

Tightening Borders, Dangerous
Journeys, and Shifting Routes to Europe

SUMMARY OF REGIONAL
MIGRATION TRENDS

MIDDLE EAST

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER - 2016



This summary is produced by DRC Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regional office. It covers inter and intra-regional displacement and displacement induced mobility drawing widely from available sources in the region. Given the complex migration trends taking place in the Middle East, this summary is intended to give a consolidated snapshot of mixed migration in the region. (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq).

A note on terminology: Throughout this report the term migrant/refugee is used for all persons involved in mixed migration flows (including asylum seekers, trafficked persons, migrants, refugees) with the exception of Syrians who are recognised as persons in need of international protection. If the group mentioned refers only to refugees or asylum seekers or trafficked persons or migrants it will be clearly stated.

Cover Photo Credit: Darashakran Refugee Camp for Syrian refugees in Erbil, Iraq. Photo by: Noe Falk



Refugee children in Qushtapa camp, Kurdish Region, Iraq. Photo by Klaus Bo Chris Iraqtensen

SYRIA

Syrian Refugees: The ongoing conflict in Syria, now in its sixth year, continues to displace thousands of Syrians both within and outside of the country. As of 30 September, 2016 UNHCR had registered a total of **4,779,568** Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries and North Africa, since the conflict began. This marks a decrease in registered Syrians of 0.7% (33,611 individuals) since the figures of the last reporting period on July 31, 2016. At the end of August, 2016 the total number of asylum application in Europe (since April 2011) was at **1,151,865**, an increase of 56,768 applications (5.2%) since June 2016. **ACAPS** reports that in 2016 the number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries has grown by less than 200,000 due to restrictions preventing movement from conflict areas.

Refugees in Syria: As of June 30, 2016, there were a reported **28,932** refugees and asylum seekers in Syria. No new figures were available during the reporting period. Of these, 24,027 were Iraqi, 1,521 Afghan, 910 Sudanese, 511 Somali, 179 Pakistani, and 1,784 individuals of other nationalities. An estimated **450,000** Palestinian refugees also remain in Syria. In June, UNHCR reported that the number of refugees in the country was **decreasing** as the security situation worsened.

Conflict and Displacement: By the end of September 2016, OCHA reported a total of 6,145,004 internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Syria. The majority are in Rural Damascus (1,437,874 IDPs) and Aleppo (1,112,814 IDPs) governorates, with hundreds of thousands of people also displaced in Idleb, Damascus, Latakia, Dar'a, and Homs, among other areas. Military escalation in Aleppo and other areas since February 2016 has displaced some **351,713** Syrians to date, including 7,613 people from Hama and Aleppo in September, as well as some **25,000** IDPs from Aleppo in August. Fighting in Al-Hasakeh governorate in North-Eastern Syria has displaced **50,641 people** since February 1, in addition to some 7,730 Syrians displaced in Dar'a and Quneitra in August 2016.

A **nationwide** 'cessation of hostilities' was announced on **September 12**, 2016. It held for **7 days** before breaking down on September 19 and resulting in renewed conflict in Aleppo, Homs, and Rural Damascus. This was marked by the bombing of an **aid convoy** near Aleppo.

Closing Borders: The ability of Syrians to seek protection internationally is increasingly limited due to growing restrictions on **borders** surrounding Syria, and throughout Europe. The construction of a border fence along Syria's border with **Turkey** is one example of these changes (see Turkey section). For Syrians today, very few legal routes to exit the country remain. Their situation is characterised by tightly controlled land borders, strict visa requirements to enter **Lebanon**, a recently closed **Jordanian** border, and visa requirements for entry to **Turkey** by sea or air, though limited irregular entry by land still occurs. The closure of the **Balkan route** in March 2016, and the implementation of the **EU-Turkey Agreement** in the same month have severely restricted the movement of Syrians to Europe.

Reports in June 2016 estimated that **160,000** people were stranded in Syria along the Turkish border, though no more recent data or updates are available regarding this situation. The border has remained closed for the past **19 months**, with some medical exceptions (see Turkey section). There are also thousands of Syrians stranded between the two berms at Syria's southern border with Jordan (see Jordan section). In September 2016 an estimated **75,000** people were stranded at the berm in poor conditions with limited aid.

As of 30 September 2016,
UNHCR had registered a total of
4,779,568
Syrian refugees

According to IOM, the
number of Syrians using
the Central Mediterranean
Route to Europe has

decreased

For Syrians today,
very few
legal routes to exit the
country remain

Eastern Mediterranean Route: Use of the Eastern Mediterranean route to Europe has **decreased dramatically** in comparison to **2015**, despite the **6,527** arrivals by sea in Greece from August 1 to September 30. These figures mark an 87.8% increase (3,053 individuals) when compared to the recorded arrivals in June and July. Of these arrivals **1,978** were Syrian, a 104% increase compared to the previous reporting period. Despite these figures, arrivals to Greece by sea in August were down 97% from the same month in 2015, while September arrivals were down 98%.

Additionally, refugees and other mixed migrants continue to enter Europe via the Bulgarian-Turkish border, with the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior reporting that **14,656** migrants have been apprehended entering, exiting, or residing in the country in 2016. The majority of people irregularly entering and stranded in Bulgaria (see Turkey section) are from Afghanistan, followed by Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan. Most refugees and other mixed migrants enter Bulgaria on foot through the country's '**green border**' with Turkey, though some cross at regular checkpoints by hiding in vehicles.

Other Routes to Europe: According to **IOM** the number of Syrians using the Central Mediterranean Route to Europe (by boat from Libya or Egypt to Italy) has decreased, despite predictions that the EU-Turkey Agreement would **shift migration routes** in this direction. **Refugees Deeply** reports that the number of Syrians crossing the Mediterranean via Libya and Egypt has decreased since the agreement came into effect, with only **577 Syrians** (0.5% of total arrivals) reaching Italy from Egypt and Libya in the first 8 months of 2016, according to UNHCR. This is compared to **6,710 Syrians** having used this route at the end of August 2015. **Arrivals** in Italy are primarily from Nigeria, Eritrea, Gambia, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Somalia, Mali, and Senegal. A statement by the **European Commission** on July 8, 2016 acknowledges that while a small number (unspecified) of boats are arriving in Italy directly from Egypt and Turkey, that it is not possible to confirm the development of a new travel route to Italy.

On September 21, 2016, at least **43 people** were killed when a boat carrying nearly **600 people** capsized off the Egyptian coast. The boat was carrying Egyptians, Sudanese, Eritreans, and Somalis. **One Syrian** was reportedly among the survivors.

A new **report** from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) claims that the number of refugees and other mixed migrants arriving in Europe by '**covert**' routes (unknown or lesser understood routes including land crossings to Greece, and routes through Russia, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine), has been rising since the EU-Turkey Agreement in March. ODI figures show that in 2016, some **60%** of asylum applications in Europe came from people who arrived using 'covert' land routes, as compared to 40% who arrived using 'overt' sea routes. Findings show that only one third of covert arrivals in Europe are Syrian.

Refugee and Migrant Vulnerability: A recent **IOM** report from the Missing Migrants Project, states that 81 people died while travelling within the Middle East in the first half of 2016. Of these, at least 69 were Syrian nationals, and the majority were killed at the Syrian-Turkish border. More recently, **3 deaths** were reported at sea, along the Eastern Mediterranean route, in August and **27** in September. Thus there were 30 recorded deaths during the reporting period as compared to 7 in June and July (see Turkey section for more information).

JORDAN

Syrian Refugees in Jordan: As of September 30, 2016 UNHCR had registered **655,483** Syrians in Jordan, a 0.2% decrease (1,565 individuals) from two months prior on July 31, 2016. This decrease is likely due to ongoing **resettlement** of Syrians from Jordan to various third countries. Of this group, 78.4% (513,996 individuals) live in urban, peri-urban, or rural areas and 21.6% (141,487 individuals) live in camps. Jordanian **leadership** and the 2015 Population **Census**, however, indicate that roughly **1.3 million** Syrians are residing in the country. Jordan hosts some **87 refugees** per 1000 inhabitants, the second highest number in the world.

Arrivals by land of refugees in Jordan ceased when the borders with Syria and Iraq were **closed** on June 21, 2016 following attacks at the border near Rukban (see ‘Syrians at the Border’ below).

Other Refugee Populations in Jordan: Jordan hosts refugees from **44** other nations. As of September 30, 2016 UNHCR reports **59,196** Iraqis registered in Jordan, a figure up 4.4% (2,506 individuals) from the **56,690** Iraqis registered on July 31, 2016. The number of Yemeni refugees in Jordan was most recently recorded by UNHCR at **4,813** individuals as of August 2016, marking an increase of 578 people (up 13.6%) since May 31, 2016. A recent report produced by **ARDD**, suggests that there may be Yemenis in Jordan who are unaccounted for by both the government and UNHCR. Since December, 2015, Yemenis have been required to apply for **visas** to enter Jordan.

UNHCR had also registered **3,104** Sudanese ‘people of concern’ in Jordan at the end of August, 2016, an increase of 41 people since May 31, 2016. There were also 767 registered Somalis at the end of August with no more recent figures. A recent article published in the **Middle East Report** highlights the unique challenges faced by Sudanese and Somali refugees in Jordan.

Syrians at the Border: As **detailed** in previous **summaries** thousands of displaced Syrians remain stranded at the **militarized** zone, known as the berm, at Jordan’s North-Eastern border with Syria. At the end of September, 2016 some **75,000** people were stranded at the berm, though numbers are difficult to verify due to restricted access. The UN estimates that women and children comprise around **80%** of those stranded at the border. A **Human Rights Watch** report from September 15, 2016 includes satellite imagery revealing maksehift burial mounds and grave sites near the Rukban border crossing. Thousands of people on the Syrian side of the border are stuck in the reportedly arid, desert environment, where sources have described **conditions** as ‘horrendous’ marked by **limited** food, water, and shelter, as well as **lack of access** to basic sanitation and medical care leading to outbreaks of **hepatitis** and jaundice, malnutrition, **starvation and death**. As of September 15, humanitarian sources have recorded at least **10 deaths** from hepatitis and 9 deaths related to childbirth.

The border between Syria and Jordan was effectively closed to **Syrians** and to **humanitarian aid** groups, following a **suicide bombing** near the informal settlement at Rukban on June 21 and the subsequent government declaration that Jordan’s Northern and Northeastern borders with Syria and **Iraq** are **closed militarized zones**. In February 2016, Jordanian leadership indicated that there were ‘**elements**’ of the so-called Islamic State among Syrians at the border. In May, the head of the Jordanian border guard claimed that roughly **2,000** Syrians at the border are suspected of involvement with the group.

As of 30 September 2016,
UNHCR had registered a total of
655,483
Syrians in Jordan

Anecdotal accounts from refugees at the Rukban area of the berm indicated that in early July an estimated 15 to 20 families were **returning** to Syria each day, following the closure of the Jordanian border. Human Rights watch confirms stories that families are returning to Syria due to the unsanitary conditions at the berm, though no exact figures on the number of people leaving are available.

Aid to the Berm: On **August 5, 2016**, for the first time since the border closure on June 21, aid was delivered to Syrians stranded at the berm. UN agencies used **a crane** to deliver a **month’s supply** of food, medicine, and **hygiene items** across the border, though it is unclear if these resources reached **everyone in need**. No further aid was distributed during the reporting period, though on September 30, **Jordanian authorities** agreed to re-allow humanitarian assistance to the berm. Under this plan, supplies will be delivered to locations **several kilometers away** from the main camps.

At the end of September, 2016
some **75,000**
people were stranded at the
berm.



Lebanon. Photo by Leila Alaoui

LEBANON

As of 30 September 2016,
UNHCR figures indicate
a total of

1,017,433

Syrian refugees registered in
Lebanon

49%

of consulted Syrians
intended to remain in
Lebanon and return to
Syria when conditions are
safe

Refugees in Lebanon: As of September 30, 2016, UNHCR figures indicate a total of **1,017,433** Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon, a decrease of 1.6% (16,080 individuals) from the previous figures reported on June 30, 2016. The **government** of Lebanon and **OCHA** estimate that the total number of Syrians in the country is closer to 1.5 million, making Lebanon the country with the **highest** concentration of refugees in proportion to its population in the world. While there are no formal refugee camps for Syrians in Lebanon, roughly **16%** of Syrians live in informal settlements around the country.

The number of registered Syrians in Lebanon has been in **decline** since April 2015 when **1,185,241** Syrians were registered by UNHCR. The decline is due to a number of issues; the ongoing **inactivation** of refugee registration in Lebanon's national refugee database, a government ordered **suspension** of new registrations, **restrictive visa entry** requirements and prohibitive **residency renewal** fees have pushed many Syrians into becoming undocumented. According to the Lebanese Social Affairs **Minister**, the country is, in effect, no longer receiving refugees, though scattered **reports** indicate that some Syrians are crossing the border **irregularly**.

As at September 30, 2016 **OCHA** reports indicated that 277,985 Palestinian refugees from Lebanon (PRL) were in the country as well as 40,807 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). These figures have not altered from OCHA's March and June reports. According to **ACAPS**, entry for PRS into Lebanon is almost entirely limited to third country transit.

Rhetoric of Refoulement: In recent months conditions for Syrian refugees in Lebanon have become increasingly **harsh**. Al Monitor claims that the country's policy of **deterrence** towards Syrian refugees is aimed at improving security and reducing the number of refugees in Lebanon, and has manifested in the imposition of **curfews**, **evictions**, and **raids** on makeshift refugee camps, in addition to the prohibitive **residency renewal** fees. At the September 19, United Nations Summit on refugees Lebanon's **prime minister** was quoted as saying that the priority is to repatriate displaced people from Lebanon, though he later stated that such relocation would not be forced. On the same day the country's labour minister, **Sejaan Azzi**, went beyond this to detail a plan in which refugees would be returned to a '**safe zone**' in Syria over a two year period. These statements have been met with **criticism** from researchers and rights groups, including Human Rights Watch.

Intentions and Motivations: According to the results of recent focus group and surveys conducted by **UNHCR** 49% of consulted Syrians intended to remain in Lebanon and return to Syria when conditions are safe (a result echoing findings by **Al Jazeera** from May). 39% of those surveyed were interested in moving to a third country, 7% wanted to return to Syria in the immediate future, and 5% were unsure. Key motivators for those who wished to leave Lebanon included inadequate support for severe health conditions and lack of higher educational opportunities. Prior to January 2016, **thousands** of Syrians and other mixed migrants were passing through and exiting Lebanon each **week**. **Visa requirements** for Syrians entering Turkey from a third country by air or sea, implemented in January 2016, have made transiting through Lebanon to Turkey nearly **impossible** for Syrians.

Trafficking: Various reports produced in 2016, including one by **Human Rights Watch** and another from the **Freedom Fund**, have highlighted the ongoing risk of trafficking faced by Syrian women and girls in Lebanon. In March 2016, Lebanese authorities, freeing 75 trafficked Syrian women, dismantled the country's largest known **sex trafficking ring**.



Maha, 75, from Sürcek near Kobane. Was crried from the village to the border of Turkey. Had a house, car and a garden. Now in Qushtapa refugee camp. Photo by Klaus Bo Christensen

TURKEY

As of 26 September 2016,
UNHCR figures indicate
2,733,655
Syrians are registered in Turkey

Arrivals: As of September 26, 2016, UNHCR figures indicate **2,733,655** Syrians are registered and granted temporary protection status in Turkey. This marks an increase of 4,669 individuals (up 0.2%) during the reporting period from figures on July 28, 2016. Overall, the number has decreased in recent months from a peak of **2,749,862** registered Syrians in Turkey on May 2, 2016. Roughly, **9%** of Syrians live in 26 camps near the border with Syria, while 91% live outside camps in urban areas.

Additionally, figures from September 2016, indicate that there are **285,025** other refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey including 126,756 from Iraq; 116,422 from Afghanistan; 29,502 from Iran; 3,921 from Somalia; and 8,424 from various other countries. This marks an increase of 13,559 individuals from the previous figures of **June 2016**, with UNHCR indicating that **2,844** Afghans were registered in September, 2016 as well as **2,471** Iraqis during the same period. These figures do not indicate the seeming prevalence of **Pakistanis** both in and travelling through Turkey, as evidenced by the high proportion of Pakistanis arriving in Greece during the reporting period. Turkey is a key country on the migration route linking Asia/the Middle East to Europe.

Significantly **diminished** land arrivals in Turkey in 2016 are likely due to strict visa requirements, the implementation of the EU Turkey Agreement, and the closing European borders. Despite claims by **Turkish officials** that Turkey **maintains** an 'open door' policy for **emergency situations**, border closures in **March 2015**, and strict **visa requirements** for Syrians entering by air or sea, have made the border very difficult, if not impossible, to cross **legally**. NGOs working along the Turkey-Syria border have reported that only **critical medical cases** are being legally **allowed** into Turkey. On September 28, 2016 a Turkish official indicated that a concrete **border wall** currently being constructed along Turkey's 900km border with Syria, would be completed by the end of February 2017. Construction of this wall began in **2014** to combat smuggling and irregular migration.

In September 2016
54,610
People entering Turkey
irregularly were apprehended

Reports indicate that Syrians and other refugees and mixed migrants are crossing into Turkey **unofficially** outside of regular border crossings. Turkish land forces reported the apprehension of **54,610** people entering Turkey irregularly by land from Syria (52,873 individuals), Iraq (1,548 individuals), and Iran (189 individuals) in September 2016. They also report the apprehension of **2,753** refugees and other mixed migrants trying to exit Turkey by land in September. 2,108 of these individuals were attempting to enter Greece; 405, Bulgaria; and 309, Syria. Reports from June 2016, and earlier, estimated that **160,000** people were stranded in Syria along the Turkish border, though no more recent data or updates are available regarding this situation.

Additional **reports** indicate that some Syrians in Greece are paying smugglers to help them cross the Evros river in Northern Greece and irregularly enter Turkey. Syrians cite poor conditions, camp closures, and restricted access to other European countries as reasons for returning to Turkey, and for some, their country of origin. Those refugees and other mixed migrants who do cross are often doing so irregularly and with the help of **smugglers**.

Departures to Europe: In August and September, 2016 the **Turkish Coast Guard** reported 119 'irregular migration incidents' in the seas surrounding Turkey involving 5,028 'irregular migrants'. These figures indicate 76 more incidents than in the previous two-month period (June-July), involving 3,609 more individuals (a 254% increase). Though these figures mark

a **dramatic decrease** from the same months in **2015**, they also indicate a growth in the prevalence of the Eastern Mediterranean Route. According to UNHCR figures **6,527** people arrived in Greece by boat from August 1 to September 30, 2016, marking an 87.8% increase (3,053 individuals) when compared to the recorded arrivals in June and July. Of these arrivals **1,978** were Syrian (104% increase compared to the previous reporting period); 1,250 were Pakistani (116% increase); 803 were Afghan (93% increase); 824 were Iraqi (187% increase); and 402 were Algerian (63% increase).

In **August** 2016, an average of 111 people arrived daily in Greece while the daily average decreased to 103 in **September**, according to UNHCR figures. Though higher than the recorded averages of **52** and **62** daily arrivals in June and July 2016 respectively, these figures show a dramatic decrease from the **thousands** of refugees and other mixed migrants arriving in Greece daily prior to the closing of the Balkan Route and the **EU-Turkey Agreement** on March 20, 2016. The **European Commission** points to the “sharp and continued decline” in irregular arrivals to Greece as evidence of the “successful implementation” of the agreement.

Europe via Bulgaria: As of September 29, 2016, IOM reports **7,070** refugees and other mixed migrants are stranded in Bulgaria, a 717% increase from the 865 individuals stranded there on March 10, 2016 before the EU-Turkey Agreement. According to the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior **14,656** migrants have been apprehended entering, exiting, or residing in the country in 2016. The majority of refugees and other mixed migrants entering and stranded in Bulgaria originate from Afghanistan, followed by Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan. Most refugees and other mixed migrants enter Bulgaria on foot through the country's ‘**green border**’ with Turkey, though some cross at regular checkpoints by hiding in vehicles. In August, the Bulgarian Prime Minister stated that border officials arrest an average of **150-200** people irregularly crossing the border from Turkey daily.

The **UN** has expressed concern over Bulgaria's detention regime as ‘virtually all’ people entering the country irregularly are subjected to detention. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights described the situation as “inhumane and unacceptable”. He also cited concern over the rising **xenophobia**, reported ‘pushbacks’, and violence along the Bulgarian-Turkish border.

EU-Turkey Agreement: As of October 3, 2016, IOM reports that **578** refugees and other mixed migrants, have been returned to Turkey from Greece under the ‘one-to-one’ mechanism of the EU-Turkey agreement. Of these 318 were **Pakistani**, 66 Afghan, 53 Syrian, 41 Bangladeshi, 22 Algerian, 22 Iranian, and smaller numbers of various other nationalities (Sri Lanka, Iraq, Myanmar, Congo, Morocco, India and others). These figures indicate that 110 people have been returned to Greece following the prior figures of **July 28**, 2016. The number of returns is widely thought to be quite low.

The deal has been described as increasingly ‘**shaky**’ and ‘**crumbling**,’ with Turkey threatening, at the end of July, to **back out** of the deal entirely if **visa liberalization** for Turkish citizens does not happen. The **EU Commission** has also commented that the deal is ‘fragile’ and at risk of breaking down. In early September the Turkish prime minister reportedly accepted a ‘year-end’ deadline for an EU **visa waiver** for Turkish citizens, though the president stated, “if our demands are not satisfied, then readmissions of migrants will no longer be possible”.

According to UNHCR ,

6,527

people arrived in Greece by boat from August 1 to September 30, 2016

As of September 29 2016,

7,070

refugees and other mixed migrants are stranded in Bulgaria

IOM reports

578

refugees and other mixed migrants have been returned to Turkey from Greece under the ‘one-to-one’ mechanism of the EU-Turkey agreement

For more information of Turkey's legal refugee framework and cooperation with the EU see **this recent report** from the Migration Policy Institute.

New Routes: Despite predictions that the EU-Turkey Agreement would **shift migration routes** away from the Eastern Mediterranean Route towards its Central Mediterranean counterpart, an increase in Syrians using this route has not materialized. **Refugees Deeply** reports that the number of Syrians crossing the Mediterranean via Libya and Egypt has decreased since the agreement came into effect, with only **577 Syrians** (0.5% of total arrivals) reaching Italy from Egypt and Libya in the first 8 months of 2016, according to UNHCR.

Refugee and Migrant Vulnerability: IOM reported **3 deaths** along the Eastern Mediterranean route in August and **27** in September. Thus there were 30 recorded deaths during the reporting period as compared to 7 in June and July. A recent **report**, by IOM and UK academics, sheds light on the failure of reception countries, mainly Greece and Turkey, to identify the bodies of deceased refugees and migrants, and notify their families.

Additionally, another IOM **report** on human trafficking and other exploitative practices, states that among respondents in Greece, Serbia, and FYROM, who entered Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean Route, **14%** answered “yes” to one of the trafficking and other exploitative practices indicators. This includes the 6% of respondents who said they were ‘held against their will’ at some point along their journey, 7% who were unpaid for work they performed at some point along their journey, and 4% of individuals who were forced to work.

Human Rights Watch, and **various** other **sources**, have reported violence and the deaths of Syrians at the Syrian-Turkish border in recent months. The **Turkish government** maintains that the claims “do not reflect the reality.” A recent **IOM report** highlights “reports of consistent abuse and violence towards people who have approached the border”, citing reports that Turkish border guards allegedly killed 64 Syrians in the first half of 2016.



Qustapa refugee camp, Erbil, Iraq Oct. 2016

IRAQ

As of 30 September 2016,
UNHCR figures indicate that
225,455
Syrian refugees were registered
in Iraq, marking a decrease of
5.7%
from 31 August 2016

As of 28 September 2016,
IOM had identified
3,283,248
individuals displaced in Iraq
since January 2014 for a
current total of
4,283,248 IDPs

Refugees in Iraq: As of September 30, 2016, UNHCR figures indicate that **225,455** Syrian refugee were registered in Iraq, marking a decrease of 13,553 individuals (5.7%) from **August 31** figures, and a 23,940 person decrease (9.6%) from **June 30**, 2016 (three months prior). Of this group 61% (138,069) live in urban, peri-urban, or rural locations, while 39% (87,386) live in camps in Iraq. **96%** of Syrians in the country were living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) on September 30, 2016. At the end of September 2016, UNHCR indicated that there were **47,442** non-Syrian refugees in Iraq though their nationalities were not disclosed. This number is unchanged from **August 31**, 2016, but represents a decrease of 8,258 (14.8%) since March 2016.

Iraqi Refugees: Despite the closure of Jordan's borders with Iraq and Syria on **June 21** (see Jordan section), UNHCR figures indicate that as of September 30, 2016 there were **59,196** Iraqis registered in Jordan, a figure up 4.4% (2,506 individuals) from the **56,690** Iraqis registered on July 31, 2016. The data also indicates that **2,730** Iraqis have arrived in Jordan during this period.

As of September 30, 2016 there were **126,756** Iraqi 'persons of concern' registered in Turkey. Of these 99,140 were asylum seekers and 27,616 were registered as refugees. UNHCR indicates that 2,471 Iraqis were registered in Turkey in September alone. Additionally, some **45,000** Iraqi refugees were registered in Iran. As of June 30, 2016 UNHCR reports the presence of **24,027** Iraqi asylum seekers and refugees in Syria, with no more recent figures available.

Conflict and Displacement: Ongoing fighting, particularly surrounding Iraqis security force attempts to recapture territory held by the so-called Islamic State, has resulted in the displacement of more than **400,000 Iraqis** in 2016 alone. As of September 28, 2016 IOM had identified **3,283,248** individuals displaced in Iraq since January 2014 for a current total of 4,283,248 IDPs in the country. As of September 30, 2016, military operations along the **Mosul corridor** beginning in March and intensifying in June have resulted in the displacement of more than **130,000** people. **62,300** people have been displaced from Mosul and surrounding areas since March, 2016, and **100,400** others have been displaced from Shirqat, Al Qayyarah, and surrounding areas since June, 2016. **691** Iraqis were killed by violence, armed conflict and acts of terrorism in Iraq in August 2016. An additional **1,003** Iraqis were killed in September, bringing the 2-month total to 1,694 deaths.

A long-anticipated government-led military **offensive** against **Mosul**, the second largest city in Iraq and last major **stronghold** of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq, is expected to occur in October. UNHCR predicts that anywhere from one to **1.5 million** people could be displaced by this upcoming offensive.

Iraqis Travelling to Europe: In August and September, 2016 UNHCR documented the arrival by sea of some **6,527** refugees and other mixed migrants to Greece, **824** of whom were Iraqi (12.6%). This figure marks an increase of 537 individuals, compared to the number of Iraqi arrivals in June and July, as well as a higher proportion of the total arrivals (only 8.26% in June and July).

Though the number of Iraqis arriving in Greece has risen over August and September, they remain significantly less than the peak 2016 arrivals of **11,964** Iraqis in January. The decline is likely attributable to the implementation of the EU-Turkey Agreement on March 20,

2016 (see Turkey section) and the closing of European borders. Iraqis use the same routes as Syrians and other mixed migrants, typically travelling to Turkey and continuing to Greece by sea, or Bulgaria by land. Iraqis comprise [15%](#) of all sea arrivals in Greece in 2016, the third largest group.

Recent reports from IOM (accessible [here](#)) and [MEDMIG](#) reveal that some of the key motivators for refugees leaving Iraq are security concerns, lack of social justice, and political/economic instability. The activities of the [so-called Islamic State](#) in Iraq have also been cited as motivation to leave the country, as well as the risk of kidnapping by both state and non-state actors. Most respondents in the [IOM](#) study felt that their perceptions of Europe, before arriving, were idealized and that living conditions were poor and asylum processes unpredictable, spurring them to return to Iraq. [Reports](#) indicate a growing number of Iraqis [voluntarily returning](#) to Iraq after travelling to Europe and facing [closed borders](#), [unemployment](#), poor [living conditions](#) and, [disappointment](#).

ISRAEL/OPT

Please see the [RMMS: Horn of Africa and Yemen – Monthly Summary](#) for more information.



Darashakran Camp in Erbil, KRI, Iraq. Photo by Noe Falk

OTHER REGIONAL NEWS

Fire in Moria Camp: On September 19, 2016 some [4,000 people](#) were forced to flee the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos due to the rapid spread of fires throughout the facility. The fire destroyed various structures and [800 sleeping spaces](#), while over 60,000 refugees and other mixed migrants remain stranded in Greece.

Smuggling Increases in Northern Greece: In August, Greek police reported an [increase in smuggling](#) on the country's Northern border. More sophisticated smuggling methods have accompanied the introduction of tougher border controls. [Motorcycle spotters](#), maps of surveillance 'blind spots', and police informants are commonly used, as smugglers charge higher fees to take refugees and other mixed migrants out of Greece.

EU-Afghanistan Deal: On September 28, 2016 a leaked [EU memo](#) revealed that the organization planned to make aid to Afghanistan [conditional](#) on the acceptance of 80,000 deportees. The deal was formally announced days later, an [arrangement](#) under which Afghanistan will take back deported Afghan asylum seekers and the EU will pay for their return.

Italy Cracks Down on Smuggling Network: On September 6, 2016, Italian police announced the arrests of 21 people suspected of [smuggling](#) Syrian refugees across the Balkan countries to Western Europe. Most of the suspects were [Syrian](#), though Algerian, Egyptian, Lebanese, and Tunisian suspects were also arrested. The network was based in Italy and used a taxi service to front the smuggling of some 200 refugees and other mixed migrants.

Germany and North Africa: Germany is reportedly looking to make an 'EU-Turkey'-style deal with [North African countries](#) "in order to get better control over the Mediterranean Sea refugee routes". Germany argues that such an agreement, which significantly lowered the number of arrivals by sea in Greece, would save lives. More than [3,000](#) people have died on the Central Mediterranean Route to Europe in 2016 alone.

UN Refugee Summit: On September 19, 2016, the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants was held in [New York](#) and attended by member state representatives, international agencies, NGOs, private sector representatives, and refugees and migrants. The [one-day summit](#) resulted in the 'New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants' an agreement that will lead to global compacts on refugees and migrants in 2018, two years' time.

See also [MHUB Monthly Trend Bulletins](#) (accessible [here](#)).

NEW RESEARCH, REPORTS OR DOCUMENTS

CARE has released a new [report](#) entitled 'On Her Own: How Women Forced to Flee Syria are Shouldering Increased Responsibility as They Struggle to Survive'. The research highlights the rise in the number of female-headed households fleeing Syria for Europe.

A September report (accessible [here](#)), published by **UNHCR**, addresses new risks of statelessness in the Middle East and North Africa, by examining how conditions in Syria are blocking access to nationality.

A recent **Save the Children** report entitled 'Forced to Flee: Inside the 21st Largest Country' looks at the demographics and locations of displaced persons, while marking forcibly displaced people as the fastest growing population in the world.

In an August report, the **Women's Refugee Commission** addresses the ways in which the EU-Turkey agreement has failed refugee women and girls. The [report](#) details the increasingly dire situation for refugee women and girls in Greece and Turkey following the implementation of the deal, and offers recommendations to address this situation.

'Migrant Routes a Year On,' a photo piece produced by **Reuters**, uses [photography](#) to highlight the changes in refugee and migrant use among key spots on the Balkan route to Europe. The photos show empty roads and vistas that, a year prior, were crowded with people en route to Europe.

The 4th issue of **IOM's** [data briefing series](#), entitled 'Dangerous Journeys – International Migration Increasingly Unsafe in 2016', gives a comprehensive overview of major global migration routes and the increasingly dangerous conditions under which they are being used.

In a new 'Internal Displacement Update', **IDMC** provides an overview of internal displacement figures across 16 countries from January to August 2016. The [update](#) addresses the largest displacements associated with both disasters and conflict/violence.

The **Danish Refugee Council** has produced a new synthesis report on mixed migration trends in Turkey between January and July 2016 (accessible [here](#)). The report gives an overview of the current mixed migration context in Turkey, broken down by arrivals, departures, resettlement, returns, protection issues, and smuggling and trafficking.

In September, **MEDMIG**, released its second [research brief](#) based on interviews conducted with refugees and migrants in Greece, and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. The brief focuses on why people choose to leave their homes, the dynamics of their journeys, the intended destination, and the resulting policy implications of the research.

Two recent reports, one from **War Child** (accessible [here](#)) and one from **UNICEF** (accessible [here](#)), highlight the growing crisis for children forced to flee their homes, and the rights they often lose during this displacement. War Child provides a global action plan for the protection of children's rights, while UNICEF offers its own agenda for action on children, migration and displacement.

RMMS has released its August and September monthly summaries of mixed migration issues and news in the Horn of Africa and Yemen region (accessible [here](#)). Summaries from West Africa are available [here](#).



To be added to DRC's monthly migration summary mailing list, please contact Nicole Maine at nicole.maine@drc-mena.org. Past reports can be accessed at <https://drc.ngo/where-we-work/middle-east-and-north-africa>