European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Egypt

Introduction

Situated along the central Mediterranean refugee route, Egypt hosts refugees living in some of the poorest neighbourhoods of its largest cities. Roughly, half of them are Syrian, others mostly from Horn of Africa countries, Sudan and South Sudan. They face the challenges of a protracted refugee situation in an impoverished urban setting, with severe barriers to access essential services, suffering harassment and discrimination. EU humanitarian aid assists refugees and asylum seekers based on their needs and irrespective of their nationality.

What are the needs?

Refugees and asylum seekers rely heavily on humanitarian assistance. They often reside in overcrowded neighbourhoods where the host community is already struggling with substandard living conditions and high unemployment rates. 32.5% of Egyptians live below the national poverty line. According to the UN Refugee Agency, this percentage is even higher among refugees (84%). Access to basic services such as healthcare and education is extremely challenging for refugees and asylum seekers.

The continued influx of refugees and migrants coincides with Egypt’s worst economic recession in decades. Dramatic price increases for food and utilities are worsening living conditions for the most vulnerable population. Refugees from African countries also face linguistic barriers and discrimination, which further limits their access to formal education and contributes to their marginalisation.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Egyptian government imposed a partial lockdown. This has directly affected refugees and asylum seekers, who are now facing greater uncertainty. Many of them have lost their livelihoods and are unable to provide for their families or pay rent. The pandemic has also worsened the stigmatisation and discrimination suffered by refugees, especially of sub-Saharan origin.
How are we helping?

In 2021, the European Union is providing €5 million to help the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt. EU humanitarian funds focus on 3 main sectors: basic needs, education in emergencies and protection. The EU is also providing an additional €1 million to strengthen the COVID-19 response, bringing the overall funding to €6 million.

Around 38% of all refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt are children. There has been a sharp increase in unaccompanied minors and separated children among the recent arrivals. Strengthening core protection activities for the most vulnerable, such as these minors, remains a high priority for EU humanitarian assistance. The EU also provides cash to refugees in acute vulnerability to cover their basic needs. It also helps refugee children access schooling by reducing the existing barriers to education. These barriers may be academic, financial, institutional or social. The support for educational activities focuses on primary and secondary school levels in both public and refugee community schools.

With lockdown measures disrupting the operations of international aid agencies, refugees who depend on humanitarian assistance are among the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. To address the deteriorating health and economic conditions, the EU is supporting prevention and protection measures. Efforts have also been made to shift educational activities to a remote modality.

In addition, the European Commission is providing €100 million in humanitarian assistance to support the rollout of vaccination campaigns in countries in Africa with critical humanitarian needs and fragile health systems. At least €5 million of this funding will be supporting vaccination campaigns for the most vulnerable in northern Africa.