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EU Fact finding mission to Jordan and Syria on resettlement of refugees from Iraq

Report

Main findings

The situation of the vast majority of the Iraqi refugee population present in the region is deteriorating, due to the depleting of their initial financial resources and to the absence of work authorization. An increasing number is in need of assistance. Though the Syrian and Jordanian government have shown high degrees of generosity, they cannot meet all the needs. Continuous support is to be ensured. This is extremely important also to avoid tensions with local population and to maintain the protection space, which is fragile. Neither Syria nor Jordan is a State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

While return to Iraq is considered to be in the long term the only solution for the vast majority of Iraqi refugees in the region, this will only be possible when the situation improves. At present no large scale movement of return is taking place and in both Syria and Jordan, the inflow of refugees from Iraq is still higher than the outflow. The main concern articulated by Iraqis remains security in their regions of origin.

Local integration in both countries is not a realistic option and it can only be a solution for a very limited number of Iraqi refugees who may eventually be able to regularize their stay.

In both countries there is a clear need for resettlement, as for many refugees no other durable solution is likely to be available, even in the long term. Among the refugee population there are many clear and easily identifiable cases of vulnerability: in particular persons with medical needs, victims of trauma and severe torture, women-headed households, religious minorities.

The Palestinians who were forced to flee Iraq and who are currently living in the camps along the Syrian/Iraqi border and within Syria are particularly vulnerable and their situation merits urgent action. For these refugees no alternative to resettlement exists.

Resettlement is considered essential both to maintain the protection space in both countries as well as to provide a durable solution to particularly vulnerable refugees. An increased engagement on the part of the EU countries on resettlement could send a positive signal to the governments of the hosting countries. Resettlement should be carried out in a well targeted and in a manner which is non discriminatory, notably with respect to ethnicity and religion, in cooperation with UNHCR.

Detailed report of mission

I. Introduction

From 1 until 6 November an EU fact finding mission was carried out to Syria and Jordan. The purpose of the mission was to examine the resettlement needs of refugees from Iraq who are currently living in Syria and Jordan. The mission was organized by the European Commission (DG JLS, EC Delegations in Syria and Jordan) in close cooperation with UNHCR. Experts from the administrations of 10 Member States as well as the European Commission participated in the mission. The mission was accompanied by UNHCR. Detailed programmes of the visit are attached in Annex I.

II. Background

Conclusions by the JHA Council

The Justice and Home Affairs Council of Ministers of 24 and 25 July 2008 adopted Conclusions concerning the situation of Iraqi refugees in the neighbouring countries and internally displaced persons in Iraq. In these conclusions the Council noted that some Member States are already taking in Iraqi refugees, particularly under their national resettlement programmes. The Council stated that it considers it necessary to continue in this respect contacts with the Iraqi authorities, and with UNHCR, in order to agree on the most appropriate forms of solidarity with all Iraqis. The Council also pointed to the potential for financing refugee resettlement through EU funding (European Refugee Fund). Furthermore, the Council welcomed the presentation by the Commission of the policy plan on asylum, under which the Commission intended to submit proposals in 2009 for the development of a Community resettlement programme in which Member States could take part on a voluntary basis (annex II).

During the Ministerial conference on asylum, which was held in Paris on 8 and 9 September 2008, participants stressed the importance of resettlement as a durable solution and underlined the need to expand resettlement within the EU. After the conference the Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr. Barrot, announced that a fact finding mission would be organized to Syria and Jordan to examine the resettlement needs of refugees from Iraq who are currently residing in those countries.

The Justice and Home Affairs Council of Ministers of 25 September 2008 adopted Conclusions in which it noted the Commission's intention to conduct a mission to Syria and Jordan in order to assess the situation of the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees in those countries, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and to examine the possibilities for resettlement in Member States willing to receive them. The Council called upon the Commission to carry out this mission at the earliest opportunity and asked to report back as soon as possible. The Council also invited interested Member States to take part. The Council also noted that the UNHCR has expressed the hope that, in the long term, most Iraqi refugees will be able to return to their country of origin in conditions of security, although, for some, resettlement will continue to be necessary (annex III).

III. General

Objectives of mission

The aim of the mission was to collect factual information with respect to the resettlement needs of refugees from Iraq in Syria and Jordan. The findings of the mission will be reported back to the Justice and Home Affairs Council of Ministers.

Participants

The participants to the mission were representatives of the administrations dealing with resettlement of interested Member States and the Commission. The following persons participated in the mission:

Angela MARTINI, Acting Head of Unit Asylum, Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security, European Commission (*Head of mission*)
Gert Jan VAN HOLK, Policy officer Unit Asylum, Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security, European Commission
Kostis KYRIAKIDES, Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior, Cyprus
Berit BÄUMERICH, Federal Ministry of Interior, Germany
Karsten KLOTH, Federal Ministry of Interior, Germany
Marlene KERPAL, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany
Michael KRATZ, Federal Foreign Office, Germany
Arja KEKKONEN, Migration Department, Ministry of Interior, Finland
Jean-Pierre GUARDIOLA, Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Development Partnership, France
Dario CAPUTO, Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, Ministry of Interior, Italy
Christiane WELTER, Ministry for Families and Integration, Luxemburg
Richard SMITH, Immigration Service, The Netherlands
Ewa CYLWIK, Office for Foreigners, Poland
Anna ZOLEDZIOWSKA, Office for Foreigners, Poland
Carin BRATT, Division for Migration and Asylum Policy, Ministry of Justice, Sweden
Oskar EKBLAD, Swedish Migration Board, Sweden
Sarah SWASH, UK Border Agency, Home Office, United Kingdom

The mission was accompanied by Judith KUMIN, UNHCR Regional Representative in Brussels.

IV. Situation in Syria

In Syria the delegation had meetings with the following counterparts:

- Syrian government: Minister of Interior, General Bassem Abdel-Majed, Vice-minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Faysal Meqdad
- UNHCR Syria
- EU representatives (EC Delegation, ECHO, Embassies of EU member states)
- IOM
- International and local NGO's
- Iraqi refugee outreach workers and Iraqi refugees and Palestinian refugees who fled Iraq

- Canadian Embassy (Deputy Chief of Mission and Immigration Officer)

Visits were made to the UNHCR registration, counselling and assistance distribution centre at Douma, to Community Centres for Iraqi refugees run by the Danish Refugee Council, to a Women's Shelter run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, and to the Al Tanf camp for Palestinian refugees who have fled Iraq located at the Syria/Iraq border.

Findings of mission

1. Estimated numbers of Iraqis in Syria

The exact number of Iraqi nationals living in Syria is not known. Estimated figures come from Syrian government sources. Different estimates were mentioned to the delegation. The Syrian Minister of Interior and the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the total number of Iraqis in Syria is at least 1.5 million. UNHCR said that the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has informed it that there are 1.1 million Iraqis with active residence permits in Syria. IOM mentioned a figure of more than 1.000.000 persons.

The only firm number relates to persons who have been registered by UNHCR. At present there are 219,690 Iraqis who have registered with UNHCR in Syria. All those coming from central and south Iraq (non-KRG-area) are prima facie recognized as refugees.

2. General political and economic situation

The Syrian government stressed their policy not to place the Iraqis in camps and not to create a situation as followed the influx of Palestinians in 1948. They underlined the heavy burden both on the economy and society as a whole which the presence of a large Iraqi community represents. In particular they affirmed that their policy to allow Iraqis free access to the Syrian health and education systems entails heavy costs for the public budget. Continuous and increased support from the international community is needed.

UNHCR said that the Syrian hospitality toward the Iraqis is wearing thin, and that the population is increasingly questioning whether Syria should continue bearing this large burden. According to UNHCR, Syrians point to all sorts of negative consequences of the presence of Iraqis (increase in prices, in criminality, etc). There have until now, nevertheless, not been any major incidents between the Syrian population and the Iraqi refugees.

At the request of the Iraqi government, the Syrian government introduced in October 2007 a visa regime with respect to Iraqi nationals. As a result of this, the flow from Iraq into Syria has decreased. Certain categories of persons are allowed in and can receive a visa at the border, but these are not necessarily the most needy people. Visas are issued to specific categories, such as Iraqis who have registered business with Syria or those who can prove that they have medical needs and that they have made arrangements for treatment in Syria.

According to UNHCR, most Iraqi refugees who are currently living in Syria belonged to the middle class and lived in urban areas in Iraq, with many having a professional background. Refugees live primarily in urban areas: most of the refugees live in Damascus; some have moved to other cities in Syria where living costs are lower. Initially many lived to a large extent on the savings which they took with them from Iraq, but as many have depleted these savings, there is an increasing number coming forward for assistance. An increasing number of Iraqi children are working, more destitute Iraqis are homeless and domestic violence is increasing as a result of frustration and despair. UNHCR, IOM, NGOs and Iraqi outreach workers note also increasing numbers of victims of exploitation and abuse among the Iraqi refugee community, including cases of child labour. Impoverishment has led to more cases of

forced prostitution and young marriages. This observation was made by the Syrian government, UNHCR, representatives of the EU, IOM and others.

According to the Syrian government and UNHCR, Iraqis have free access to health and education in Syria. There is however a serious problem with capacity of the current infrastructure and some alternative services, provided by the UN agencies and NGOs, have had to be established.

At present just over 175,000 refugees who have registered with UNHCR receive some assistance in the form of rations of food and non-food items (basic food provided by WFP and complementary food and other items by UNHCR). UNHCR provides cash assistance (using ATM cards) to a limited number of the most vulnerable. At present 33,000 refugees receive this limited monthly financial support

UNHCR noted that, as a result of the impoverishment, the over-all resettlement needs have increased, and have the tendency to increase further.

4. General protection situation

Although Syria is not a Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, according to UNHCR there has been a relatively good protection environment in Syria over the past two years. UNHCR's main challenge is to maintain that protection space. In UNHCR opinion, higher commitment on resettlement could help consolidate this positive development.

One major strand of progress is that Syria has begun to allow international NGOs to work in Syria, subject to signature of a Memorandum of Understanding which governs the conditions under which they may operate. Until last year no international NGO was allowed to work with the Iraqi refugee population in Syria. There are now some 12 international NGOs which have obtained authorization to operate in the country (since this is a recent development some of these NGOs have not become fully operational yet). Both UNHCR and the EU representatives with whom the delegation spoke stressed the importance of this development.

The delegation had meetings with Iraqi Outreach workers, with NGO staff working at the refugee community centres and with Iraqi refugees themselves. The delegation met many refugees who had compelling protection and humanitarian needs (such as victims of severe torture, victims of kidnapping, random as well as targeted violence, handicapped people and women-headed households).

5. Possibilities of local integration

The position of the Syrian government is that the Iraqis are "guests" who should return home when the situation permits. Local integration is officially not an option except, according to UNHCR, for some limited categories of Iraqi nationals, such as businessmen, who can obtain permission to remain. Local integration is therefore not a possibility for the large majority of Iraqi refugees; even "de facto" local integration is very difficult as the Iraqis are not officially permitted to work in Syria.

6. Return

All counterparts met by the delegation agreed that, in the long term, return to Iraq is the only feasible solution for the great majority of refugees in Syria, and this is also what the Iraqi government is promoting. However, the government representative stressed the fact that the situation at present is not yet conducive for return and that the main issue is the establishment of safety and security in Iraq. If, even in the long term, return is not feasible for some Iraqi refugees, resettlement to a third country is an option. In the meantime, the refugees need to be assisted. According to the Minister of Interior and the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, the

number of returns has been low and there has been a larger inflow than outflow of Iraqis over the past year. Recently there has been a new influx of Christians who have fled from the Mosul area.

UNHCR considers that in the long term, voluntary return is the preferred option for the large majority of Iraqis living in Syria. Conditions in Iraq are not yet such that UNHCR can promote or encourage return, though limited help is provided to individuals who freely opt to return (400 individuals so far). Apart from security, issues such as compensation, restitution of property, eviction of occupiers of houses and livelihoods need to be addressed. It appears that some Iraqis are returning to Iraq because they can hardly survive in Syria, due to impoverishment. However, some Iraqi returnees were forced into secondary displacement or were obliged to come back to Syria, with dramatic stories about what happened to them in Iraq. The Iraqi refugees met by the delegations stressed that return is not currently a possibility because of security concerns.

7. Position of Palestinians from Iraq / Al Tanf camp

UNHCR informed the delegation as follows: Syria has a large Palestinian population which has been living there since many years, most of them since 1948 (estimated at 450,000 persons). After the fall of the Saddam Hussein government, the Palestinian refugees living in Iraq became the targets of severe violence and persecution, and many sought to flee. However, Palestinians from Iraq are not allowed to enter into Syria, although some succeeded in entering Syria using Iraqi passports obtained fraudulently before the visa requirement was introduced. Their number is estimated at between 2,000-3,000. UNHCR believes that 10,000 Palestinian refugees remain in Iraq (out of 30,000 a few years ago).

Palestinians from Iraq who are apprehended at the border and in some cases who are apprehended within Syria are placed in a camp at Al Tanf, located in between the Syrian and Iraqi border posts. This tented camp is in the desert, approximately 300 km from Damascus. It is a narrow and short strip of sand. On one side is the busy road which leads into Iraq; on the other is a wall behind which is a Syrian militarized zone. At one end is the Iraqi border, at the other, the Syrian border. The refugees living there are not able to leave since they cannot enter either country. The location is totally unsuitable for human habitation due to the extreme climate (heat, sandstorms, floodings). There are no facilities or space for sports or recreation, and poor medical facilities. There is a tent-school for children until 15 years old. At the moment there are 800 Palestinians in this camp of whom 300 are children under 17 years old.

The delegation paid a visit to the camp and spoke with some of the refugees there. The situation in which these Palestinian refugees live is extremely bad, and is compounded by their isolation and the hopelessness of their situation, given that they can not return to Iraq and are not allowed to enter Syria.

These refugees are urgently in need of protection. As protection is not available in Syria, resettlement is the only option. UNHCR said that if there would be an effort to resettle the Al Tanf population, it would endeavour to negotiate with the government of Syria to close the camp and to cease further transfers to this unsuitable site. There is a second camp in Syria for Palestinians who fled Iraq at Al Hol, in the north-east of the country. This camp houses approximately 300 refugees who were previously stranded at the Iraqi-Jordanian border and have been staying in the camp for more than two years. A third camp for Palestinians who tried to flee Iraq is located at Al Waleed, which is on Iraqi soil. It is located a few kilometres from Al Tanf camp but on the Iraqi side of the border. Palestinian refugees from Iraq who currently try to flee into Syria, are not given access to Syria and are given shelter in this camp.

The delegation did not visit this camp, but the living conditions there are considered to be equally bad as in Al Tanf camp. There are at present approximately 1,400 persons living in Al Waleed camp. UNHCR is also seeking resettlement of the refugees in these two camps.

IV Situation in Jordan

In Jordan the delegation had meetings with the following counterparts:

- Jordanian government: Secretary-General of Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation (together with Representatives from Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Education and Health)
- UNHCR Jordan and UNHCR Lebanon / regional resettlement hub
- EU representatives (EC Delegation, ECHO, Embassies of EU member states)
- IOM
- international and local NGOs
- Iraqi refugees
- Embassies of non-EU resettlement countries (USA, Canada, Australia)

Visits were made to the UNHCR refugee registration centre, the Community Centre Association at Hai Nazzal and the Save the Children field office in Nuzha, where group discussions with Iraqi refugees took place.

Findings of mission

1. Estimated numbers of Iraqis in Jordan

With respect to the numbers of Iraqis who are currently staying in Jordan, the Jordanian government officials with whom the delegation spoke referred to the study which was commissioned in September 2007 from the independent Norwegian research institute FAFO. This study estimated there to be between 450,000 and 500,000 Iraqis in Jordan. Some sources however consider this number to be over-estimated.

The number of Iraqi refugees registered by UNHCR is around 53,000.

2. General political and economic situation

While the Jordanian government considers the Iraqi refugees as “guests”, the presence of a large Iraqi community clearly places serious strains on basic services, such as the health system and schooling. The government pointed also to the impact on other costs, such as the need for increase in the number of police and border guards. Considerable support from the international community is needed. In addition to this UNHCR pointed out that the government is concerned about the effects of a large Iraqi refugee population on the political and security situation in Jordan (there is already a very large Palestinian population in the country –around 2 million persons, of whom most now have Jordanian citizenship). According to the Jordanian government there has been relatively little tension between the Jordanian population and the Iraqi nationals in Jordan but the presence of the Iraqis places a tremendous strain on public services.

The Iraqi refugee population in Jordan is a largely urban refugee population which lives mainly in and around Amman but is also dispersed across the country. The majority belongs originally to the Iraqi middle class, often with a professional background. Over 50% of them originate from Baghdad. A substantial part of the refugees have lived until now on savings

which they have brought with them from Iraq. The different partners with whom the delegation spoke, including government authorities, emphasized that many Iraqis in Jordan have depleted their savings and are impoverished. Iraqis do not officially receive employment authorization, many work without authorization. As a result they are at risk of exploitation. They can apply for financial assistance from UNHCR (approximately 18,000 persons benefit from this), but this is insufficient to cover all living costs.

Iraqis currently need a visa to enter Jordan. According to the Jordanian authorities, these visa requirements were introduced at the request of the Iraqi government, who do not want to see a large outflow from Iraq. Various categories of persons are eligible for visas, which must be applied for within Iraq. It is not totally clear how these visa requirements are applied by the Jordanian authorities: medical needs and family ties with Jordan seem to be grounds on which visa are generally granted. This was corroborated by statements of Iraqi refugees with whom the delegation spoke. According to the Jordanian government two-thirds of the visa requests which are lodged by Iraqis in Iraq are approved. The delegation received, however, conflicting information with respect to the question how difficult it effectively is for Iraqis to enter into Jordan at present.

The government officials stressed that they do not deport Iraqis back to Iraq, not for reasons of overstaying their visa, nor for working illegally, nor for criminal offences. The only reason for deportation is national security, according to the government. They maintained that there have been only "a handful" of such cases in which an Iraqi has been deported back to Iraq on grounds of national security. UNHCR declared to the delegation that they believe that there have been some deportations since 2007, but that these were not many.' UNHCR has stated to the delegation that they have generally access to registered Iraqis who are detained in Jordan. On the other hand, some NGOs and Iraqi refugees met by the delegation consider deportation to be more widespread and in general it seems that Iraqis do not feel secure about their situation in the country.

According to the Jordanian government and UNHCR, the government has agreed to give access to public primary and secondary education and to health services for all Iraqis living in Jordan. Health care is provided at the fees charged to uninsured Jordanians.

With respect to education the Jordanian government emphasized to the delegation that Iraqis are treated equally as Jordanian citizens, and they have access to academic institutions and vocational training on the same footing as Jordanian citizens. However, others and refugees themselves did not describe the situation in such positive terms and also pointed to the number of Iraqi children attending schools, which seems low compared to the estimated total Iraqi population in Jordan. According to them this raises questions with respect to the effective access to schooling for Iraqi children.

3. General protection situation

Although Jordan is not a State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the protection situation in Jordan has improved over the past two years. UNHCR considers that generally Iraqi refugees in Jordan are de facto protected against return to Iraq although they lack a clear legal status and many live in a state of anxiety as a result.

In spite of the improvement of the protection situation in Jordan, the fundamental constraints which UNHCR faces in Jordan with respect to protection are still largely the same as some years ago. The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Jordanian government and UNHCR is still applicable. This implies that Iraqis who register with UNHCR are considered as asylum-seekers and not refugees by the Jordanian authorities, this in spite of the fact that they are recognized as prima facie refugees by UNHCR if they originate from central or south

Iraq (this excludes those Iraqis who originate from the Kurdish region/KRG area). Another requirement of the Memorandum of Understanding is that UNHCR is obliged to provide a durable solution (resettlement) within six months for those Iraqis who are recognized as refugees. This seems, however, largely to be a formal requirement which is currently not enforced.

At present approximately 53,500 Iraqis are registered by UNHCR. There are approximately 500-600 new registrations per month; most of these are newcomers who have entered from Iraq into Jordan recently. The composition per religion of the total of registered Iraqis is as follows: 48,8 % Sunnis, 28,6 % Shias, 14,4 % Christians, 4,9 % Sabaeans/Mandaeans, 2,5 Islam not specified, 0,1 % Yezidis, 0,7 % others. Of the total number of Iraqis registered by UNHCR, at most 5% are considered potentially sensitive because the person in question had a certain level of responsibility with the former Iraqi government or the army. This is only a first labelling. These cases are considered in need of further examination and refugee status determination to determine eligibility and exclusion grounds.

4. Possibilities of local integration

As indicated earlier, Jordan is not a State Party to the 1951 Refugee convention. Iraqis in Jordan lack legal status and do not have access to the labour market. For these reasons, UNHCR explained that the possibilities of local integration for Iraqis in Jordan are limited. Local integration is an option only for specific groups of Iraqis who have either close family links with Jordanian citizens or who have business activities or considerable wealth.

5. Return

All counterparts met by the delegation (Jordanian authorities, UNHCR, EC delegation, NGOs) noted that there is very limited return to Iraq. UNHCR receives and counsels individuals who express a wish to repatriate voluntarily. So far UNHCR has assisted around 200 return cases. According to the Jordanian government, there are no significant numbers of returns yet. On the contrary, there is at present each month more inflow of Iraqis than outflow. The inter-ministerial committee stated that the difference is a net inflow of Iraqis into Jordan of 14,000 persons over the past 12 months. The general conclusion of the Jordanian government and UNHCR is that the Iraqi population residing in Jordan is not yet ready to return. According to these counterparts the overriding concern of Iraqis in Jordan is the security. This general observation was corroborated by statements made by Iraqi refugees met by the delegation. Apart from the safety situation other reasons which were mentioned for which people do not go back yet are: the occupation by others of houses in Iraq, absence or ill-functioning of basic services, such as schooling, health facilities, electricity etc., as well as lack of job opportunities.

According to the Jordanian government officials with whom the delegation spoke, the majority of Iraqis who are living in Jordan will decide to go back to Iraq when the situation there has improved sufficiently. The government representatives met consider that return to Iraq needs to be a free choice for the Iraqis. Likewise, the government officials also consider resettlement to be a free choice for the individuals.

V. Resettlement needs

1. UNHCR resettlement criteria and procedure

UNHCR has outlined 11 criteria for prioritization of Iraqi refugees for resettlement:

1. persons who have been the victims of severe trauma (including SGBV), detention, abduction or torture by State or non-State entities in COO;
2. members of minority groups and/or individuals who are or have been targeted in COO owing to their religious/ethnic background;
3. women-at-risk;
4. unaccompanied and separated minors;
5. persons in need of family reunification;
6. older refugees at risk;
7. high profile persons;
8. persons perceived as sympathizers of the international military presence in Iraq;
9. refugees with medical problems that can not be addressed in the country of asylum;
10. persons at risk of refoulement; and
11. stateless persons.

In addition, UNHCR has also developed a heightened risk identification tool to enhance effectiveness in identifying refugees at risk by linking community basis/participatory assessment and individual assessment methodologies.

All UNHCR offices in the region identify refugees in need of resettlement mainly through their registration procedures. A thorough interview is conducted at the moment of first registration and / or renewal of UNHCR certificates. Registration staff refer cases that meet one of the 11 resettlement criteria for Iraqi refugees to the Resettlement staff unless they have exclusion concerns that warrant an in depth analysis and assessment by protection staff and exclusion experts. UNHCR have set up outreach programmes in an effort to reach the most vulnerable refugees, as well as those who do not approach the UNHCR offices out of fear that they might be detained on their way for illegal stay. UNHCR Protection and Community services can also refer cases to the resettlement unit, while NGOs, churches, resettlement countries or refugees themselves regularly request cases to be considered for resettlement.

Resettlement staff conducts resettlement interviews and prepare the cases through short form Resettlement Registration Forms (RRFs), including bio data, background information (education and employment), military service and political affiliation, as well as a brief summary on the reasons for flight. A short paragraph is provided including information on the personal situation of the principal applicant and his family in the country of asylum. RRFs are reviewed by the UNHCR Regional Resettlement Hub in Beirut before being submitted to resettlement countries.

According to UNHCR there is a clear need for additional European quota for the following reasons:

- To broaden the resettlement base in order to have in place a truly international effort, and to demonstrate burden-sharing. Currently, only 9 per cent of submission are to EU countries
- To address the needs of particularly vulnerable refugees who could benefit from a solid health care system, psycho social assistance, trauma counseling and other specialized services.
- To submit an increasing number of refugees in need of family reunification with their close family members in European countries.

- To address the resettlement needs of refugees who are inadmissible for resettlement to the US based on specific legislation, such as: material support cases, refugees forced into prostitution, refugees who have been involved with communist parties, etc.
- To offer an alternative option for refugees who have valid reasons not to wish to be submitted to the US.

2. Resettlement needs in Syria

UNHCR's Global Resettlement Needs Assessment issued during 2008 estimates that approximately 65,000 Iraqis are in need of resettlement. However, needs are constantly evolving.

UNHCR-Syria submitted 3,183 Iraqi refugees for resettlement in 2006. In 2007 the number of submissions increased to 7,692. In 2008 (until 7 November) 10,766 persons were submitted for resettlement. Of the 2008 submissions, 70% were submitted to the USA. Roughly 7.5% of submissions were made to EU countries operating resettlement countries.

Departures of resettled refugees in 2007 and 2008 (as of October):

USA (4,966), Australia (188), Canada (502), New Zealand (33), Norway (36), Finland (105), Sweden (143), Portugal (5), France (27), Denmark (5), UK (5), Netherlands (118).

3. Resettlement needs of Palestinians from Iraq

According to UNHCR some of the most urgent resettlement needs exist for the Palestinians from Iraq who are presently living in Al Hol camp, Al Tanf camp and Al Waleed camp. The total population living in these camps is around 2,400 (400 in Al Hol, 800 in Al Tanf and 1,200 in Al Waleed). For these refugees no alternative to resettlement exists, as they cannot find protection in Syria.

UNHCR would like to see Al Tanf camp to be closed completely and will press for this with the Syrian government. The closure of the camp would prevent the camp from being filled up again with other Palestinians who live in Syria illegally and are apprehended by the Syrian authorities.

According to UNHCR the fact that Palestinians from Iraq can be submitted for resettlement is in itself a breakthrough compared to the situation a few years ago. The resettlement of this group was first opposed by the PLO and the Syrian government. The PLO has now accepted not to oppose the resettlement of these persons to third countries, if the persons concerned wish to do so.

The following countries have resettled Palestinians from Iraq (from Jordan, Syria and the border area), as of 7 November 2008: Brazil (107), Chile (108), Norway (19), Denmark (38), Sweden (178), Iceland (29), the Netherlands (24).

4. Resettlement needs in Jordan

UNHCR's Global Needs Assessment document issued in 2008 estimated that 10,000 Iraqi refugees among those registered in Jordan were in need of resettlement. As is the case in Syria, the resettlement needs are in constant evolution, in view of the growing vulnerability of the population. In addition, in Jordan the US implements its special programme for their former employees, which accounts for considerable numbers of submissions..

UNHCR-Jordan submitted 540 persons for resettlement in 2006. In 2007 the number of submissions increased to 8.062. In 2008 (until 7 November) 8.243 persons were submitted for resettlement. The large majority of these cases were submitted for resettlement to the USA. Currently around 10% of submissions are to EU countries.

Departures of resettled refugees in 2007 and 2008 (end September):

USA (6,267), Australia (707), Canada (346), New Zealand (22), Brazil (5), Switzerland (3), Norway (18), Sweden (396), Spain (1), France (129), Denmark (23), UK (142), Germany (2), Netherlands (95).