

MOROCCO UPDATE

REGULARISATION OF REFUGEES BY NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

December 2015

BACKGROUND

- Upon instruction from His Majesty the King Mohamed VI, an *ad hoc* Commission for the regularisation of refugees registered with UNHCR was established in September 2013.
- The Commission is chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bureau for Refugees and Stateless Persons) and includes representatives from ministries of interior (Mol), justice, labour, the Inter-ministerial Delegation for Human Rights and UNHCR.
- The Government of Morocco (GoM) wished to process non-Syrian refugees (issuance of national refugee card) separately from Syrians (status and document to be determined).
- The Commission started its first hearings on 25 September 2013. To date, **1,181** UNHCR-registered persons (**618 non-Syrians and 563 Syrians**) have been interviewed by the Commission.
- A separate track was established by the GoM for the exceptional regularisation of irregular migrants. It was managed by the Mol and implemented by 84 Offices for Foreigners in the regions. Under this scheme, 27,643 migrants from 116 countries contacted the Offices for Foreigners for regularisation. The majority of applicants were Senegalese (6,600), Syrians (5,250), Nigerians (2,380) and Ivoirians (2,281). 92% of the applications have been accepted under this exceptional procedure, which ended on 31 December 2014.

REGULARISATION

Regularisation of non-Syrian refugees

- All UNHCR-recognised refugees who were interviewed by the *ad hoc* Commission were recognised as refugees by the Moroccan authorities and issued with refugee cards.
- These were subsequently issued with one-year (renewable) sojourn permits by the aliens offices of the Ministry of Interior.

	Refugees registered with UNHCR	Unknown whereabouts and/or left the country	Examined by the Commission	Recognised by the Commission
Number	1,116	349	626	618 ¹
Percentage	100%	31%	56%	55%

Hearings of Syrians by the Commission

- All Syrians registered with UNHCR and considered to be in need of international protection are referred to the Commission for interviews. Lists of newly registered Syrians are shared with the Government on a monthly basis. Interviews by the Commission started on 25 June 2014 and are on-going.

¹ Not including eight children born to Moroccan mothers and who are *de jure* Moroccan citizens.

	Registered with UNHCR	Unknown whereabouts and/or left the country	With residence permit (delivered by MoI)	Examined by the Commission
Total	3,731 ²	809	1,742	563
Percentage	100%	22%	47%	15%

A comparative overview of migrant and refugee status

	Migrants	Refugees
Responsible authority	Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MFAC)
Residence	Resident card (“ <i>carte d’immatriculation</i> ”) valid for one year renewable	Refugee card, valid for one year renewable Resident card (“ <i>carte d’immatriculation</i> ”) valid for one year renewable ³ Syrians: nature of documents to be issued to Syrians regularised by the Commission is still to be determined by the GoM
Health	No formal access to public medical insurance scheme. Discussions are under way to guarantee this access the earliest possible	Idem
Education	Access to primary and secondary public education - cf. 9 October 2013 of Ministry of Education	Idem
Employment	Access to legal employment with a national preference	Access to legal employment without national preference
Local integration	Development of local integration strategy for regularised migrants and refugees is underway by the Ministry for Migration Affairs Areas covered include housing, professional training, legal and social assistance, education, health and employment	Idem

PENDING ISSUES

- Syrians who have been interviewed by the *ad hoc* Commission were issued with a receipt, but the GoM has not decided yet on the status they will receive (i.e. refugee status, temporary protection, other).
- Since the ending of the exceptional regularisation procedure for migrants in December 2014, such an alternative regularisation option for Syrian refugees is not available any longer. In the absence of sojourn permits, they cannot be legally employed, which is hampering their self-sufficiency and local integration, and exposing them to exploitation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To issue Syrians with Moroccan refugee cards, similar to other refugees regularised by the *ad hoc* Commission.

² Out of this group, 2,385 were still active in UNHCR database as of 30 Nov. 2015. The rest are persons who have not been in contact with UNHCR office for a period of 3 months after the expiry of their certificate – presumption is that they might have left Morocco.

³ A 10-year residence permit was delivered to some refugees, including one Palestinian, one Iraqi and one Congolese.