

**Permanent Mission of Egypt
to the United Nations Office, the
WTO and other International
Organizations**
Geneva



البعثة الدائمة لجمهورية مصر العربية
لدى مكتب الأمم المتحدة ومنظمة التجارة
العالمية والمنظمات الدولية الأخرى
جنيف

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The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office, the World Trade Organisation and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Special Procedures Branch), and with reference to the letter of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants dated 22nd December 2020, regarding the questionnaire on “pushback practices and their impact on the human rights of migrants”, has the honour to enclose herewith the response of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt in this regard.

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office, the World Trade Organisation and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Special Procedures Branch) the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 28th January 2021



Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Special Procedures Branch)

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Egypt has ratified the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, in addition to the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa.

In 1954 the Government of Egypt and UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Under the framework of this MOU, UNHCR has been entrusted to provide services related to registration, refugee status determination (RSD), resettlement, voluntary repatriation, assistance to the most vulnerable persons of concern and coordination of the assistance provided to refugees by charity organizations authorized by the government. In addition, UNHCR is documenting asylum seekers and refugees registered with its office and the Government of Egypt is issuing them with residence permits. All nationalities except Syrian and Yemeni nationals undergo RSD with UNHCR. UNHCR RSD results, along with registration data, are shared with the government of Egypt on a monthly basis.

Egypt, as a party to the 1951 Convention, is committed to abide by the non-refoulement principle. Article 93 of Egypt's Constitution stipulates that international conventions ratified by Egypt have the force of law. Moreover, article 91 of the Constitution guarantees the right of asylum to those facing persecution on various grounds.

The Government of Egypt (GoE) continues to allow refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR to regularize their residency and grants six-month renewable residence permits. In July 2019, GoE moved to a new Emigration and Nationality Administration Office in order to improve the processing of residence permits. Refugees and asylum seekers continue to have access to public education and health services on equal footing to Egyptians. Egypt continues to provide such sharing of public services and subsidies despite the fact that it represents an added challenge for the Egyptian economy.

It is worth noting that Egypt - with the participation of all relevant national authorities - is currently in the process of drafting a national "asylum law", which would enhance national capacities to manage the refugee file more effectively.

The geographic location of Egypt and the political situation in a number of countries in the region contributed to the transformation of Egypt into a country of transit and destination for Migrants. According to the latest statistics in March 2020, Egypt currently hosts about 260 thousand registered refugees and asylum seekers, 51% of them are Syrians, and the

rest are from various nationalities coming from 58 countries, most notably Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Iraq and Yemen. The number of children and minors is about 128,000, of whom 4,863 are unaccompanied children. Refugees in Egypt are concentrated in the urban areas of Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Qalyubia, Sharqia and Damietta.

In addition to the registered refugees, the number of foreigners who fled to Egypt as a result of armed conflicts or political unrest in their countries ranges between 5 and 6 million, of whom more than 4 million are in a refugee-like situation. Egypt provided these individuals with residency, the right to move freely, and work. They also enjoy basic services such as primary health care and pre-university education at Arabic-speaking governmental schools, on an equal footing with the Egyptian citizens.

The Government of Egypt is constantly looking for ways to improve the standard of living and the quality of provided services for refugees and asylum - seekers living in the country and strengthen the social cohesion with the Egyptian communities hosting them.

With regard to medical services, Egypt allows the provision of the same primary health services available to Egyptian citizens for refugees. The executive regulations of Law No. 2 of 2018 on comprehensive health insurance stipulated that foreigners residing in Egypt and refugees be included in the comprehensive health insurance system. Egypt provides primary, preventive and curative health care services to refugees in Egypt, in addition to providing curative care services in cooperation with UNHCR and the World Health Organization through the hospitals of the Ministry of Health and Population. Nearly 300,000 primary health care services were provided to refugees through the basic care units and centers of the Ministry of Health and Population from 2015 to mid-2019. Refugees were also included to benefit from the 2019 presidential initiative “100 million health” for Hepatitis C screening and treatment.

With regard to educational services; Syrian, Yemeni and Sudanese students are granted full access to public education, and are enrolled in public schools and have been exempted from tuition fees for the 2019/2020 academic year. Palestinian students in public schools are also exempted from paying the traditional tuition fees set for international students and asylum-seeker children of other nationalities who are not granted access to public education continue to rely on community or private schools. The Egyptian government is also keen on designing recreational activities to promote integration between Egyptian students and refugee/asylum seeker students. In this regard, it should be noted that the number of foreign students -

including refugees - enrolled in Egyptian schools for the 2019/2020 academic year reached 85,539 students, of whom 48,170 are enrolled in public schools.

COVID-19 Response:

The Minister of Education gave permission to Egyptian public schools to accept admission of refugee and asylum-seeking students registered with UNHCR in Cairo whose residency has expired for the 2020/2021 academic year, taking into account the exceptional circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Education was also keen this past year to promote the use of modern technology to help refugee students who were unable to attend school regularly by facilitating the use of online educational platforms.

The Government of Egypt is also committed to the 'One Refugee' approach which entails that equal assistance and quality of services are provided to all refugees and asylum-seekers regardless of their nationality. Improving quality of life and welfare for people living in Egypt is one of the main objectives of the "Egypt's vision 2030" launched by the Government in 2015 to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These national developmental priorities are being implemented with a strong commitment to the principle of leave - no - one behind" as an integral responsibility sharing pillar of the Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In addition to the above, refugees benefit from the support and subsidies provided by the government to its citizens in terms of basic goods and services. The Egyptian government is cooperating with international bodies working in Egypt which are concerned with immigration and asylum issues, to support refugees who are considered to be among the most vulnerable groups. These organizations have supported the efforts of the Egyptian government and the Ministry of Health and Population to limit the spread of the pandemic among migrants, refugees and their Egyptian host communities.

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic represented an unprecedented challenge in the international arena, and the Egyptian government has been keen since the beginning of the crisis to provide protection and support to the refugees on its territory and to make all health and medical services available to them on an equal footing with citizens within the national efforts to confront the pandemic. Accordingly, the GoE put in place a series of

measures to alleviate pressure on migrants. Some examples are the provision of medical health on equal level with Egyptians and applying flexibility in visa expiration dates, which falls under objective 5 of the GCM: enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.

The Egyptian government suspended all procedures pertaining to deporting and returning migrants who are currently present on its territory to avoid exposing them to health risks that could result from movement and travel in light of the current circumstances. Access to preventive health services (masks and protective equipment) and food services to migrants and refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic was provided, with support from international organizations.

Egypt is one of the first countries to join the International Call to Action: “Remittances in Crisis: How to Keep Them Flowing” when launched in May 2020. This initiative is spearheaded by the Embassy of Switzerland and the Embassy of the United Kingdom, in order to mitigate and combat the negative socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, on migrants, and refugees and the local economy. The Call to Action is designed to highlight the vital role that remittances play in supporting hundreds of millions of people around the world, and to generate momentum around a number of important measures that can keep remittances flows moving in the crisis. Among the first countries to join the call are Egypt, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Jordan.

Moreover, The National Coordinating Committee for Preventing and Combating Illegal migration and Trafficking in Persons (NCCPIM&TIP) is working on identifying and collecting job opportunities and entrepreneurship for youth and publishing them in their webpage, as part of creating alternatives for all the people who are losing their jobs due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Protecting Victims of smuggling and trafficking

Egypt ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) in 2004 and Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (2005), supplementing UNTOC.

There is a comprehensive legal framework that addresses trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and penalize the perpetrators of both crimes, while ensuring protection and assistance to the victims.

An inter-ministerial national committee was established by a Decree from the Prime Minister to Combat irregular migration and trafficking in persons NCCPIM&TIP and 29 ministries and national institutions are

represented in this Committee to ensure policy coherence and effective implementation of the national strategy. The Committee is implementing the 2016-2021 National strategy for Combating Trafficking in Persons, as well as the National Strategy on Combating Illegal Migration for the period (2016-2026), in addition to biannual Plans of Actions.

The GoE established a shelter to host victims and vulnerable Egyptian women and girls at-risk and Victims of Trafficking (VoTs). The shelter is an inter-ministerial effort that will help realize the national strategy to prevent and respond to protection needs of the victims. The shelter supports the rehabilitation efforts of the government towards the victims and strengthen the national protection framework.

The Ministry of Social Solidarity has sought out to build capacity of over 100 social workers and their supervisors on trafficking in persons, the training will support the social workers to better identify and respond to needs of victims and those at-risk of trafficking.

In 2018, the National Council for Childhood & Motherhood (NCCM) and the National Council for Women (NCW) expanded its hotline response to become more accessible to victims and those at-risk of trafficking. This included a full capacity building programme to ensure the hotlines and their operators are well-equipped to respond to needs of callers. This step is expected to strengthen the government's identification efforts to reach more of those in need.

Since 2017, the NCCPIM&TiP conducted more than 92 trainings to enhance the capacity of Egyptian agencies working on combating trafficking in persons & smuggling of migrants. These trainings aimed at strengthening the understanding of trafficking and protection of victims and shed light on the ethical considerations when reporting on victims of trafficking.