and protection principles. Some 440 participants attended, including diplomats, judges, prosecutors, immigration officials, port security officials, police and state security officers. Another training-of-trainers programme was conducted for ten Egyptian officers.

A total of 1,100 Sudanese refugees, mainly from Southern Sudan, were assisted to return voluntarily to Sudan. UNHCR also gave cash grants to help some 200 Iraqi refugees who returned to their places of origin. Meanwhile, 925 refugees were submitted for resettlement in 2008, with 197 of them departing for third countries during the year.

### Activities and assistance

**Community services:** UNHCR continued to work with seven community-based organizations to address the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers in the country. Some 8,000 refugees (17 per cent of the total) with specific needs were given cash grants. A total of 27,000 refugees received counselling and psychosocial support.

**Domestic needs /household goods:** Some 5,000 packages of sanitary material were distributed to 2,500 refugee and asylum-seeker women and girls. Contingency stocks of non-food items and medical materials worth USD 30,000, including mattresses, blankets and chairs were purchased to prepare for a possible emergency in the Gaza strip.

**Education:** Some 6,700 refugees and asylum-seeker students (3,400 male and 3,300 female) received education grants for the 2008-2009 academic year. Of these, 600 attended public schools while 3,700 attended private institutions. Another 2,400 children attended refugee schools.

**Health:** A total of 35,000 medical consultations were provided, representing an increase of 11 per cent over 2007. UNHCR subsidized at least 75 per cent of the cost of treatment and medicine.

**Income generation:** A comprehensive livelihood survey was initiated jointly with the ILO to develop a refugee self-reliance strategy. UNHCR also facilitated the access of close to 900 refugees to vocational training institutions. Of some 70 refugees who received counseling on employment, 30 managed to find work.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Palestinian	70,000	170	-	-
	Sudan	10,100	10,100	38	33
	Iraq	10,100	10,100	49	39
	Somalia	5,600	5,600	51	30
	Eritrea	800	800	42	17
	Various	1,100	1,100	46	14
Asylum-seekers	Sudan	13,100	13,100	36	30
	Eritrea	800	800	70	9
	Ethiopia	300	300	80	6
	Côte d'Ivoire	140	140	21	12
	Various	330	330	43	27
Stateless	Various	60	60	78	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>112,430</b>	<b>42,600</b>		



A Sudanese boy in Kilo Arbo Wi Nus, an outlying district of Cairo, Egypt

UNHCR / T. HARTWELL

**Legal assistance:** Close cooperation was maintained with NGO partners to provide legal representation to refugees.

**Operational support (to agencies):** UNHCR provided financial and technical support to five NGO implementing partners, thus enhancing their capacity to provide quality services to needy refugees and asylum-seekers.

● **Constraints**

The absence of legal frameworks, including national refugee legislation, difficult socio-economic conditions, obstacles to accessing public services, limited options for self-reliance and a significant increase in the cost of living posed challenges for UNHCR. The shrinking asylum space, resulting from the increase in illegal mixed migration movements and the Government's growing security and political concerns with regard to illegal entries also imposed major constraints on the operation in 2008.

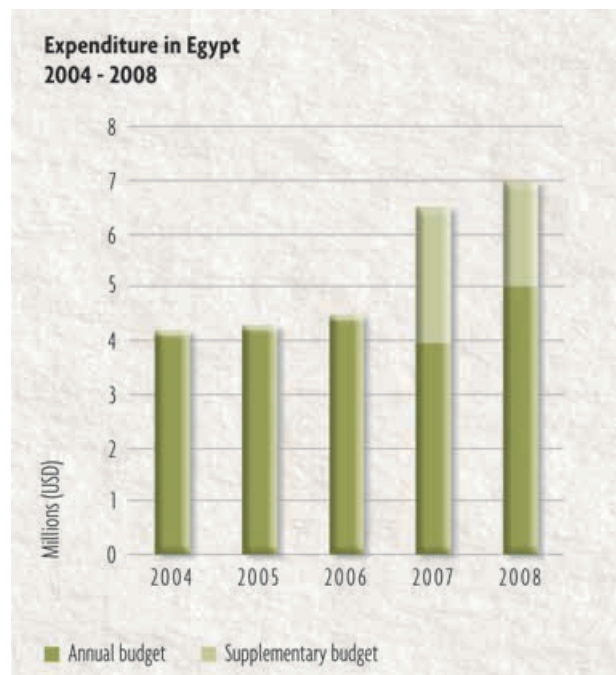
The hostilities which erupted in the Gaza strip towards the end 2008 did not result significant outflow of refugees to Egypt. UNHCR provided logistics support to UNRWA. In an open statement, the High Commissioner called for opening the borders to allow civilians to seek safety from violence, and the Office provided support to the Egyptian Red Crescent society to enhance its capacity to assist Palestinians fleeing violence in Gaza.

| **Financial information** |

The 2008 budget for UNHCR's operations in Egypt was well-funded. Within a total budget of more than USD 5 million, UNHCR managed eight projects, two under special budgets. With the funds made available in 2008, UNHCR

was able to provide the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers with limited financial assistance. However, due to the global financial crisis and the resulting increase in the cost of living, the budget, although well-funded, was only enough to cover some 30 per cent of the education, health and basic life-sustaining needs of the vulnerable refugees.

The operation's expenditures increased from USD 2.1 million in 2004 to more than USD 5 million in 2008. This is attributed to the rise in the number of people of concern to UNHCR, from 21,000 in 2004 to some 43,000 in 2008, including an increase in the number of Iraqis during 2007-2008.



## Organization and implementation

The UNHCR office in Egypt is staffed by 55 staff members, including seven international employees, 31 national staff, two JPOs and 15 UN Volunteers. Three of the international staff performed regional functions and supported other UNHCR offices in the MENA region in public information, information technology and refugee law training.

## Working with others

In addition to its operational and implementing partners, the Office cooperated with other agencies, including IOM, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO, to prepare for the Iraq Common Appeal.

Partners
<b>Implementing partners</b>
<b>NGOs:</b> Cairo Family Planning Association, Saint Andrew's Caritas International, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), Refuge Egypt
<b>Operational partners</b>
<b>Government:</b> Refugee Affairs Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>NGOs:</b> Africa & Middle East Refugee Assistance (AMERA)
<b>Others:</b> Cairo University, ICRC, IOM, University of Sixth of October, ILO, UNICEF, WHO, the UN Country Team and community-based refugee organizations

## Financial report for UNHCR's operations in Egypt (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Prior years' project
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	601,647	87,202	688,849	0
Community services	133,863	8,788	142,651	0
Domestic needs and household support	724,155	259,027	983,182	0
Education	210,306	344,253	554,559	0
Health and nutrition	281,835	188,710	470,545	0
Income generation	64,173	7,143	71,316	0
Legal assistance	268,246	30,182	298,428	0
Operational support (to agencies)	135,772	90,465	226,237	0
Transport and logistics	26,071	220,802	246,873	0
Instalments to implementing partners	1,099,392	718,315	1,817,707	0
<b>Subtotal operational activities</b>	<b>3,545,460</b>	<b>1,954,887</b>	<b>5,500,347</b>	<b>0</b>
Programme support	1,446,209	48,649	1,494,858	0
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>4,991,669</b>	<b>2,003,536</b>	<b>6,995,205</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Cancellation on previous years' expenditure</b>				<b>(21,128)</b>
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>				
Payments made	2,490,140	1,610,704	4,100,844	
Reporting received	(1,390,748)	(892,388)	(2,283,136)	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>1,099,392</b>	<b>718,316</b>	<b>1,817,708</b>	
Outstanding 1st January				189,914
Reporting received				0
Refunded to UNHCR				(188,868)
Currency adjustment				(1,046)
<b>Outstanding 31st December</b>				<b>0</b>

## Budget, income and expenditure in Egypt (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available <sup>1</sup>	Total expenditure
Annual budget	5,125,026	1,912,518	3,061,690	4,974,208	4,991,669
Iraq Situation SB	2,216,710	156,661	1,934,546	2,091,207	1,800,989
Return and Reintegration of Sudanese Refugees SB	586,892	0	202,547	202,547	202,547
Supplementary budget subtotal	2,803,602	156,661	2,137,093	2,293,754	2,003,536
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,928,628</b>	<b>2,069,179</b>	<b>5,198,784</b>	<b>7,267,962</b>	<b>6,995,205</b>

Note: Supplementary programmes do not include seven per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

<sup>1</sup> Total funds available include currency adjustments.