Estimated number of Syrian refugees: 1.5 million (UNHCR)
Number of registered refugees: 914,000 from Syria (UNHCR)
27,000 Palestinians from Syria (UNRWA)
270,000 from Palestine (UNRWA)
Almost 18,000 other nationalities (UNHCR)

Overall EU aid funding: €1.7 billion, including €580 million from the humanitarian budget for Syrian refugees and host communities since 2011.

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Lebanon

Introduction

Lebanon has taken in 1.5 million refugees since war erupted in neighbouring Syria in 2011. Refugees make up 30% of the country’s population, the highest concentration per capita of refugees in the world. Countrywide anti-establishment protests since October 2019 have sent Lebanon’s economy in free fall and are hitting vulnerable Lebanese and refugees hard. The EU provides humanitarian assistance to the neediest refugees.

What are the needs?

The 1.5 million Syrian and Palestinian refugees have put additional pressure on Lebanon’s economy, infrastructure and services.

The authorities have not allowed the construction of formal camps for Syrian refugees. This has forced many refugees to live in substandard accommodation such as garages, warehouses, tents, and unfinished buildings. An increasing number of refugees lack proper legal documentation, restricting their freedom of movement and access to basic services and employment. Half of all Syrian refugee families survive on less than $2.9 per person per day and 88% are in debt. Around 42% of school-aged Syrian refugees are out of school, according to the Ministry of Education.

The disruption caused by the protests as well as the worsening financial crisis and harsh winter conditions have a detrimental impact on the refugees. They are easy victims of exploitation and abuse, and may feel forced to resort to negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and child marriage.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, at the end of 2019 over 53,000 people had returned to Syria since 2016. Refugees cite the socio-economic conditions in Lebanon as one of the main reasons for returning to their home country where an uncertain future often awaits.
How are we helping?

Since 2011, the European Union has provided €580 million in humanitarian funding to respond to the fallout of the Syria crisis in Lebanon. This funding has helped particularly vulnerable refugees who often live on the margins of society and in substandard accommodation.

The bulk of EU humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon is in the form of multi-purpose cash assistance. Cash assistance reduces their vulnerability in the face of deteriorating socio-economic conditions and protection threats. In 2019, this assistance benefitted around 358,000 people who mostly used the money to cover essential needs such as food, shelter and healthcare.

Through its humanitarian funding, the EU also supports programmes that counsel refugees, provide them with much needed information and legal assistance in a restrictive protection environment. In 2019, more than 500,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon were assisted through EU-supported protection services. The EU also helped almost 30,000 Syrian out-of-school children to access educational services while facilitating their transition into formal education.