



prior to 1920. Children born to Kuwaiti women are not generally accorded citizenship if their fathers are *Bidoon* or foreigners, although the government agreed in 2001 to grant citizenship to children of Kuwaiti widows or divorcees previously married to *Bidoon* men.

Since 1991, Kuwait has reduced the number of *Bidoon* residents by more than half, down from a pre-war population of 250,000 to an estimated 120,000 in 2001. Kuwait deported many *Bidoon*, often without a hearing, most commonly for alleged collaboration with the Iraqi occupying forces during the war. *Bidoon* with strong ties to Kuwait who left the country have not been allowed to return, and remain stateless in Iraq and other countries. As a result of the war, Kuwait also fired *Bidoon* from government jobs many had held before the war, restricted *Bidoon* to overcrowded slum areas, and barred *Bidoon* children from Kuwaiti schools.

In May 2000, Kuwait's parliament voted to ease the citizenship requirements of *Bidoon* registered in the 1965 population census, who numbered some 36,000. At the same time, the government announced that the remaining *Bidoon* would not be eligible for citizenship and were required to regularize their status with the authorities by June 27, 2000 or face prosecution and deportation.

By the end of 2001, the government reportedly had registered some 80,000 *Bidoon* cases. These included the 36,000 registered in the 1965 population census and an additional 8,000 registered in June 2000 who were eligible to apply for citizenship. The government considers the remaining 36,000 registered *Bidoon* to be illegal aliens, maintaining that many are in fact citizens of other countries and are concealing their nationality in order to obtain Kuwaiti citizenship. Persons in this group may apply for a status short of full citizenship that accords them five-year residence permits and other benefits, but must come forward and admit their "true" nationality to do so. During the year, thousands of *Bidoon* came forward, documenting themselves as citizens of other countries, although significant numbers reportedly purchased counterfeit documents in order to adjust their status.

Acquiring citizenship proved difficult even for many *Bidoon* who were eligible because they were counted in the 1965 census. Even as the Kuwaiti parliament voted to consider this group for citizenship, it also voted to limit to 2,000 the number of adult *Bidoon* who could naturalize annually. However, even fewer—only 500 to 600—were granted citizenship in 2001.■

Lebanon

Lebanon hosted about 389,500 refugees and asylum seekers in need of protection in 2001. These included 382,973 Palestinian refugees registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), 2,815 other refu-

gees recognized by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and 3,680 asylum seekers awaiting a UNHCR decision on their refugee claims.

In addition to UNRWA-registered refugees, another 42,000 unregistered Palestinians live in Lebanon. Because about 22,000 of these trace their exile to the 1967 war, they fall outside the UNRWA definition. Another 20,000 are considered to be of Lebanese origin, but identify themselves as Palestinians.

Conditions for Palestinians in Lebanon remained poor in 2001, as did their relations with their reluctant Lebanese hosts. Infighting between Palestinians aligned with Yassir Arafat's Fatah movement and other Palestinian factions, particularly in Sidon's Ain El-Hilweh refugee camp, also triggered sporadic violence during the year.

Lebanon made slow progress during 2001 in returning an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 long-term internally displaced people to their homes. Although significant numbers of internally displaced Lebanese originated from parts of southern Lebanon from which Israeli forces withdrew in May 2000, few had returned to reclaim their homes in the formerly occupied zone by the end of 2001.

Some 3,900 South Lebanese Army (SLA) militia men and their families who fled southern Lebanon following the Israeli army's withdrawal from the area in May 2000 remained in Israel at the end of 2001. Several hundred more were in other countries.

Palestinian Rights and Legal Status The overwhelming majority of Lebanese citizens remained steadfastly opposed in 2001 to the permanent integration of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Lebanese frequently argue that naturalizing Palestinians, who amount to as much as 10 percent of Lebanon's total population and are mostly Sunni Muslim, would disrupt Lebanon's delicate political balance, which is based on power sharing along sectarian lines. Others blame Palestinians for their role in the protracted civil war of the 1970s and 1980s.

Lebanon's constitution explicitly forbids the permanent integration of Palestinians in the country. The rejection of permanent settlement has led Lebanon's government to oppose all policies and actions that could be construed as accepting or facilitating Palestinian integration.

Since the early 1990s, Lebanon has imposed a host of draconian restrictions on resident Palestinians to prevent their integration and to signal to the international community that it considers Palestinian refugees to be an international, not a Lebanese, problem. While Lebanese government officials have insisted to the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) that Palestinians are treated the same as other foreigners, Palestinian refugees and various observers whom USCR interviewed during site visits to Lebanon, most recently in November 2001, reported widespread discrimination against Palestinians. The most recent manifestation of this was the passage of a law in March that bans Palestin-



Shatila refugee camp in Beirut still bore the scars of Lebanon's civil war in 2001. The Lebanese government prohibits Palestinians from rebuilding homes outside the camp's perimeter, on the right.

Photo: USCR/S. Edminster

ians from buying property in Lebanon. The new law also prohibits Palestinians from inheriting property already in their family's possession.

Unlike Palestinian refugees in Syria and Jordan, Palestinians in Lebanon are denied the right to work in skilled professions and generally are unable to compete with cheaper Syrian labor for unskilled work. The overall unemployment rate for Palestinians stood at 40 percent in 2001 and at 60 percent for camp residents.

Palestinians are also denied access to Lebanese health care and other social services, and most are unable to attend Lebanese schools and universities. The Lebanese government also restricts building in and around Palestinian refugee camps, relegating many refugees to substandard housing in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

On the other hand, the Lebanese government issues travel documents to Palestinians, enabling them to travel and work abroad. However, in March 1999 the Lebanese government stopped issuing visitor's visas to Palestinians born in Lebanon but with Jordanian citizenship.

Assistance to Palestinians While Lebanese restrictions have left Palestinian refugees almost fully dependent on outside aid, the refugees also continued to feel the effects of

cuts in international assistance in 2001. Faced with a chronic structural deficit, UNRWA has been forced to implement austerity measures that continued to severely strain its ability to assist Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Refugee needs in the areas of education, health care, infrastructure development, housing rehabilitation, and emergency relief outstripped available resources during the year.

Refugee health care suffered from UNRWA's weakened state, hospital care being particularly problematic. While extra contributions to UNRWA enabled the agency to maintain basic health-care services, UNRWA required patients in need of life-saving treatment to pay for a substantial portion of their treatment, which many patients could not afford. UNRWA contracted with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), which runs four hospitals in Lebanon. UNRWA also maintained contracts with 14 private Lebanese hospitals to provide secondary care. UNRWA provided primary health-care services through a network of 25 clinics in 2001.

During the year, needs also outstripped available resources in the area of education. Almost half of UNRWA schools were located in dilapidated rented buildings, often with rooms too small to accommodate the average class of



35 students. About 45 percent of all UNRWA schools in Lebanon operated on double shifts.

UNRWA operates five secondary schools in Lebanon because Palestinian students are not eligible to enroll in Lebanese government secondary schools and generally cannot afford Lebanese private schools. UNRWA also provided vocational and technical training to some 650 students in 2001 and granted 50 university scholarships, down from 84 the previous year.

The high number of refugees enrolled in UNRWA's special hardship program in Lebanon also served as a barometer for the poor socio-economic conditions in which Palestinian refugees lived during 2001. UNRWA registered 11 percent of all Palestinian refugees in Lebanon as "special hardship cases" during the year, the highest in all of UNRWA's fields of operation. During 2001, UNRWA reported an increase in the number of special hardship cases as greater numbers of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were unable to meet their most basic needs for food and shelter.

UNRWA provided cash, food, and housing assistance to special hardship cases. Although UNRWA provided funding to rebuild 123 houses belonging to families registered with the special hardship program, the agency lacked the funding to rebuild 1,571 other refugee houses identified as substandard. Lebanese government building restrictions reportedly hampered UNRWA efforts to rebuild refugee housing in some refugee camps in southern Lebanon.

Non-Palestinian Refugees UNHCR reported 2,815 non-Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in 2001, mostly from Iraq (1,828) and Sudan (521). Some 2,312 asylum seekers filed applications with UNHCR during the year, the majority from Iraq (1,497).

Already precarious, the situation of non-Palestinian asylum seekers and refugees deteriorated during the year. The arrest, detention, and deportation of undocumented foreigners, including asylum seekers and refugees, increased during 2001. However, Lebanon claimed that it was merely enforcing its laws to prevent foreigners from entering illegally, which is how the overwhelming majority of asylum seekers arrived in the country.

Although other deportations were reported during 2001, the largest took place on December 22, when Lebanon deported between 180 and 300 Iraqi nationals to Syria, including UNHCR-registered refugees and asylum seekers. Syria, in turn, deported them to northern Iraq. An unconfirmed report alleged that the de facto Kurdish authorities in northern Iraq deported at least one Iraqi family of Arab ethnicity to government-controlled Iraq, where the family was arrested by the Iraqi police. The deportees reportedly included some refugees approved for resettlement to third countries, including the United States.

USCR condemned the deportations in a December 28 letter to the Lebanese government, saying that Lebanon's

actions breached the *nonrefoulement* provision of the UN Refugee Convention, which Lebanon, although not a signatory to the Convention, was bound to honor by customary international law. USCR also pointed out that Lebanon's arrest and detention of the deportees prior to their removal violated Article 31 of the UN Refugee Convention (which holds that states should not penalize asylum seekers for illegal entry provided they show good cause for their illegal entry).

The *Surete Generale*, responsible for border control, reportedly detained hundreds of foreigners pending deportation—mostly Iraqis, Sudanese, Egyptians, and Sri Lankans—in poor conditions. There were credible allegations that Lebanese authorities mistreated detainees.

Because of Lebanon's restrictive approach toward non-Palestinian asylum seekers and refugees, resettlement was the only durable solution for UNHCR-recognized refugees in Lebanon in 2001. While UNHCR assisted 904 refugees in resettling to third countries during the year—including 653 Iraqis, 132 Sudanese, and 66 Afghans, and 53 refugees of other nationalities—it appeared that the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States would result in a substantial drop in future resettlement opportunities for refugees in Lebanon. At year's end, the United States—which resettled the majority of UNHCR-recognized refugees in Lebanon prior to September 11—appeared to indicate that it would not return to Lebanon to adjudicate refugee claims for resettlement in 2002.

Southern Lebanon In May 2000, Israel withdrew from its so-called "security zone" in southern Lebanon, ending its 22-year occupation. As Israel pulled its forces back into northern Israel, its surrogate, the South Lebanese Army (SLA), disintegrated, and about 6,000 of its members and their families fled to Israel, fearing retribution from Hizballah guerrillas and Lebanese forces for collaborating with Israel.

Several hundred SLA militia men and accompanying family members reportedly returned to Lebanon in 2001, in addition to the 1,600 who repatriated in 2000. Lebanese authorities arrested, tried, and convicted most for treason upon their return, handing down sentences ranging from one week to life imprisonment.

Although tens of thousands of Lebanese displaced from their homes in the Israeli occupied zone during the past quarter-century poured into southern Lebanon to visit their former villages and homes in the wake of Israel's troop withdrawal in May 2000, the Lebanese government reported to USCR that few have returned permanently since. The economic and physical devastation of the formerly occupied south, coupled with the fact that many displaced from the south had long since started lives elsewhere in the country (many in Beirut), appeared to explain the low level of return.

Long-term Internal Displacement Lebanon's civil war caused the violent fragmentation of a pluralistic society into

fairly distinct sectarian areas. At the height of the conflict, up to a million people were internally displaced for long periods of time, and many people were often displaced briefly during the course of the fighting. When the civil war ended in 1991, some 90,000 families, or about 450,000 persons, remained displaced. Some 86 percent of the displaced originated from the Mount Lebanon governorate (62 percent) and southern Lebanon (24 percent). Significant numbers of the displaced, particularly from the south, settled in Beirut.

Although reliable figures remained scarce, some observers estimated that about 20 percent (90,000 people) of the 450,000 still displaced in 1991 had returned to their former homes between 1991 and 2001. Although it was not known how many internally displaced persons were actively seeking to return to their homes, USCR believed that between 250,000 and 300,000 Lebanese remained internally displaced in 2001.

The pace of return appeared to remain slow in 2001. Although the Lebanese government reportedly spent \$208 million on programs for the internally displaced between July 1999 and October 2001, the destruction of infrastructure, shortage of schools, and lack of economic opportunities prevented returns to many villages of origin. In some cases, political obstacles and security fears also prevented the return of internally displaced persons.

In the past, the UN Development Program (UNDP) has questioned the central assumption underlying the Lebanese government's approach to long-term internal displacement: that the solution to the problem lies in reversing the process and returning the displaced to their former homes. UNDP said that the goal of returning the displaced disregards the many social and economic changes that Lebanon has undergone during the past 20 years, and argues that these changes, many the result of rural-to-urban migration, would have taken place even in the absence of war. ■

Saudi Arabia

At the end of 2001, Saudi Arabia hosted about 128,500 refugees and asylum seekers in need of protection. These included 123,000 Palestinians, most of whom had legal status, but were not formally recognized as refugees by the Saudi government. Another 5,084 Iraqi refugees and 109 Afghan refugees were living in the Rafha camp. At year's end, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was assisting another 75 refugees of various nationalities elsewhere in Saudi Arabia. An additional 234 asylum seekers remained pending a UNHCR refugee status determination at the end of 2001.

Saudi Arabia, which has not signed the UN Refugee Convention, lacks a procedure or legal framework for determining refugee status. Since September 1998, however, the Saudi government has permitted UNHCR to

carry out refugee status determinations for individual asylum seekers.

Refugees from Iraq During the 1991 Gulf War, more than 90,000 Iraqis sought refuge with coalition forces in the occupied zone of southern Iraq. Some 33,000 were eventually settled in two camps in Saudi Arabia, Artewiya (for single men) and Rafha (primarily for families and women). Artewiya camp was merged with Rafha camp during the last months of 1992. The vast majority of Iraqis remaining in Rafha at the end of 2001 were ethnic Arab Shi'a Muslims, primarily from urban areas and the marshes of southern Iraq.

Although Saudi Arabia provided health care, air cooling in living quarters, and primary and secondary schooling, Rafha remained a closed, prison-like camp in 2001. Saudi authorities prohibited refugees from leaving the camp, which is located in a highly militarized zone. Saudi soldiers regularly patrolled the camp in armed vehicles and strictly enforced a nightly curfew.

The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Defense and Aviation, through its military personnel and a Saudi Arabian nongovernmental organization called the International Islamic Relief Organization, controlled all camp services, although UNHCR maintained a presence in both Rafha and Riyadh during the year.

As Iraqis in Rafha observed the tenth anniversary of their exile, many exhibited increasing signs of strain and frustration, resulting from their confinement in the camp and the poor prospects for resettlement or repatriation. In June, 40 refugees held a hunger strike and about 200 others demonstrated in the camp to demand a resumption of resettlement from Rafha. Although reports alleged Saudi mistreatment of some demonstrators, the reports could not be independently confirmed. Following intensive negotiations with UNHCR and the Saudi authorities, the refugees agreed to end their demonstration as it entered its thirteenth day. While the protest appeared to have been resolved peacefully, UNHCR officials expressed concern that tensions in Rafha would remain high in the absence of any progress on durable solutions.

Although the demonstrators were overwhelmingly single men, others in Rafha also showed signs of strain resulting from their long-term exile and confinement. Iraqi refugee women suffered disproportionately from the restrictions Saudi Arabia placed on them; Saudi authorities allowed women to move about the camp only when fully veiled and in the presence of a male escort. In 2001, one-quarter of the Rafha camp population were children under the age of nine who have known nothing but life in the camp.

USCR Actions and Resettlement During the year, the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) called upon the United States and other resettlement countries to negotiate with the government of Saudi Arabia to enact a comprehensive solu-



tion to close the refugee camp. In a July 24 letter to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and a *Washington Post* op-ed piece, USCR called upon the U.S. government to negotiate a quota arrangement with other countries to resettle some 3,200 Rafha refugees whom UNHCR has identified as seeking resettlement. It also urged Secretary Powell to negotiate with the Saudi government to permit the local integration of the remaining 2,000 refugees, who wished to stay in Saudi Arabia. In two separate letters to the Saudi Arabian ambassador in Washington, D.C., dated September 4 and October 16 respectively, USCR also urged the government of Saudi Arabia to permit the local integration of this group. Finally, USCR contacted the governments of Australia, Canada, and Sweden, calling upon them to participate in a resettlement effort to close the Rafha camp.

Although some officials, including those in the U.S. government, expressed an openness to USCR's recommendations, progress toward resolving the situation of the remaining refugees in Rafha appeared limited as 2001 drew to a close. While the Saudi government in November showed a willingness to UNHCR to open the Rafha camp and grant some refugees freedom of movement locally and the right to work, authorities refused to allow refugees to live outside the camp. Moreover, the Saudi concession remained contingent upon commitments from other countries to accept the refugees interested in resettlement. For their part, resettlement countries, such as the United States and Canada, appeared reluctant to resettle more refugees from Rafha without firmer commitments from Saudi Arabia on local integration and from other resettlement countries on participation in any comprehensive solution to close the camp. The perception of the Iraqi refugees in Rafha as difficult to integrate coupled with security concerns following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, also appeared to discourage resettlement countries from returning to Rafha.

Between 1992 and 1997, about 24,700 refugees were resettled from Rafha, 12,100 in the United States, the remainder mostly in Iran, Sweden, Australia, and Canada. Although the United States and Sweden accepted an additional 338 refugees in 2000, only one refugee was resettled from Rafha in 2001.

Repatriation Since UNHCR established its office in Rafha in late 1991, 3,434 Iraqi refugees have repatriated voluntarily. The vast majority of these returned to Iraq during the first few years. Some 240 refugees repatriated in 2001, compared with 66 the previous year.

Although Iraq issued an amnesty in June 1999, which some refugees took as a sign that they might return home safely, UNHCR did not promote repatriation from Rafha in 2001 because Iraq refused to ensure the safety of the returning refugees and restricted access to them. Although UNHCR reported a breakthrough in negotiations with the Iraqi government at the end of 2001 whereby the

government agreed to allow the agency to monitor repatriations, the safety of returning Iraqi refugees—and by extension, the prudence of promoting returns—remained in doubt at year's end. In 2000 and in previous years, there were unconfirmed reports that the Iraqi authorities arrested and detained some Iraqis who repatriated from Rafha. Others reportedly disappeared or died under mysterious circumstances.

Other Foreign Nationals Saudi Arabia's 1992 Basic Law says that "the State will grant political asylum," but qualifies this by adding "if the public interest mitigates" in favor of it. The government has not established procedures for adjudicating refugee claims, and did not amend its laws or regulations relating to asylum during the year.

In practice, many foreigners who might have well-founded fears of persecution if returned to their home countries stay in Saudi Arabia as part of its large expatriate workforce, rather than as recognized refugees. Foreign workers must have Saudi sponsors. Employers, who routinely keep foreign employees' passports, control their movement within Saudi Arabia, as well as their ability to leave the country.

Estimates on the number of Palestinians residing in Saudi Arabia range from 123,000 to 290,000. In general, Palestinians residing outside the mandate area of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza) are considered *prima facie* refugees.■

Syria

At the end of 2001, Syria hosted more than 397,600 refugees and asylum seekers in need of protection. These included 391,651 Palestinian refugees registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 3,271 non-Palestinian refugees registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and about 2,700 asylum seekers pending a UNHCR status determination at year's end.

In addition to Palestinians registered with UNRWA, the Syrian government reported another 75,000 unregistered Palestinians living in refugee-like conditions in the country. As many as 40,000 Iraqi nationals not registered with UNHCR also lived in Syria during 2001, many of whom may be refugees. An estimated half-million long-term internally displaced persons and 200,000 stateless Kurds also lived in the country. Some 4,300 Syrian nationals sought asylum in European countries during 2001.

Palestinian Refugees Although Palestinian refugees in Syria are not eligible for citizenship, they are permitted to work and have access to government services. Of the Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA, 109,466, about 28

percent, were living in camps. Palestinian refugees in Syria represented 10.1 percent of all UNRWA-registered refugees.

Successive budgetary shortfalls have forced UNRWA, the UN agency that assists Palestinian refugees, to implement austerity measures that continued to strain severely its ability to assist Palestinian refugees in Syria during the year. Nevertheless, UNRWA continued to provide essential services in the fields of health care, education, infrastructure development, and emergency relief in 2001.

During the year, UNRWA operated 23 medical clinics, including mother-and-child health care and family-planning services. Funding shortages forced UNRWA to limit hospital referrals and the duration of hospital care.

UNRWA's funding shortage manifested itself in other ways during the year. Although the number of people registered with UNRWA's special hardship program had increased by 7.2 percent to 28,513 by June 2001, delays in funding prevented the agency from providing emergency cash assistance in a timely manner to needy families. Serious overcrowding in UNRWA schools continued in 2001, with 93.6 percent operating on double shifts, the highest percentage in any of agency's fields of operation.

Non-Palestinian Refugees Syria is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol. Therefore, non-Palestinian asylum seekers and refugees continued to register with UNHCR for assistance and protection during 2001.

In June, Syria amended its admission and residence procedures for citizens of Arab countries generally, and for Iraqis specifically. Whereas Syria previously had allowed nationals of Arab countries (except Iraqis) to reside indefinitely in the country without applying for a residence permit, the new regulation requires Arab-country nationals to apply for, and renew, a residence permit every three months. Citizens of Arab countries still may enter Syria without a visa. The regulation also rescinded the prior requirement that had obliged Iraqis to obtain a security clearance from the Syrian authorities to enter and remain in the country. During a U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) site visit to Syria in January 2002, UNHCR reported that it was too early to gauge the impact on asylum seekers of the new residence permit requirement.

UNHCR registered 3,271 refugees in Syria in December 2001, mostly from Iraq (1,597 persons). Significant numbers also came from Yemen (662), Somalia (397), Afghanistan (407), and Sudan (109).

Some 2,935 asylum seekers applied for refugee status with UNHCR during the year, mostly from Iraq. Although UNHCR was unable to provide detailed statistics on its status determinations for 2001, it reported to USCR that its recognition rate was somewhere between 10 and 13 percent, a significant drop from the 29 percent approval rate the agency reported for 2000.

During USCR's January 2002 site visit, UNHCR re-

ported that about 700 Iraqi long-term residents of Iran had applied for refugee status with UNHCR in Syria since the beginning of 2000, most in 2001. UNHCR treats such applicants as "irregular movers," granting them refugee status if they meet the refugee definition, but denying them assistance and resettlement opportunities because it deems them to have already found protection in Iran.

Syria does not allow non-Palestinian refugees the right to employment, although it reportedly tolerates the illegal employment of foreign Arabs. Most UNHCR-recognized refugees received limited financial assistance from the agency, provided through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society and the Women's Association.

The Syrian authorities generally cooperated with UNHCR to ensure that refugees received protection, and facilitated the agency's visits to asylum seekers and refugees in detention. During 2001, however, Syrian authorities reportedly deported to northern Iraq seven Iraqi asylum seekers registered with UNHCR in Damascus. There were also reports that Syria *refouled* between 180 and 300 Iraqis, originally deported from Lebanon, to northern Iraq in December. Illegal border crossing reportedly constitutes a deportable offence in Syria.

On December 7, Syrian authorities arrested more than 100 rejected southern Sudanese asylum seekers for demonstrating outside the UNHCR office in Damascus. The demonstrators were protesting what they called an unfair bias against southern Sudanese in UNHCR's refugee status determinations, and demanding that the agency issue them protection letters to prevent their deportation to Sudan. Syrian police made the arrests after UNHCR refused to meet the protesters' demands and the demonstrators in turn refused to leave the UNHCR office. Although Syrian authorities promptly released the women, children, and married men they had arrested, about 90 single male demonstrators remained in detention at year's end.

Syria generally tolerates the presence of non-Palestinian refugees, but does not offer them the possibility for permanent asylum. Thus, UNHCR pursues resettlement for those the agency recognizes as refugees in Syria.

Internal Displacement Except for some Druze villagers who stayed behind, most of the Syrian population of the Golan Heights fled in 1967. Estimates of their original numbers vary. While Israel says that about 70,000 left, Syria puts the original number at 153,000 and asserts that the number has grown to almost 500,000, 34 years later.

After the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Israel agreed to return a slice of territory along the eastern edge of the Golan Heights, extending to Kuneitra, the one-time capital of Golan Province, in return for the repatriation of Israeli POWs. Before leaving, however, the Israelis leveled the city with bulldozers and dynamite. Although its 53,000 displaced residents had been expected to return, the late President Assad said that the city was uninhabitable, and it remained empty.



The Syrian government rebuilt ten villages in territory adjacent to the Golan returned to Syria in 1973 where it resettled about 60,000 displaced Golan residents. The remaining Syrian displaced and their descendents, as many as 400,000 people in 2001, lived in government housing projects in the suburbs of Damascus, Dara, and Homs.

Stateless Kurds Another little-known group outside Syria are 200,000 stateless Kurds in northeastern Syria. Although the Syrian government has registered the Kurds, it denies them citizenship despite their strong claims. Consequently, they are denied the rights and benefits of Syrian nationals, including the right to hold a Syrian passport and travel outside the country. The Syrian government disputes that the Kurds suffer discrimination, claiming that stateless Kurds in Syria who wish to travel abroad receive temporary travel documents.

The Syrian government asserts that the stateless Kurds are Turkish nationals and classifies them either as “foreigners” or as *maktoumeen*, meaning “unregistered.” The former are issued red identity documents, which prevent them from owning land, practicing certain professions, receiving food subsidies, being admitted to public hospitals, or having legally recognized marriages to Syrian citizens. The latter are issued no documents at all. *Maktoumeen* are the children (or grandchildren) of “foreigners,” including foreigners who marry women who are Syrian citizens.

In a December 7, 2001 letter to USCR, the Syrian government defended its treatment of this group, claiming that it provides shelter and other assistance to needy stateless Kurds and allows their children to attend school. Nevertheless, diplomatic sources disputed the government's assertion, reporting to USCR that the situation of stateless Kurds remained very difficult in 2001. ■

Yemen

At year's end, Yemen hosted about 69,500 refugees, the overwhelming majority Somalis (67,485), followed by Ethiopians (1,480), Iraqis (200), Palestinians (123), and small numbers of refugees from Eritrea, Sudan, and elsewhere. Some 5,000 Sudanese and 2,000 Iraqis not registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also lived in Yemen during 2001.

Refugee Status Determinations Yemen is the only country on the Arabian Peninsula to have signed the UN Refugee Convention and Protocol. Although Yemen had no domestic asylum or refugee laws in 2001, the government permitted UNHCR to conduct status determinations.

During the year, some 2,322 asylum seekers registered with UNHCR, including 1,330 Ethiopians, 448 Iraqis, 249 Palestinians, 129 Sudanese, and 166 persons

from other countries. Although comprehensive data on UNHCR status determinations were not available for 2001, the agency reported that it recognized 230 refugees in individual status determinations during the year, including 123 Iraqis, 45 Palestinians, 33 Ethiopians, and 29 refugees of other nationalities.

UNHCR assisted 168 refugees with resettlement to third countries in 2001, including 71 Somalis, 37 Sudanese, 35 Iraqis, and 18 Ethiopians.

Refugees from Somalia UNHCR registered 11,070 Somali asylum seekers in Yemen during 2001, some of whom arrived during the year and others who arrived in past years but only registered in 2001. Those who reached Yemen during the year crossed the Gulf of Aden in often-perilous journeys that reportedly cost several hundred refugees their lives when their makeshift boats sank. In May, more than 80 Somali asylum seekers drowned when smugglers forced them to jump overboard after the boat's engine stalled. The boat capsized soon thereafter. Fishing boats rescued about 75 passengers.

Unlike asylum seekers from other countries who received individual status determinations, UNHCR granted *prima facie* refugee status to Somalis unless the agency determined that individual protection concerns necessitated their resettlement.

During the first half of 2001, UNHCR provided basic assistance, including food, shelter, medical care, schooling, and job training to about 13,000 Somalis at the Al-Gahin camp, located about 87 miles (140 km) east of Aden. In June, UNHCR relocated the refugees to the newly constructed al-Kaharaz camp in the Lahaj governorate. Children reportedly receive schooling and adults may attend vocational training in al-Kaharaz.

Most Somalis, however, lived in urban centers, such as Sana'a, Aden, and Ta'iz. Most had reportedly integrated into urban areas and were no longer receiving food or financial assistance in 2001. They were eligible for partial assistance, however, including medical treatment at UNHCR clinics in Aden and Sana'a, and small income-generating loans for refugee women.

According to UNHCR, 527 Somali refugees voluntarily repatriated in 2001.

Other Refugees Although little information was available on other refugee groups living in Yemen during 2001, many of the 1,480 registered Ethiopian refugees reportedly were living alongside Somalis in the al-Kaharaz camp. UNHCR recorded only 18 voluntary repatriations of Ethiopians during the year.

Information is also scanty regarding Iraqi refugees in Yemen. In addition to the 200 registered Iraqis, UNHCR continued to monitor the situation of another 2,000 Iraqis who had not registered refugee claims, but were believed to be living in refugee-like circumstances in the country. ■