

Highlights:

- First UN convoy comprising 78 trucks of food and non-food supplies delivers cross-border aid from Turkey to Syria;
- Syrians become the largest asylum-seeker population in 44 industrialized countries, replacing Afghans.

First UN convoy delivers cross-border aid to Syrian IDPs

For the first time in three years since conflicts flared in Syria in 2011, the United Nations deployed a humanitarian aid convoy from Turkey to Syria, bringing much needed food and non-food supplies to internally displaced Syrians and host communities in northern Syria. The operation is a tangible result of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2139 (2014) which required for cross-border delivery of humanitarian aid to people displaced in Syria.



Trucks loaded with relief items from the UN are crossing the border at Nusaybin, Turkey. 20 March, 2014.

It is estimated that some 9.3 million people are in need inside Syria, including 6.5 million internally displaced people. Northern Syria remains inaccessible from inside Syria since the last quarter of 2013. Cross-border aid delivery hence became the most effective way to reach displaced Syrians at border areas.

The first convoy from Turkey to Syria is a positive step forward to expand the protection space in Syria through the synergy of multi-actor cooperation. Following the agreement of the Governments of Turkey and Syria, 78 trucks with relief items from UNHCR, WHO, WFP, UNICEF and IOM crossed the Nusaybin-Qamishli border point from 20-25 March 2014.

As part of the convoy, UNHCR urgently mobilized 24 trucks of core relief items from its warehouse in Turkey for at least 50,000 families, which included high thermal blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen sets, children clothing and jerry cans. These items will soon be replenished by UNHCR's central stockpile so that the assistance to Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey will not be affected.

The UN has already delivered aid to Syria from Jordan, Lebanon, and periodically from North Iraq. Turkey is now part of this international effort. However given the huge humanitarian needs in northern Syria, the cross-border aid delivery is not sufficient to help all people in need. UNHCR's Representative in Turkey Ms. Carol Batchelor said, "We hope that this cross-border operation will continue, so that we are able to provide more humanitarian assistance to civilians who are suffering and are desperately in need in other parts of Syria."

First UN convoy delivers cross-border aid to Syrian IDPs



Relief items during loading, UNHCR warehouse in Gaziantep, Turkey.
Photo: UNHCR/Turkey



UN trucks waiting to cross into Syria. Nusaybin, Mardin-Turkey.
Photo: UNHCR/Turkey



UNHCR trucks loaded with relief items crossing into Syria from Nusaybin border of Turkey. Photo: UNHCR/Turkey



UNHCR trucks on way to UNHCR warehouse in Qamishli, Syria.
Photo: UNHCR/Syria



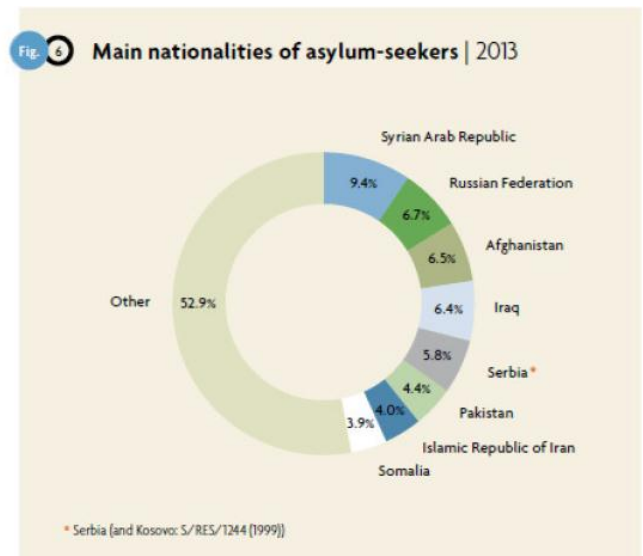
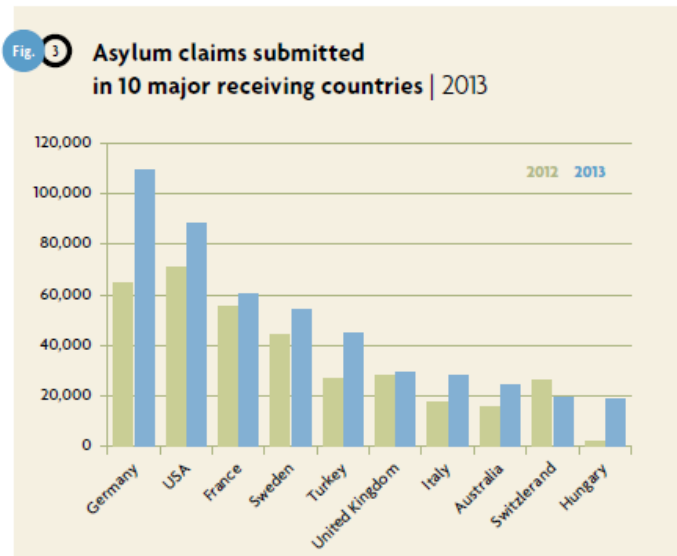
Relief materials are being off loaded in UNHCR warehouse in Qamishli, Syria.
Photo: UNHCR/Syria

Industrialized countries see 28 per cent jump in asylum applications

A UNHCR report released on 21 March shows a sharp rise in asylum claims in 44 industrialized countries during 2013, driven primarily by the crisis in Syria.

UNHCR's Asylum Trends 2013 report says 612,700 people applied for asylum in North America, Europe, East Asia and the Pacific last year – the highest total for any year since 2001. Reflecting a shifting international dynamic Afghanistan, which in the previous two years was the world's principal country of origin for asylum-seekers, ranked third in terms of new claims behind Syria and the Russian Federation. Among the top-10 countries of origin six are currently experiencing violence or conflict – Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, Iraq and Pakistan.

Asylum-seekers arriving in industrialized countries undergo individual assessments to determine whether they qualify for refugee status. Consequently their numbers are always higher than those who eventually get accepted as refugees. For the 44 industrialized countries mentioned in the Asylum Trends report, acceptance rates vary widely and tend to be higher among people fleeing conflict.



Sector progress

Protection

The registration of non-camp Syrians is on-going in several locations in the southeast. As of 14 March 2014, local officials informed UNHCR that 132,676 Syrians were registered in Gaziantep Province. In Nizip town, it was reported that the authorities have increased registration staff and workstations, and were able to register about 80 people per day. However, over 2,500 more people were still waiting, and getting an appointment may take six weeks. The Syrian refugees can have free access to health care after registration.

Camp management

In Mardin Midyat camp, the management have announced that they have established a "monitoring team" comprising of four members, including one mukhtar of the district, one school manager in the camp, and one woman from women's committee and one from youth committee, to monitor the prices in the camp supermarket. This monitoring team visits the town regularly to compare the prices of the items in the camp market with those in town to ensure the prices in the camp is reasonable. The camp supermarkets are run by private individuals, and refugees use their e-vouchers to buy food (WFP funded) and other items there.