



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Syria - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Monday 13 & Tuesday 14 August 2012

**Seeking information on the following:
Recent position papers & guidance notes;
International protection to those fleeing;
Country guidelines on the eligibility of nationals for international protection**

A *UNHCR* paper issued in March 2012 notes:

“As the situation in Syria is fluid and may remain uncertain for some time to come, UNHCR appreciates that Governments have taken measures to suspend the forcible return of nationals or habitual residents of Syria, including those who have had their asylum claims rejected. Such measures are intended to be implemented until the situation in the country has stabilized. UNHCR strongly recommends that States adopt a moratorium on all returns to Syria for the time being, pending an assessment of when the changed situation in the country would permit return in safety and dignity” (UNHCR (2 March 2012) *UNHCR Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic*).

This document also points out that:

“UNHCR appreciates measures already taken by Governments to afford international protection to those having fled the country, including in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, which have all maintained open borders for those fleeing” (ibid).

In June 2012 *UNHCR* states that:

“Those fleeing Syria will continue to require protection until such time as the situation in Syria improves and allows for voluntary return in safety and dignity. Given the current situation in Syria, persons who left Syria and have approached UNHCR and the respective host Governments have been registered as persons seeking international protection and are being assisted. Arrivals need to be afforded international protection and associated rights, the form of which may vary, depending on how the situation in Syria unfolds and on the processing and reception capacity of countries receiving them” (UNHCR (11 June 2012) *International Protection Considerations with regard to people fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic*).

A paper issued in June 2012 by the *UNHCR* states:

“The remarkable generosity and hospitality offered to Syrian refugees by the neighbouring countries of Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey continue to form the basis of efforts to ensure international protection and assistance. The borders of all neighbouring countries remain open, providing safe and secure environments for tens of thousands of refugees” (UNHCR (June 2012) *Revised Syria Regional Response Plan*, p.3).

The *UNHCR* in July 2012 commenting on those fleeing to surrounding and other countries notes that:

“...the Jordanian government estimates that some 150,000 Syrian refugees have entered the Kingdom since March last year. 38,883 of them are receiving protection and assistance; the rest are not registered” (UNHCR (31 July 2012) *Numbers of Syrian displaced rises as violence continues unabated*).

In July 2012 *Refugees International* states:

“Since early 2012, Lebanon and Jordan have seen a dramatic increase in the number of refugees crossing their borders as the Syrian government intensifies its crackdown on opposition groups. Despite the fact that neither country has signed the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol, both have accommodated those fleeing Syria, providing services and assistance despite their own strained resources” (Refugees International (10 July 2012) *Syrian Refugees: Anxious Neighbors Stretched Thin*, p.1).

A report issued in July 2012 by the *Brookings Institute* points out that:

“The United Nations refugee agency reports that it has registered over 117,000 Syrian refugees in the neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. These numbers probably underestimate the number of Syrian refugees in the region as many are staying with family or friends and simply do not register” (Brookings Institute (24 July 2012) *Syrian Displacement: The Human Consequence of the Continuing War*).

Commenting on fleeing Syrians, the *UNHCR* in July 2012 states:

“In consultation with government authorities, UNHCR and its partners are now in the field verifying numbers and assessing the profile and needs of newly arrived Syrians, with a particular focus on vulnerable people who may need immediate assistance” (UNHCR (20 July 2012) *UNHCR gravely concerned about dramatic escalation of Syria exodus*).

The *UNHCR* in August 2012 points out that:

“The Syrian refugee population in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey is steadily growing. The total number of Syrian refugees has so far reached 146,667” (UNHCR (10 August 2012) *Syria Regional Refugee Response, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey*, p.1).

In August 2012 *Human Rights Watch* states:

“Fighting between the Syrian armed forces and pro-government shabiha militias on one side, and the Free Syrian Army and other opposition armed groups on the other amounts to a non-international (internal) armed conflict under international law. It is regulated by Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which sets forth minimum standards for the proper treatment of people within a warring party’s control—namely civilians and wounded and captured combatants, and customary laws of war, concerning the methods and means of warfare” (Human Rights Watch (10 August 2012) *Q & A on Laws of War Issues in Syria*).

References

Brookings Institute (24 July 2012) *Syrian Displacement: The Human Consequence of the Continuing War*

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2012/07/24-syria-ferris>

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http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/RI_SyrianRefugees_AnxiousNeighborsStretchedThin.pdf

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UNHCR (10 August 2012) *Syria Regional Refugee Response, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey*

<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

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UNHCR (June 2012) *Revised Syria Regional Response Plan*

<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4fec681e9.pdf>

Attachment not included due to IT limitations

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UNHCR (11 June 2012) *International Protection Considerations with regard to people fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/international-protection-considerations-regard-people-fleeing-syrian-arab-rep>

This is a subscription database

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UNHCR (2 March 2012) *UNHCR Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/unhcr-position-returns-syrian-arab-republic>

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Accessed Monday 13 August 2012

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints.

This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted

Amnesty International
BBC News
Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
IRIN News
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
Reuters
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State
UNHCR Refworld