



AUGUST HIGHLIGHTS:

Syrian refugees from Aleppo and Al Raqqa sub-districts and other areas continue to arrive through the Peshkhabour border which is open to all new arrivals since the closure of the Ibrahim Khalil border in March 2015. The total of new arrivals since January 2015 stands at 42,370 individuals, with 5,379 new arrivals in August 2015, which presents a 28% increase as compared to the month of July and the highest recorded number in 2015. Refugees are provided with a 30 day Asylum Request Card, which enables them to choose the location where to lodge the asylum application, their place of residence and offers an opportunity to join family members as applicable.

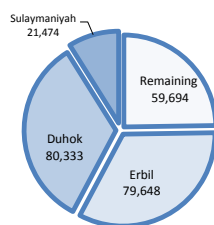
At the same time, the number of spontaneous departures to Syria has increased by 66% as compared to the previous month (3,833 individuals in August, and 48,541 since the beginning of the year). Returnees cite economic hardship, lack of employment, family reunification as main reasons for return.

UNHCR continues to monitor the border with Turkey and has observed movements of Syrians, holders of valid passports, and Iraqis nationals.

Biometric registration and verification has been completed for refugees residing in camps. The verification of the residual caseload living out of camps is complicated due to the high mobility of refugees in the KR-I, the inconsistent practices of the residency departments and the complexity of transferring residency files. UNHCR continues to advocate for harmonization and simplification of the procedures to ensure that refugees are registered and documented in the place of residence. Partners Harikar, Qandil and CDO continued to provide **legal support to refugees** in need of civil status documents (birth, marriage, death and divorce certificates). In some semi-urban areas, refugees struggle to obtain residency permits due to the complex and lengthy residency procedures. In addition, security has imposed further restrictions on access to residency cards for those refugees who returned to Syria, and seek now to re-activate their case in the KR-I. As of June, the validity of residency cards has been reduced from one year to 6 month in the three Governorates of KRI, further impacting on the documentation security of the persons of concern. The administrative practices are under discussion with the authorities, as these practices likely have negative implications for the protection of refugees.

Iris-Scan in KR-I

75% enrolled
25% remaining



UNHCR convened a **roundtable on urban displacement** with representatives of the humanitarian community and the Kurdistan Regional Government to review the situation pertaining to urban displaced populations in the KR-I. A protection road map was developed, aimed at providing an integrated response to out of camp refugees, encompassing registration and documentation for urban refugees, enhanced protection and specialized services for urban refugees with specific needs and fortifying communication with communities efforts.

With the start of the new school year approaching, UNHCR, UNICEF and education actors supported the **"Back to School Campaign"** in the KR-I which aims to raise awareness of the importance of education and to encourage parents to enroll children in school. UNHCR conducted several focus group discussions (FGD) across the KR-I in areas with a high concentration of refugee children aged between 6-9 years. The FGDs aimed to inform and encourage families on the new decision by the KR-I Ministry of Education allowing Syrian children to register in Kurdish schools for grades 1-3.

GBV-IMS coordinators are conducting trainings to familiarize **SGBV** partners on reporting. The issue of early marriage remains a predominant protection concern in the KR-I with an awareness campaign intended to address the issue. Capacity building of UN staff, NGOs and relevant authorities is ongoing, with SGBV partners focusing on improving capacity of national NGOs to respond to SGBV.

In August, 6 cases of 27 persons were referred for **resettlement** to Sweden and 5 cases of 23 persons to Australia. Further, 1 individual was accepted and 4 families of 10 persons have departed for resettlement.

Protection activities in Al Qaim refugee camp remain suspended since June 2014; it has been reported that there are 195 unregistered refugees in the camp. There is no information about the fate of some 2,971 urban refugees in Al-Qaim.



Refugee and IDP children playing together in Shawes urban area, Erbil, September 2015.
UNHCR/K. Hindi

NEEDS ANALYSIS:

Access to safety, and access to asylum remains a concern with changes in exit procedures and admission procedures into the KR-I. Although the KR-I authorities request support for developing humanitarian admission criteria, most refugees from conflict areas or with serious medical needs, are currently receiving 30 days visas which allows for asylum applications, whereas other persons with international protection needs receive 15 days visas. In August, only 3% of arrivals to the KR-I entered as asylum-seekers. The concern that persons with international protection needs are not able to access safety, or face serious delays, or are not permitted to submit asylum applications.

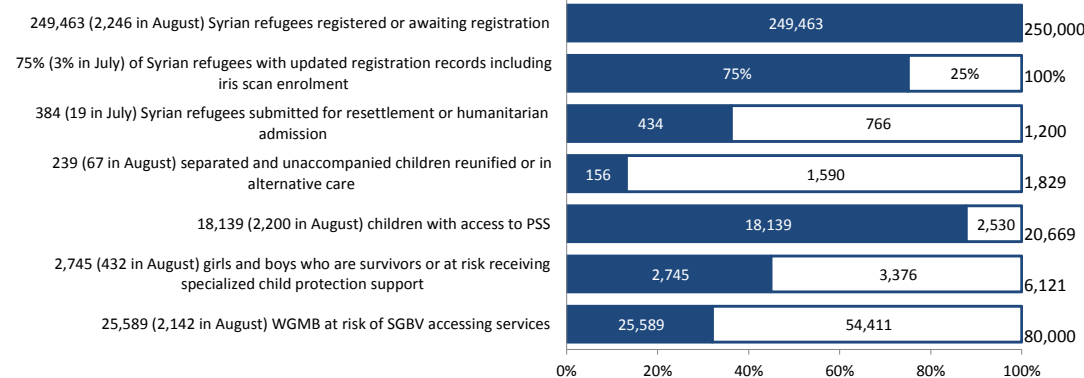
The issue of people smuggling has been reported in refugee camps and urban locations with numbers of refugee families departing to Turkey for onward movement to Europe. In some cases, heads of households travel alone leaving their spouses and children behind. UNHCR and partners are collecting the data through focus group discussions to analyze the current trend and determine the way forward in addressing protection risks related to this phenomenon.

UNHCR is currently following up on requests from local authorities and the community to strengthen community structures in urban areas in Duhok, such as schools and youth centers.

Extreme weather conditions have continued to affect the capacity and attendance at CFS/YFS in most camps. The shortage of shaded space also affects the implementation of outdoor activities resulting in overcrowding in the caravans.

The situation in Al Qaim refugee camp remains of great concern, with the protection partner having withdrawn all staff due to security concerns.

IRAQ RESPONSE INDICATORS: AUGUST 2015



Planned response based on full funding of 3RP for an expected direct beneficiary population of 250,000 Syrian refugees and 1.5 million members of impacted local communities by end-2015. There are currently 249,463 Syrian refugees registered by UNHCR (38% in camps and 62% out of camps).

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