

UN agency concerned over detention of Syrian refugees in Egypt

[UN news.un.org/en/story/2013/07/445572](http://news.un.org/en/story/2013/07/445572)

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UNHCR/S. Baldwin

Syrian and Egyptian children play football in an impoverished neighbourhood of the 6th of October City outside of Cairo.

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The United Nations today voiced concern over the detention of an increasing number of Syrian refugees in Egypt, including several minors, amid growing anti-Syrian sentiment in the country.

This new climate began following allegations regarding participation of a few Syrians in protests and violent acts during July, Melissa Fleming, the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), said at a [news conference](#) in Geneva.

“There have also been numerous reports of xenophobic remarks and verbal attacks against Syrians, including disturbing statements made through certain media outlets,” she added.

Egypt is among the countries that have taken in refugees fleeing the ongoing conflict in Syria. More than 100,000 people have been killed, and millions have either been displaced or become refugees in neighbouring countries since fighting began in March

2011 between the Syrian Government and opposition groups seeking to oust President Bashar Al-Assad.

Ms. Fleming noted that since the start of the conflict, Syrians enjoyed an “extremely hospitable” environment in Egypt, with the Government granting unrestricted visas and residence permits and providing full access to public services.

“Syrians had not felt the urgency to renew expired residency permits as required. Now, a growing number of Syrians are expressing their fear of being arrested if they circulate in public,” she stated.

This “hostile” environment has led to a notable increase in the number of Syrians approaching UNHCR to register, said the agency. The Government estimates that there are some 250,000 to 300,000 Syrians currently residing in Egypt – 80,000 are registered with UNHCR as of 25 July, while around 28,800 have secured appointments for registration in the coming weeks.

Egypt has been grappling recently with its own political crisis, which escalated earlier this month with the military removing President Mohamed Morsy from power amid widespread protests in which dozens of people were killed and wounded. The Constitution has been suspended and an interim government has now been set up in the country, which has been undergoing a democratic transition following a revolution two years ago.

“UNHCR appreciates the Egyptian Government’s affirmation that Syrians are welcome in Egypt,” said Ms. Fleming. “We call upon the Government to ensure that any precautionary measures in light of the current security situation in the country do not infringe upon fundamental human rights principles and the country’s international responsibilities to provide asylum and protection to refugees.”

UNHCR has been requesting access to 85 detained Syrians and assurances that they are not returned to Syria, stressing that they should be afforded fair and due process of law in Egypt.

[syria](#)

[refugee](#)

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UN agency concerned over new restrictions for Syrian refugees fleeing to Egypt

12 July 2013

The United Nations refugee agency said today it is concerned about reports of a number of flights carrying Syrians being turned back from airports in Egypt, and reiterated its call on all Governments to admit and protect Syrians who have fled the conflict in their country.