

Egypt
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BASIC INFORMATION

Official Name: Arab Republic of Egypt or Egypt.

Capital: Cairo

Estimated population: 71,897,547 (January 2005)

Websites

CIA - The World Factbook - Egypt

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/eg.html>

Al-Ahram newspaper

<http://www.ahram.org.eg/>

Map of Egypt

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/egypt_pol97.jpg

SUMMARY

Egypt is situated in the north-east of Africa, with the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Red Sea on the east. Egypt borders Libya to the west, Sudan to the south and Israel to the east. The area of Egypt is 1,02 million square kilometres. The capital is Cairo, and other main cities are Giza, Alexandria, Luxor, Aswan, Port Said, Ismaileya, Marsa Matrouh, El Arish and Suez. Egypt is divided into 26 governorates. The main ethnic groups are Eastern Hamitic stock (Egyptians, Berbers and Bedouins) who comprise 99%; Nubian; Armenian; Italian; and Greek communities. The main religious groups are Sunni Muslim and Coptic Orthodox Christians. Other religious groups include Roman Catholic, Coptic Catholic, Protestants and there are a small number of Shia Muslims, Bahais and Jews. Arabic is the official language.

Websites

CIA - The World Factbook - Egypt

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/eg.html>

US State Department Report on Human Rights Practices 2002 - Egypt

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18274.htm>

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Historical Background

‘Civilization’ has existed in Egypt for approximately 5,000 years. In the Neolithic period, nomad hunters settled in the Nile valley. In early Pharaonic times there were two kingdoms of Lower and Upper Egypt. Menes (approx. 3000 BC) was able to unite the kingdoms and wore the double crown of north and south. The Old Kingdom (2757 – 2134 BC) had a strong central government based in Memphis, which was also the religious centre and was characterised by the age of the pyramids, of which the Giza pyramids and the step pyramid of Sakkara are the most famous. The Middle Kingdom (approx. 2040 – 1640 BC) collapsed with the invasion of the Hyksos. The New Kingdom (approx. 1550 – 1070 BC) established its capital in Thebes (Luxor). During this period, Egypt’s rule extended to parts of Syria and Palestine. However a deterioration of the power of the pharaohs and a rise in the power of the priests

weakened the central government. Egypt was successively invaded by Libyans, Ethiopians, Assyrians and Persians.

In 332 BC, Alexander the Great conquered Egypt and made it part of the Greek Empire. Upon Alexander's death, his Macedonian general, Ptolemy I, became the ruler of Egypt. The Ptolemies ruled Egypt for three hundred years during which the country was the centre of Greek culture. The last Ptolemy, Cleopatra the Seventh was defeated by the armies of the Romans and Egypt became part of the Roman Empire.

In 642, Egypt was conquered by the Arabs and became an Islamic country. In 969, the Fatimids decided to move their caliphate from Tunis to Egypt and built Cairo as their capital. The Fatimid dynasty ruled from Cairo until 1171 when Salah El Din El-Ayubi (Saladin) took power and established the Ayubid dynasty. In 1250, with the murder of the Ayubid Turanshah, the Mameluks came to power and established the Mameluk dynasty. In 1517, with the defeat of the last Mameluk Sultan Tuman Bey at the hands of the Ottoman army, Egypt became part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1798, Napoleon's French expedition to Egypt placed the country under French rule for a brief period (1798 – 1801). After the French withdrew from Egypt, it returned to the status of semi-autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire. In 1805, Mohamed Ali Pasha, an Albanian soldier, was appointed governor *wali* by Istanbul. Mohamed Ali got rid of the remaining Mameluk princes and leaders and set about establishing an Egyptian army and modernising the country. During his reign, Egypt controlled Sudan as well as parts of Arabia. Ali Pasha's grandson, Khedive Ismail, saw the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In 1882, British military troops landed in Egypt to quell a rebellion and remained as occupying forces. In 1914, Egypt was declared a British protectorate. In 1936, Egypt gained its independence but the British retained its troops in the country.

In 1952, an army officer, Gamal Abdel Nasser overthrew King Farouk, and in 1953 Egypt was declared a republic. The last British troops withdrew completely from Egypt in 1956. In 1958, Egypt and Syria united briefly to form the United Arab Republic, a union which disintegrated in 1962. Tensions between Israel and its neighbours - Egypt, Syria and Jordan - led to the outbreak of the Six Day War in June 1967 during which Israel inflicted heavy losses on the Arab armies. Nasser ruled until his death in 1970 and was succeeded by his vice president, Anwar Sadat. In 1977, Sadat shocked the world by flying to Israel as an overture for peace and in 1979 Egypt signed the Egyptian – Israeli Peace Treaty. Sadat was killed by army officers in 1981 and was succeeded by the current president, Hosni Mubarak.

1.2 Politics

According to the Egyptian Constitution, the country is a social democracy and Islam is the state religion. The President is elected every six years. President Mubarak has been in power since 1981. There are two governing bodies: the Legislative People's Assembly and the consultative Shura Council which are made up of elected as well as presidentially-appointed members. The President also appoints the Cabinet as well as the country's 26 Governors. Egypt has fought four wars with its neighbour Israel and in 1979 was the first Arab country to sign a peace agreement with the Israeli state. The Emergency Law has been in place in Egypt since 1981 and has been extended every three years, the last time being in 2003.

Websites

US State Department Report on Human Rights Practices 2002
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18274.htm>

Geography, society and economy

Egypt's population is largely concentrated in the Nile Valley while the rest of the country is mostly desert. The main cash crop is cotton. Egypt is self sufficient in energy, having petroleum and natural gas reserves. Main revenue sources are tourism, petroleum remittances from Egyptians working abroad and the Suez Canal (Central Bank of Egypt). Unemployment in Egypt is currently at 10.7%. Egypt has a high birth rate with a child birth every 23.6 seconds. Egypt's population is expected to reach 96 million by 2026. Egypt is an emigration country with 1.9 million migrant workers, most of whom are working in Saudi Arabia, Libya, Jordan and Kuwait (*Al-Ahram*, 2004).

Websites

Central Bank of Egypt
<http://cbe.org.eg/>

Al-Ahram newspaper
<http://www.ahram.org.eg/>

1.3 Historical asylum

Egypt reputedly extended refuge to the Holy Family; according to the Bible an angel appeared to St. Joseph in a dream and instructed him to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt and to remain there until it was safe to return to Palestine. "Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you."
-Matthew 2:13.

2. CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

2.1 Origin of Refugees in Egypt

The number of refugees in Egypt is unknown. Representing one of the five largest urban populations in the 'developing world' (Sperl 2001), estimates vary widely from 500,000 to 3 million. According to the US Committee of Refugees, in 2003, there were about 3m Sudanese living in Egypt and it is not known how many of those feared persecution and how many resided in Egypt for economic or other reasons (USCRI – World Refugee Survey - Egypt Report 2004). The UNDP's 2004 Human Development Report indicated that the number of refugees in Egypt was 89,000 (UNDP 2004). The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has assumed responsibility for status determination. By the end of 2004 it reported 20,428 recognized refugees. Over the period 1997 to 2003, the UNHCR has rejected some 32,000 asylum cases (UNHCR, Cairo), and since most people seeking asylum are unable to return, it is safe to assume the numbers of refugees in Egypt is far higher.

Refugees in Egypt are made up of some 36 different nationalities. The largest refugee group is from Sudan, followed by Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. There are also refugees from Afghanistan, Burundi, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone,

Yemen, and many other Africans, as well as other nationalities (UNHCR Regional Office (RO) - Cairo: Egypt's Refugee Population 2004).

There are an estimated 70,000 Palestinian refugees in Egypt, the majority from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and most of whom have fled Palestine in 1948 and 1967 (UNHCR RO - Cairo: Egypt's Refugee Population 2004)

Websites

United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants – Egypt Report 2004

<http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?subm=&ssm=&cid=96>

UNDP Human Development Report 2004

http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/pdf/hdr04_HDI.pdf

2.2 Refugees in Egypt

While Egypt has opened its borders to refugees, it has not requested international aid to address the refugee situation. There are no refugee camps in Egypt and the majority of the refugees live in urban areas such as the capital, Cairo, and Alexandria which is the country's main port and second largest city.

2.3 Conflict-Induced Displacement

In the last two decades, Egypt has become host to refugees fleeing conflicts in Africa and Asia. The possibility of obtaining a one-month tourist visa at the airport upon arrival has made entry to Egypt relatively easy for many asylum seekers. Egypt is country of first asylum for many people but there are no local integration prospects. Refugees who fit the criteria are resettled in third countries and this is believed to constitute a pull factor effect for migrating to Egypt.

2.3.1 Refugee Communities in Egypt

Sudanese refugees

The 19 year old civil war in Sudan has caused the displacement of an estimated 500,000 Sudanese to eight neighbouring African countries: Egypt, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Chad, Central African Republic, Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of Congo (US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2002).

The largest refugee group in Egypt is the Sudanese who make up 73% of asylum seekers in Egypt (UNHCR RO Cairo 2003). By the end of 2004, *there were 14,999* Sudanese refugees recognised by the UNHCR. The Sudanese refugees in Egypt come from all parts of Sudan, although the southern Sudanese make up the largest group (Sperl, 2001). According to the UNHCR Regional Office in Cairo, in 2004 southern Sudanese made up 61% of the Sudanese recognised refugee community. Sudanese refugees are made up of different ethnicities and speak different languages as well. Whereas the majority of northern, western and central Sudanese are Muslims, southern Sudanese are predominantly Christian.

Historically, Egypt and Sudan have enjoyed excellent relations. There were many bilateral agreements signed between the two countries allowing for the free passage of people and goods across the Sudanese-Egyptian border. In 1994, the Egyptian government requested that the UNHCR screen Sudanese asylum seekers. In 1995,

after an assassination attempt on Egyptian President Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in which it was believed that the Sudanese government was implicated (Hassan, 2000). Egypt closed its borders and applied visa requirements on Sudanese nationals. Sudanese who entered Egypt to reside after that date were required to hold a residence permit (Sperl, 2001).

As of 1 June 2004, the UNHCR RO Cairo has stopped registering all Sudanese asylum seekers for Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews and is only issuing them with yellow cards (temporary protection). The yellow cards are valid until the end of 2004. The UNHCR has stated that by the end of 2004 the situation in Sudan will be reviewed and a decision will be taken regarding the status of the Sudanese refugees in Egypt. The UNHCR stated that if the situation remains the same, the temporary protection for the Sudanese asylum seekers will be extended. If the situation improves, the UNHCR will promote voluntary repatriation. It will give *prima facie* recognition if the situation worsens. On 1 December 2004, the UNHCR Cairo decided to extend the temporary protection for Sudanese refugees in Egypt until June 1, 2005. All Sudanese asylum seekers presenting themselves at a UNHCR office are registered and issued with a UNHCR yellow card and are entitled to renewable six-month residence permits. Sudanese refugees in Cairo are mostly concentrated in Maadi, Nasr City, Heliopolis and Ain Shams (UNHCR, 2003b).

Websites

US State Department – Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2002 – Sudan
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18228.htm>

US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants – World Refugee Survey 2004 Country Report Sudan
<http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?subm=&ssm=&cid=170>

Somali refugees

By the end of 2004, the second largest group of refugees after the Sudanese by the end of 2004 were the 3,734 Somali refugees recognised by the UNHCR, and which make up 18% of the refugee population in Egypt (UNHCR RO Cairo, 2003). Somali refugees fled Somalia after the eruption of the power struggle brought about by the fall of Barre's regime. There are an estimated to be 75,000 Somali refugees living in the Middle East (in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Libya) (Al-Sharmani, 2003)

Somali refugees in Cairo live in two main neighbourhoods: Ard il Liwa in Giza and Nasr City. Most of the Somali refugees in Egypt belong to one of five clan families: Darood, Hawiye, Issaq, Dir and Rahenweyn, although there are also others from minority clans (Al-Sharmani, 2003).

Ethiopian Refugees

By the end of 2004, there were 459 Ethiopian refugees recognised by the UNHCR in Egypt. The Ethiopian refugees make up 2% of the total refugee population recognised by the UNHCR (UNHCR RO Cairo, 2004). Ethiopian refugees fled to Egypt in three waves: between 1977 – 1979 to escape the Mengistu regime: between 1991 – 1992

with the fall of the regime; and in 1998 – 2000 as a result of the border conflict with Eritrea, as well as the suppression of civil liberties and economic hardship (Zohry and Harrell-Bond, 2003)

Eritrean Refugees

The number of Eritrean refugees recognised by the UNHCR in Egypt by the end of 2004 was 158. In 2000, the invocation of the cessation clause by the UNHCR and the Eritrean government caused Eritrean refugees in Sudan to flee to Egypt because of their fear of forcible repatriation. Eritrean refugees in Sudan lost their refugee status by end of 2002. It is estimated that the Ethiopians and Eritreans in Egypt number around 5000, the majority of whom have had their asylum claims rejected by the UNHCR (Zohry and Harrell-Bond, 2003) (UNHCR, Eritrean refugees in Sudan screened for political asylum, 2002).

Yemeni refugees

By the end of 2004 there were 319 Yemeni refugees recognised by the UNHCR in Egypt (UNHCR RO Cairo, 2003). In 2002, 137 Yemenis who expressed their wish to repatriate voluntarily were assisted by the UNHCR to return home (UNHCR, Country Operations Plan: Egypt 2004). Some Yemenis in Egypt have not applied for asylum.

Development-induced displacement

After the Egyptian government decided to go ahead with plans to build the High Dam in the south of the country in 1963, it started the relocation of the Nubian communities living between Aswan and the border with Sudan. The Nubians are an ethnic group and the Nubian population involved then numbered approximately 100,000. In 1963 to 1964, the Nubians were resettled to Kom Ombo. The displacement of the Nubians from their traditional homes to new ones had a number of effects: changes in agricultural methods as well as problems concerning food and water (Zohry and Harrell-Bond, 2003).

Refugees from Egypt

In 2003, there were an estimated 2,000 Egyptians seeking asylum in Western countries (USCRI 2004). According to the UNDP's 2004 Human Development Report, during 2003, there were 1000 Egyptians who applied for asylum in other countries.

Websites

UNHCR, Country Operations Plan: Egypt 2004

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=RSDCOI&id=3fd9c62d4&page=home>

United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants – Egypt Report 2004

<http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?subm=&ssm=&cid=96>

UNDP Human Development Report 2004

http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/pdf/hdr04_HDI.pdf

3. NEEDS AND RESPONSES

3.1 Policies towards refugees

According to Article 53 of the Egyptian Constitution: “*The right to Political Asylum shall be guaranteed by the State for every foreigner persecuted for defending the peoples' interests, human rights, peace or justice. The extradition of political refugees is prohibited*” (Constitution after amendments of May 22, 1980).

In an agreement signed between the Egyptian Government and the UNHCR on 10 February 1954, the UNHCR opened its first office in the Arab world in Cairo (UNHCR, 2001). The UNHCR was assigned the task of caring for the stateless refugee population living in Egypt (Sperl, 2001). The stateless population at that time consisted of Russians, Armenian, Yugoslavs, Albanians, Hungarians, Czechs, Bulgarians, Polish, Romanians, and Estonians (*Cairo Times*, ‘Where does the son of a country go?’). According to the 1954 agreement, the UNHCR was also entrusted with:

- A) Cooperation with the government authorities in order to undertake the census and identify the refugees eligible under the mandate of the High Commissioner.
- B) Facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees.
- C) Encourage, in cooperation with the Egyptian government and the international organizations competent in immigration matters, the initiative leading to the resettlement, in every possible measure, in the countries of immigration, of the refugees residing in Egypt.
- D) Assist, within the limits of the funds received to this effect, the most destitute refugees under the mandate of the High Commissioner.
- E) Ensure the coordination of the activities undertaken in Egypt in favour of the refugees under the mandate of the High Commissioner, by the welfare societies duly authorised by the government.

On 12 June 1980, Egypt ratified the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which builds on the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol by considering that “*the term ‘refugee’ shall also apply to every person who owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality*” (UNHCR, 2000).

Egypt was one of the drafting members of the 1951 Convention (Goodwin-Gill: 1996) and acceded to the Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees on 22 May 1981. Although it was always believed that Egypt has no domestic refugee legislation, in 1984, Presidential decree no. 188 called for the creation of a permanent committee in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to review asylum applications and grant refugee status:

“The President of the Republic, after consulting the constitution and law no. 453 of 1955 concerning the organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as presidential decree no. 331 of 1980 concerning the accession to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees signed in Geneva on 28/7/1951, and based on what was presented by the Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Foreign Affairs has decided:

Article 1

The creation of a permanent committee for Refugee affairs located in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to be presided by one of the Assistants of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and whose members would consist of representatives from the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Interior and the Presidency of the Republic.

Article 2

The above mentioned committee shall review asylum applications to grant refugee status as per the Refugee Convention signed in Geneva on 28/7/1951. The committee shall send its recommendations to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and whose decision would therein be considered final.

Article 3

Rules currently applying to those dealing with the Office of the Political Refugees in the Presidency of the Republic, shall remain in force.

Article 4

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs are to implement this decree.

Issued in the Presidency of the Republic on 15 May 1984.”

However, it is not publicly known if this committee has ever taken any decision regarding the granting of refugee status and if it exists or functions. The determination of refugee status in Egypt is undertaken by the UNHCR which have been unsuccessfully trying to hand over this responsibility to the Egyptian Government for the past few years (Kagan, 2002)

Egypt made five reservations to the 1951 Convention: article 12 (1) (personal status); article 20 (rationing); article 22 (1) (access to primary education); article 23 (public relief and assistance) and article 24 (labour legislation and social security) (UNHCR, 2003b).

The response of the Egyptian government has been quite positive in regard to the protection needs of refugees. The government cooperates with the UNHCR. However the government opposes any suggestion of integrating refugees into Egyptian society and the presence of the refugees is seen as temporary, only until they are resettled to a third country. The Egyptian government considers resettlement as a form of burden sharing (Sperl, 2001). Refugee status determination (RSD) in Egypt is carried out by the UNHCR, based on the agreement signed between the UNHCR and the Government of Egypt in 1954. In 2002, there have been no records of Egypt forcibly returning any person to a country where they feared persecution. (US State Department Report 2002).

However, asylum seekers whose claims have been rejected by the UNHCR and have been unable or unwilling to return to their home countries, live under constant threat of detention and deportation (Grindell, 2003).

Websites

Kagan, 2002

http://www.aucegypt.edu/academic/fmrs/Affiliation_Opportunities/Asylumprocedures.pdf

US State Department Report 2002 - Egypt
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18274.htm>

3.2 Rights and Legal Status

According to the Egyptian Government, there are three categories of recognised refugees in Egypt: political asylees; refugees (registered with the UNHCR); and Palestinian refugees.

Political asylees were officially received in modern Egypt for the first time in 1917, when Egypt's Sultan, Hussein Kamal, formally granted asylum to members of the Ceasar family who had fled the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Over the years, Egypt has granted political asylum to a number of kings, presidents, ministers and government officials. Among these include famous figures such as the former Shah of Iran, the former King of Libya, the last King of Yugoslavia, the King of Albania, former Tunisian President Habib Bou Requeba, Imam El Khomeini, Aly El-Saady, Secretary-General of the Iraqi Baath Party, former Syrian President Shoukri El Quwetelly, Lauran Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and former President of Sudan Gaafar Numeri (Khattab, 2002).

Refugees registered with the UNHCR are persons who have fled their own country and arrived in Egypt seeking asylum. Asylum seekers are given an individual refugee status determination interview and if they are found to fit the criteria of a refugee under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol and/or the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention, are recognised as refugees and granted protection (the UNHCR is the decision maker in Egypt). Egypt is considered as a 'first country of asylum', and from Egypt refugees may be resettled to Canada, Australia, USA and Finland. Due to the reservations Egypt entered when signing the 1951 Convention, there are almost no local integration prospects for refugees in Egypt.

Palestinian refugees first began arriving in Egypt in 1948 and were granted asylum by the Egyptian Government. The Higher Committee for Palestinian Immigrant Affairs was established on May 9, 1948, and was the body responsible for the affairs of the Palestinian refugees in Egypt (Brand, 1988).

Recognition of Refugee Status

Political asylees are granted asylum by a Government decree and their affairs are regulated by the Office of Political Asylee Affairs – Presidency of the Republic (Law 26 of 1975). More recently, some political asylees have also obtained the UNHCR blue refugee card.

All refugees in Egypt are registered with the UNHCR. In 1998, the Egyptian government agreed to the introduction of a Refugee Identity Card issued by the UNHCR RO Cairo (UNHCR, 2001). Recognised refugees are provided with the UNHCR blue refugee card, which is stamped by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior (Refugee Affairs section in the Department of Migration and Citizenship). The renewable residence permit (which has a duration of six months) is also provided with the refugee card. Since November 2002, asylum seekers who have

applied for refugee status at the UNHCR and are awaiting their eligibility interview are given a UNHCR yellow card, with the case number and the date of the refugee status determination interview (UNHCR, 2003a). According to the UNHCR RO Cairo in 2003, the time period between refugee registration and the refugee status determination interview was six months. Results of the refugee status determination interview are usually issued two weeks after the interview (UNHCR, 2003a).

At present, the Palestinian refugees section in the Department of Migration and Citizenship, Ministry of the Interior is the office that issues documentation for the Palestinian refugees in Egypt. As the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has never operated in Egypt, Palestinian refugees in Egypt fall under the UNHCR's mandate according to Article 1 D of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees: Persons already receiving United Nations Protection or Assistance *"This convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees protection or assistance. When such protection or assistance has ceased for any reason, without the position of such persons being definitively settled in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, these persons shall ipso facto be entitled to the benefits of this Convention"*

However, the UNHCR in Egypt hardly offers any protection or assistance to the Palestinian refugees in country, whom the Egyptian government considers to fall under its competence. Some Palestinian refugees approach the UNHCR Cairo office for help with residence permits and family reunification (UNHCR, Country Operations Plan 2004). There are about 216 Palestinian refugees in Egypt who are registered with the UNHCR in Cairo and who hold UNHCR blue cards (UNHCR RO Cairo, 2003).

Travel Documents

Political asylees and Palestinian refugees are issued with a five year travel document or *laissez-passer*. Whereas refugees (registered with the UNHCR) can, in principle, apply for Convention Travel documents at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as per Article 7 of the 1954 Agreement between the UNHCR and the Egyptian Government which stipulates that *"The Egyptian government will grant to said refugees, when they have to travel abroad, travel documents with return visa, of a limited, but sufficient, duration, except if reasons of public security prevent it."* In reality, however, travel documents are not automatically granted but rather occasionally and on a case-by-case basis.

Residency permits

According to decree no. 8180 of 1996, issued by the Ministry of the Interior, all three categories of refugees obtain a three-year temporary residency permit, unless otherwise indicated but in the case of the Palestinians, this depends on when they arrived.

Employment

Political Asylees

Decree No. 390 of 1982, which regulates the procedures for obtaining work permits for foreigners, specifies that the political asylee must obtain a recommendation

permitting employment for foreigners from the Office of Asylee Affairs – Presidency of the Republic (Clause 2). Clause 11 of decree no. 390 specifies that the principle of giving priority to Egyptians over foreigners in employment is waived in the case of the political asylee as long as he/she obtains the agreement of the employers.

Palestinian refugees

Palestinian refugees are required to obtain a work permit in order to work.

Refugees registered with the UNHCR

Although Egypt did not make any reservations to articles 17 or 18 (wage-earning employment or self-employment), this issue is regulated by Egypt's local labour legislation, Law no. 12 of 2003 concerning the employment of foreigners. In effect, refugees registered with the UNHCR are not allowed to work and very few obtain work permits. However, the residence permit stamp was modified recently and currently the phrase 'work prohibited' is absent.

According to Article 5 of Decree 136 of 2003 concerning the Conditions and Procedures of Granting Work Licenses to Foreigners, refugees and foreigners alike are required to pay the full fee which is 1004 LE (US\$ 161), however, according to Article 6 of the same decree, some nationalities are exempt from paying this fee, such as Sudanese, Palestinians holding travel documents issued by the Arab Republic of Egypt or by the Palestinian Authority, as well as Greeks and Italians who have been living in Egypt for a period of not less than five years. They are only required to pay the price of the work permit card which is 4 LE (US\$ 0.75).

Most refugees find employment in the informal sector: street peddling, construction labour and domestic work.

Education

Although Egypt made reservations to Article 22 (1) of the 1951 Convention which is access to primary education, in 2000 the Egyptian Minister of Education decided to implement a 1992 ministerial decree (No. 24 of 1992) that allowed the children of recognised refugees from Sudan to enrol and attend Egyptian public schools (*Cairo Times*, 2001). However, despite this in reality Egyptian public schools are overcrowded with waiting lists for Egyptian children, which makes it rather difficult for refugee children to gain entry. According to the same ministerial decree, children of Sudanese, Libyan and Jordanian political asylees are also permitted to attend public schools (Afifi, 2003). Refugee children who are accepted into public or refugee schools may receive a UNHCR educational grant worth L.E. 600 (approximately US\$ 100) per year until grade 9 (*UNHCR*, 2003a). Sudanese and Palestinian refugee and asylum seeker children are treated like Egyptian children in terms of school admission and tuition fees, whereas refugee and asylum seeker children of all other nationalities are charged a tuition fee set by the Foreign Students Department.

During the late 1970s and the 1980s, the UNHCR Cairo office ran a scholarship programme to enable Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees displaced in Somalia, Djibouti and Sudan to come to Egypt and receive educational and training qualifications (Sperl, 2001).

Assistance

There is no assistance available for refugees from the Egyptian government.

Websites

Cairo Times, 2001

<http://www.cairotimes.com/content/archiv05/refugees.html>

3.3 UNHCR and its implementing partners

In 2003, the UNHCR worked with five implementing partners: Caritas Egypt, Catholic Relief Services, St. Andrews Church, the Family Planning Association and Refuge Egypt, to provide assistance and services to refugees (UNHCR, Country Operations Plan 2004). The UNHCR's less prominent implementing partners include El-Nadim Centre for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (Sperl, 2001), which offers psychological counselling to refugees' victims of torture.

Caritas Egypt

Refugees recognised by the UNHCR are assisted by Caritas, the UNHCR's main implementing partner. Refugees receive a one-time or monthly financial subsistence allowance depending on family size, vulnerability and medical needs. During 2004, the UNHCR changed the assistance program so that only "vulnerable cases" such as families with five or more members, single female headed households, separated children, elderly refugees, refugees with serious medical disabilities or chronic illnesses, were eligible to receive monthly allowances. Caritas also assists refugees with medical problems, providing up to 25% of the cost of the doctors' fees and medicines and up to 50% of the costs of hospitalization, X-rays and lab tests. In chronic cases, Caritas covers 50% of the cost of doctors' fees, medicines, hospitalization, X-rays and lab tests, and in exceptionally destitute cases provides 100% coverage for hospitalization charges. In 2004, Caritas opened another office in the Mattareya district of Cairo.

Catholic Relief Services

The Catholic Relief Service (CRS) has been a UNHCR implementing partner since 2002. CRS administers educational grants for school children as well as illiterate adults. During 2004, CRS provided 3244 educational grants to refugee children. At the end of 2004 and, for the first time, the CRS will provide educational grants for a limited number of children of asylum seekers.

The Family Planning Association

The Cairo Family Planning Association (CFPA) began its refugee program in 1993 after an agreement with the UNHCR to provide health education for refugee women. Currently the CFPA offers four services for refugees: skills training (cooking, sewing, handicrafts and embroidery) and first aid training. There are five clinics that provide medical treatment. The CFPA also organises an annual event for refugees.

SOS

The UNHCR has a sub-agreement with SOS, a transit home for separated children. The home provides a flat that houses six to eight unaccompanied refugee children.

Assistance from Church groups

There are a number of churches that offer assistance and services to refugees:

All Saints Cathedral – Refuge Egypt (a ministry of the Episcopal Church)

All Saints Cathedral – Refuge Egypt assists African people living in Cairo, who have been displaced by war or disaster or who have a well founded fear of return because of persecution or loss of rights. Refuge Egypt also provides services to UNHCR-registered refugees.

Refuge Egypt mainly targets the asylum seekers who have not yet been recognised as refugees. Asylum seekers need to be registered with Refuge Egypt in order to benefit from their assistance programs.

Refuge Egypt's food program distributes basic foodstuffs: oil, sugar, rice, powdered milk and lentils to pregnant women, large families, TB-infected refugees and single-parent households (Hassan, 2000). Refuge Egypt provides health care, education, advocacy and 'spiritual encouragement'. Refuge Egypt has a medical centre at All Saints Cathedral and recently a clinic was opened at the school for refugee children in Arba Wa Nuss, an informal settlement on the outskirts of Cairo and where very needy refugees live.

The medical centre at All Saints has four programs: general clinics, TB, women's health and torture assessment.

Refuge Egypt offers training programs for refugees in order to acquaint them with the kind of work they might be able to find. A certificate is given upon completion of the training and shows the kind of skills the person has acquired. Refugees are later assisted in finding employment. Most employment is in the informal sector such as domestic cleaners and babysitters.

Refuge Egypt also has the Tukul crafts project which offers training and income generation for the displaced. Sudanese refugees receive training in skills such as painting, design, tailoring and silk screen painting. There is a Tukul crafts shop in the premises of the Cathedral where the products made by the refugees are displayed and sold.

Refuge Egypt is supported by Tearfund, the UNHCR, the Church of Scotland, Bible Lands and Archbishop of Sydney (Refuge Egypt, 2002).

St. Andrews Refugee Ministry

St Andrews Refugee Ministry was founded in 1979. It offers assistance to refugees through its various programs:

Educational programs for children

Refugee children who cannot go to public schools and cannot afford to pay fees for private schools can attend classes at St. Andrews. Classes of English, Maths, Science and information technology are offered. There are also sports classes. There are about 120 students at the school. There is also a summer school programme, which offers classes in English, Art, Drama and Sports (St. Andrews Refugee Ministry).

Educational programs for Adults

There are classes of English, Business English, Drama, Creative Writing and Computer Literacy. These classes are offered in order to help refugees who might get

resettled adapt more quickly to an English speaking environment, as well as find employment. There are about 1200 participants in the adult educational program each year (St. Andrews Refugee Ministry).

African Arts and Crafts

St. Andrews offers handicraft classes to refugees in order that they learn to use their skills. There is a handicrafts shop where refugees can sell their products. There are classes in art, jewellery making and sewing (St. Andrews Refugee Ministry). St. Andrews Church also works with the German Church to provide refugees with classes in carpentry (Ferris, 2000).

Refugees applying for the educational programs at St. Andrews are requested to go through a screening process in order to make sure that they are asylum seekers and not economic migrants.

The Sacred Heart Church (Sakakini)

The Sacred Heart Church runs educational programs for children and adults, a clinic, assistance programs and legal aid (Musa'ideen)

The church runs five schools for refugee children:

St. Lwanga Centre for Basic Education is located in the Sacred Heart Church premises, with classes from KG to Senior 1. The church also has a small clinic which provides services for school children and their teachers. Teachers are from the refugee community. The classes follow the Egyptian curriculum. In 2003/2004, there were 1700 children registered at the school, the majority of Sudanese nationality

St. Bakhita Centre for Basic Education is located in the informal settlement area of Arba Wa Nus, there are 350 school children registered in the school and 13 teachers.

St. Joseph Centre for Basic Education is located in the Maadi area. In 2003/2004 there were 128 registered students and 13 refugee teachers. All students are of Sudanese nationality. Classes are from kindergarten to level three primary. The classes follow the Egyptian curriculum. Children are also taught computer literacy.

Father Sina Educational Centre

The Father Sina Educational Centre is located in the Shubra area of Cairo. Currently it has two secondary school classes with 60 students and 15 teachers. The classes follow the Egyptian curriculum. In 2005 – 2006, the centre will open a third class: Secondary 3, following the Egyptian Secondary Education model.

Canossian Social Centre

The Canossian Social centre is located in Helmet Zeitoun in Cairo and has three classes for children. The majority of the children are Sudanese but there are some Egyptians as well. In 2004, there were about 60 children enrolled at the centre. The teachers are from the refugee community. The centre also offers vocational training classes for adults in sewing and computer literacy.

Educational Programs for Adults

The Sacred Heart Church (Sakakini) offers classes in English, Computer, Accounting and Literacy. In 2003, most of the adult student population were Somalis and Ethiopians.

Sudanese Refugee Child Sports Association

The Sudanese Refugee Child Sports Association offers sports activities such as soccer, basketball, netball, karate and boxing for Sudanese refugee children.

The Coptic Orthodox Cathedral

The Coptic Orthodox Cathedral is the first Coptic Church to provide assistance for refugees. The Church currently provides some material and spiritual assistance only to Sudanese refugees. Money is regularly distributed to refugees at the beginning of the month and there is a possibility of extra material assistance for needy refugees given out on a case by case basis. The Church distributes children's clothes in Christmas and Easter and sponsors a limited number of Sudanese to attend the Cathedral's religious training college.

Maadi Community Church

The Maadi Community Church only assists refugees who belong to the Church. The Church's offers English courses for refugee children and adults, counselling sessions for refugees as well as the Sudanese Refugee Child Sport Program, which offers space and facilities for refugee children to play football and basketball. There are also karate and athletics classes.

African Hope School

The African Hope School is a school for African refugee children run by the Maadi Community Church, it has about 400 students with ages ranging from 3 to 16 years. The teachers are from the refugee community.

Heliopolis Community Church

Family Fund is the branch of the Heliopolis Community Church concerned with refugees. Apart from spiritual services, the church offers material services to refugees: distribution of blankets, clothing and food; job placement; and financial assistance.

Community Services

Musa'ideen

Created in 1998 by the church communities in Cairo, Musa'ideen is a group of refugees who help other refugees, by offering classes and information sessions about the procedures for applying for refugee status with the UNHCR. Musa'ideen also help the refugees' candidates for resettlement to fill the application forms for the different embassies. Musa'ideen work in All Saints' Cathedral, St. Andrews Church, Sakakini Church and Maadi Community Church.

Somali Refugee Committee of Egypt (SRCOE)

The Somali Refugee Committee of Egypt was established in 2001. SRCOE is a program that provides education for Somali refugees in Cairo. There are English language classes for adults and home-schooling classes for children. In 2004, there were 50 children and 70 adults enrolled with SRCOE.

Sons of Sudan Charity Association

The Sons of Sudan Charity Association was founded in 2001. The association provides social and financial assistance for Sudanese (refugees and non-refugees) residing in 6th October city. The association provides some families with a monthly stipend and aid in special circumstances such as marriage or death. The association also offers adult education classes in English and Arabic language, computer literacy and handicraft classes. It also provides newly arrived Sudanese with temporary housing.

Sadaka

Sadaka is a joint program of All Saints Cathedral, St. Andrews Church and the Sacred Heart (Sakakini) Church. The program provides emotional support for refugees by listening to their stories.

The Sudanese Development Initiative (SUDIA)

The Sudanese Development Initiative was created in 1995. The program serves mostly Sudanese, Ethiopian and Somali refugees. The program offers Employment Education, Information Technology and training as well as a number of support services such as referral services and small loans.

Ma'an

Ma'an, a Sudanese refugee based organization, was formed in 1996. Ma'an offers courses in gender, woman's rights, computer and health care. Discussion group are held once a week to address different issues in Sudan. Ma'an, in collaboration with the Forced Migration & Refugee Studies Department (FMRS) at the American University in Cairo has developed a training course for refugee women and which was offered in 2001 and 2003.

The Union of Great Equatoria

The Union of Great Equatoria was established in 2003 by the Equatorians living in Egypt and it embraces the 28 sun-communities of Equatoria. The Union of Great Equatoria offers assistance through five programs:

Education: assisting Sudanese youth in continuing their education

Health: the Union of Great Equatoria provides ante-natal care, TB, family planning, and HIV/AIDS.

Cultural Development: the development of trust and self-respect between communities in Egypt.

Civic Education and Information: raise awareness about rights and responsibilities

Economic Development: working to develop human capital in order to rebuild Sudan.

Al Mobadra

Al Mobadra is an Egyptian NGO that provides the UNHCR referred refugees with small loans for the establishment and development of micro-credit projects.

Vocational Training

In 2004, the UNHCR worked with the vocational training provider 'Don Bosco'.

Care with Love program

Care with Love is a registered NGO that offers vocational training for young women to become 'Home Health Care Providers': how to care for the sick and elderly. Upon completion of the training and internship period, graduates are assisted in finding work. Applicants must be refugees recognised by the UNHCR and who are not eligible for resettlement.

Don Bosco

Don Bosco offers vocational training for refugees in repairing and maintenance of car motors, electrical appliances, mechanics, paintwork and welding.

Websites

FMRS: Organizations Providing Assistance for Refugees

<http://www.aucegypt.edu/fmrs/Services/YellowPages/Profiles/profiles.html>

Refugees in Alexandria

Estimates vary for the number of refugees living in Alexandria, Egypt's second largest city; from 3000 – 4000 (Hassan, 2000) to 1000 – 2000 (the Sacred Heart Church in Ibrahimeya in Alexandria). The majority are Southern Sudanese and are concentrated in the Ibrahimeya area.

In Alexandria four churches provide assistance for refugees:

The Sacred Heart Church in Ibrahimeya

The Anglican Church

The Presbyterian Church

The Sacred Heart Church in Ibrahimeya

The Sacred Heart Church offers material assistance to refugees; refugees are provided with ration cards which enables them to obtain basic foodstuffs for free from a special shop once a month. The Church also provides refugees with some financial assistance to pay the cost of their transportation to and from Cairo. The Church has provided a space for the use as a social club for the refugees.

The Anglican Church

The Anglican Church offers educational classes for refugee adults and children: English Language and Dinka dialect for adults and English, Science and Maths for children. In 2003/2004, there were 50 children enrolled at the Church.

The Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church offers educational classes for children. In 2003/2004, there were 60 children enrolled at the church. The Church also distributes monthly foodstuffs.

The Churches have an agreement with Sidi Bishr Hospital and Amba Takla Natal Clinic where the refugees pay 50% of hospital/clinic charges.

3.5 Resettlement

The granting of refugee status by the UNHCR Egypt office has been linked with resettlement. Due to lack of local integration prospects in Egypt as well as the continuing conflicts in their home countries which makes voluntary repatriation not an option for the majority of refugees, resettlement is considered as the only feasible

durable solution. In 2004, there were 3,884 refugees who left Egypt for resettlement (UNHCR, Refugee Population in Egypt on 30 November 2004). Some refugees have also managed to get resettled to Canada and Australia through sponsorship programs (Zohry and Harrell-Bond, 2003). However, since June 2004 and with the progress made towards the signing of the Sudan Peace Process, the UNHCR has scaled back its resettlement opportunities especially for Sudanese refugees and has established new criteria for refugees to be eligible for resettlement.

3.6 Trafficking

The impossibility of finding work in Egypt as well as a lack of resettlement opportunities has obliged some refugees to resort to desperate measures. Recently, some Sudanese asylum seekers made their way to Israel to work in agricultural labour as a replacement for the Palestinians banned from Israel due to the closure imposed on the Occupied Territories (*Africa Analysis*, 2003). In early 2004, Egyptian newspapers published articles accusing Africans of making deals to be smuggled to Israel. The newspapers alleged that the aim of smuggling Africans to Israel was to “expel the Palestinian labour and to populate the empty settlements” (El Serwgy and Salem, 2004)

3.7 Racism and Xenophobia

African refugees in Egypt complain about racism and mistreatment from the Egyptian population as well as from the police and security forces. The Egyptian government, although having signed the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol as well as the 1969 OAU Convention, does not publicly address the refugee issue. In official newspapers and magazines refugees are usually portrayed as labour migrants (e.g. *El Ahrām*, 2002). With Egypt’s current economic hardships, it is no surprise that the Egyptians do not welcome the refugees. Refugees report incidents of harassment, insults and stone throwing by Egyptians. There are reports of police harassment as well. Some Egyptians resent the fact that refugees receive assistance and get resettled whereas Egyptians have a hard time obtaining visas to go to developed countries (*Sudan Tribune*, 2003).

In January 2003, a campaign by the Egyptian police dubbed ‘Operation track down blacks’, resulted in the arrest of hundreds of refugees and foreigners in the Cairo suburb of Maadi (*Human Rights Watch*, 2003). Police targeted and rounded up Africans and took them to the police station. The UNHCR was later able to obtain the release of the refugees registered with the organization as well as those who were awaiting their status determination interview, holders of UNHCR yellow cards (Apiku, 2003).

While the Egyptian government has not made any effort to educate the people or raise awareness about the refugee situation, it might be argued that the UNHCR is partly to blame as well. An advertisement campaign run by the UNHCR Cairo office in 2002 portrayed refugees in a refugee camp and requested donations to provide the refugees with ‘tents’. The advertisements were placed in an English language magazine *Egypt Today* in 2002 and in 2002/2003 in another English language magazine *Cairo Times*, both of which are mostly read by expatriates and upper class Egyptians. In a country without any refugee camps and where refugees live in urban areas, the advertisements were very much removed from the realities of the refugee situation in Egypt. The

same advertisement campaign is being run again in 2004 in *Cairo Times* magazine. (*Egypt Today*, 2002 - *Cairo Times*, 2002, 2003, 2004)

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Apiku, 2003

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3.8 Civil Society

Africa and Middle East Refugee Assistance (AMERA)

The African and Middle Eastern Refugee Assistance (formerly the Refugee Legal Aid project), offers free legal advice to refugees. It helps refugees in writing their testimonies for the UNHCR as well as in preparing appeal testimonies for the refugees whose claims have been rejected by the UNHCR. It also trains Egyptian lawyers and students in refugee law and advocates for the improvement of policies towards refugees.

The Refugee Centre for Human Rights (RCHR)

The Refugee Centre for Human Rights provides legal aid. The centre offers services to recognised refugees. The centre also helps asylum seekers who have been rejected by the UNHCR, as well as asylum seekers with closed cases wishing to appeal the decision. The centre also assists refugees with legal representation before Egyptian law in issues such as marriages and divorce. The centre has social workers who provide some support (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, July 2002).

The Forced Migration and Refugee Studies (FMRS) Department at the American University in Cairo.

The Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Department apart from offering a graduate diploma in forced migration and refugee studies, conducts research and surveys on refugee issues in Egypt. It also holds seminars, workshops and summer courses. FMRS has a community outreach program offering:

Community Interpreters Initiative

The FMRS Department holds courses three times a year to train refugees to serve as community interpreters (Calvani, 2003)

Ma'an

The FMRS Department has for the past two years offered space and facilities for the annual training sessions of Ma'an, a Sudanese refugee based local organization.

Glossary-Building Project

FMRS students are currently participating in the glossary-building project to develop multi-lingual glossaries, initially based on a number of African languages and dialects. The aim of this project is to make a tool available to the community interpreters.

Education for Refugees

The FMRS Department has provided space for two voluntary organizations providing educational services for refugees: West African Education Project and the African Institute for Culture. The West African Education Project offered computer literacy and English language classes to a group of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees, while the African Institute for Culture offered training in English language for a group of Sudanese, Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in the summer of 2003.

World Refugee Day

For the past three years consecutively, FMRS/AUC, in collaboration with the UNHCR and Catholic Relief Services, has hosted the World Refugee Day Festival. The event featured music, dance, theatre performances and cuisine from different countries. Handicrafts produced by refugees were exhibited and sold.

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AMERA-UK

<http://www.amera-uk.org/>

Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR)

<http://www.eohr.org/ref/index.htm>

Forced Migration & Refugee Studies Department at the American University in Cairo (FMRS)

<http://www.aucegypt.edu/fmrs/>

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

UNHCR Regional Office Cairo

<http://www.unhcr.org.eg/>

Refuge Egypt

http://www.refuge-egypt.org/refuge_egypt/index.shtml

Catholic Relief Services, Egypt

<http://www.catholicrelief.org/>

St. Andrews Refugee Ministry

http://www.biblelands.org.uk/project_partners/by_location/egypt/st_andrews_refugee/index.htm

Caritas Egypt

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Save the Children UK, Middle East and North Africa

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