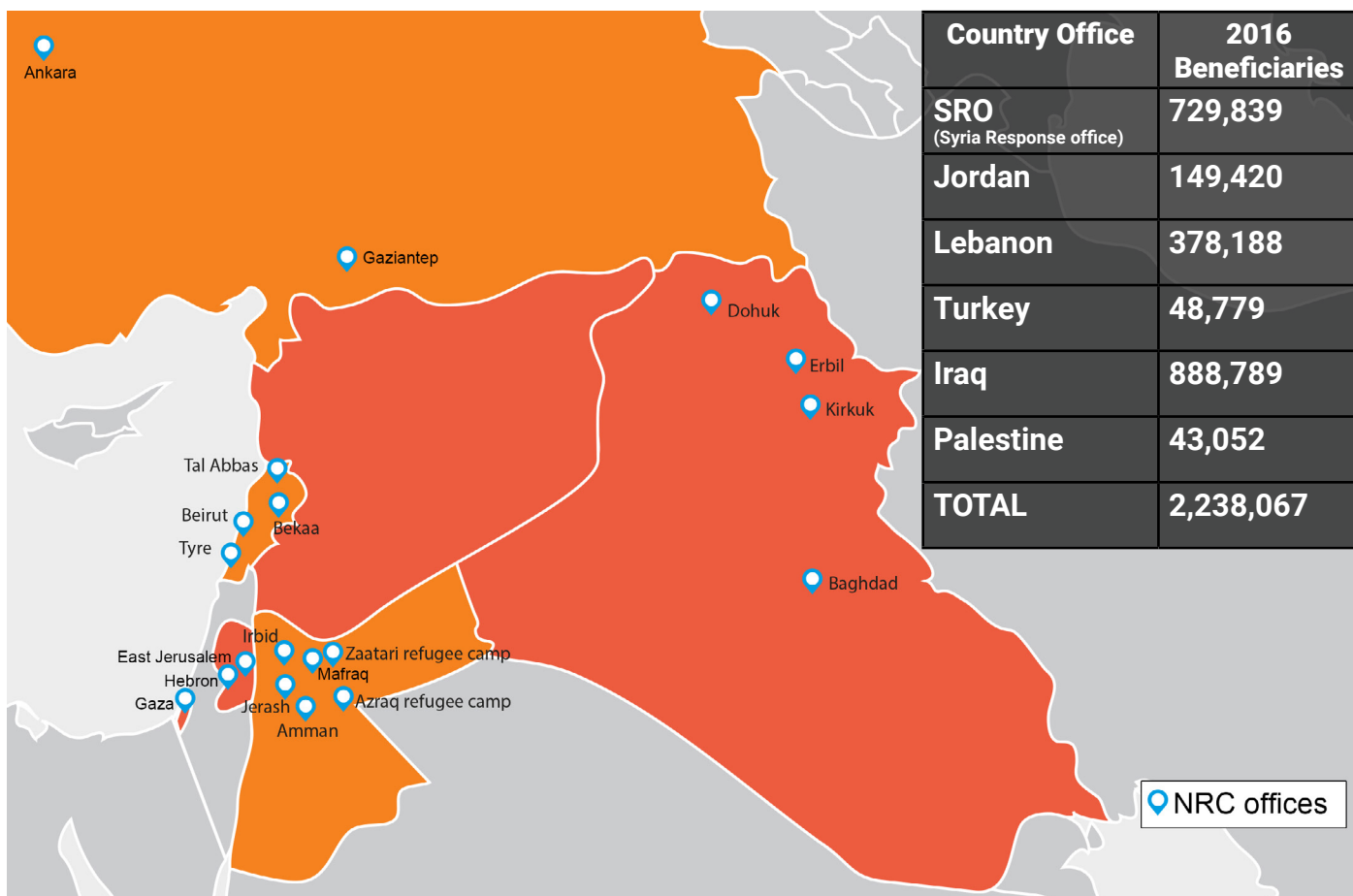


NRC Middle East Annual Newsletter

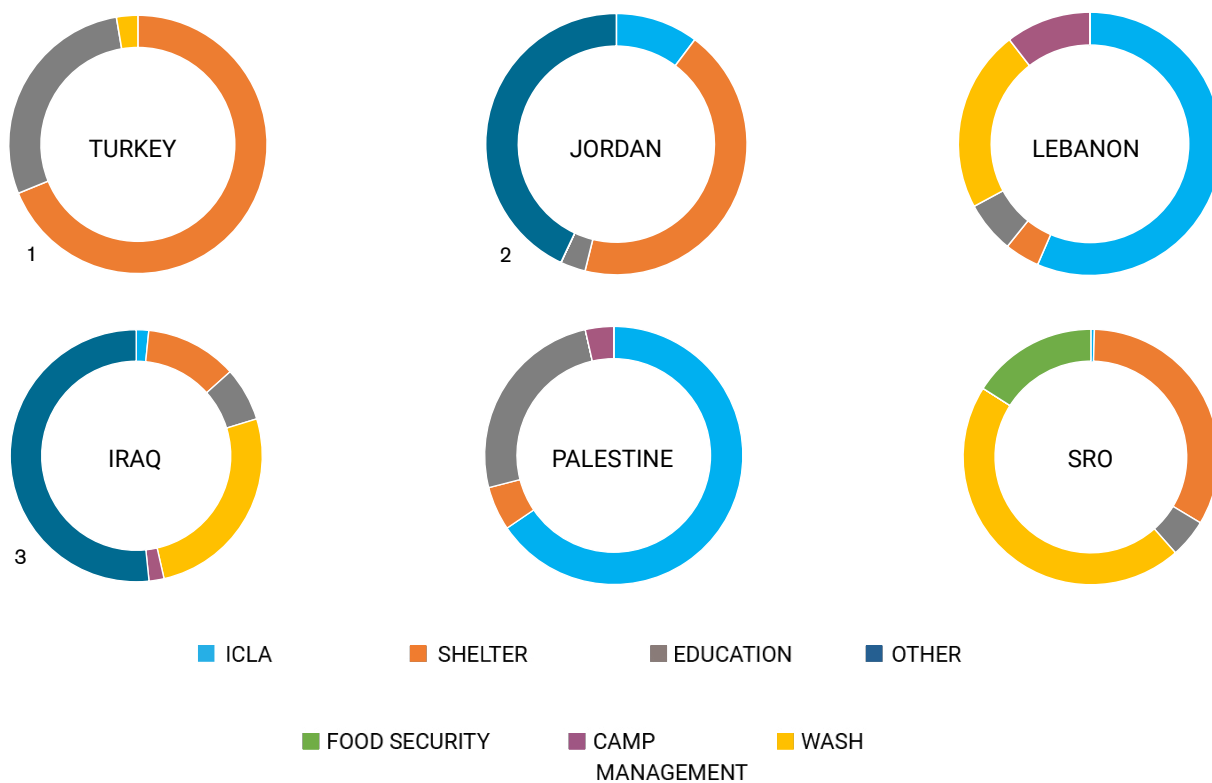
2016 in review



Ibrahim, Mustafa and Ibrahim have lived under IS for two years in Qayyarah before it was retaken in August 2016.
Photo: Wolfgang Gressmann/NRC



Beneficiaries by sector



- 1 - Includes heaters distributed in early 2016 as part of shelter programming.
- 2 - Basic needs and unconditional cash distributions.
- 3 - Emergency response: cash distributions, gender based violence programming.

REGIONAL CONTEXT UPDATE

After nearly 6 years of war inside **Syria**, 13.5 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Parties to the conflict continue to use siege as a weapon of war, with 4.9 million people now trapped in besieged or hard to reach areas without sustained access to humanitarian assistance. Despite recent internationally sponsored talks, a conclusive political settlement seems unlikely to take hold in the near future. Protracted conflict, limited movement of people and goods across conflict lines and a decimated economy are some of the major factors degrading living conditions each day. Across the country, community services and jobs are disappearing. Citing political and security considerations as well as strains on resources, the countries neighbouring Syria have now effectively closed their borders to new refugee arrivals. Internally, multiple waves of displacement scatter the population, making it difficult to predict where they might seek refuge next. Shifting pockets of access, meanwhile, create barriers to people in need of emergency aid, while besieged and hard-to-reach areas remain nearly impenetrable.

In 2016, **Jordan** has reshaped its refugee policies with a focus on macro-economic development, access to education for all and creation of livelihoods opportunities for Jordanians and Syrians alike. Despite continued challenges related to the regulatory framework and some restrictive refugee-hosting practices, the so-called Jordan Compact has succeeded in attracting unprecedented international funding to the country. Accentuating pre-existing restrictions, the Syrian border was effectively closed in June leaving an estimated 45-50,000 Syrians stranded in a militarised zone between Syria and Jordan referred to as 'the berm'. In addition to current and anticipated conflict dynamics in southern Syria, security and socio-economic concerns acted to further impact humanitarian access for and to refugees.

Following years of political impasse, a new President was elected and government formed in **Lebanon** in late 2016. Through 2016, refugee policy largely remained dormant as a result of this stalemate, with few of the commitments that were made at the February London Conference acted upon. Lebanon has the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. 71% of Syrian households in Lebanon live below the poverty line, 52% below the extreme poverty line. As the crisis continues, refugees' coping mechanisms, money and assets have been exhausted. Syrian refugees face substantial barriers to obtaining legal stay documentation in Lebanon. The cost of registration and renewal is out of reach for most, impacting on every facet of refugees' lives, from the ability to earn a livelihood to the threat of arrest or forced return to Syria. As a result of donors' commitments at the London Conference, access to education and spaces in schools have in many cases improved. However, refugee students face substantial obstacles to getting an education. The Syria crisis has exacerbated conditions for Palestine refugees. Lebanon was host to an estimated 278,000 Palestine refugees before the Syria crisis, and is now hosting an additional 32,000 from Syria.

Turkey, which was hosting approximately 3 million refugees by the end of 2016, sought to take the lead on durable initiatives by introducing domestic legislation addressing protection concerns, signing an agreement with the EU to curb migration across the Aegean Sea and hosting the World Humanitarian Summit. Internally, policies pursued by the Government of Turkey following the failed coup also strained relations with the US and EU. Externally, Turkey's rapprochement with Russia, its endorsement of 'Operation Euphrates Shield' in Syria and its military presence in Iraq raised questions with regards to the prospective status of Syrian refugees, the implications of inter-state rivalry, deteriorating tensions with Kurdish actors and escalating terrorist activities conducted by IS.

REGIONAL CONTEXT UPDATE

During the first half of 2016, the humanitarian response in **Iraq** focused efforts on responding to the needs of displaced people following the military campaign to regain Government-control over ISIS-held areas. During the May-June military campaign to retake control over Fallujah city alone, some 85,000 people were displaced in Anbar. Simultaneously, humanitarian agencies continued responding to the displacement from Hawija District to Kirkuk and Salah al-Din. Increased pressure on IDPs in Kirkuk to return to their areas of origin culminated in October 2016 in the mass expulsion of thousands of families. The second half of 2016 was marked by preparations to reassert government control over the city of Mosul. Between August and October 2016, some 150,000 people were already displaced in the Mosul corridor. By the time the Iraqi Security Forces declared east Mosul retaken, an additional 200,000 people had sought safety and assistance in the displacement camps located to the south and east of the city. Efforts to retake the western part of the city is ongoing, which is expected to trigger the displacement of 250,000 to 400,000 civilians.

With focus directed elsewhere, Israel proceeded in advancing its occupation policies in **Palestine**, such as the Gaza blockade as well as settlement expansion, house demolitions and population transfers in Jerusalem and the West Bank. As Israel rejected Paris talks, opposed UN statements and enacted an NGO Transparency Law, the perpetual cycle of violence persisted between aggressive Israeli activities and independently-perpetrated attacks by Palestinians.



Recently displaced Syrian families walking towards the Syrian border with Turkey at Bab Al Salama crossing.
Photo: NRC

COUNTRY OFFICE INFORMATION

SYRIA RESPONSE

In 2016 NRC expanded its operations to reach more vulnerable people affected by displacement across government and opposition controlled areas in Syria. NRC implements its Education, Food Security, ICLA, Shelter and WASH programmes in Syria directly and through 16 local humanitarian partners (9 of which have already progressed through NRC's robust partner assessment approach and have been identified as preferred strategic partners), using remote management techniques where necessary and appropriate.

Education programming was established across Syria to bring children and youth back into safe learning environments and support their psychosocial needs. The ICLA programme was established in response to civil documentation and Housing, Land and Property (HLP) concerns of displaced individuals, which were identified as main protection concerns in the Syria 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview. The Shelter and WASH response was expanded to respond to emergency needs such as provision of tents and safe drinking water, and to contribute to resilience of communities by rehabilitating water and sanitation infrastructure. NRC expanded cash based programming in emergencies through the development of a set of guidelines and tools for remote cash programming.

NRC developed and rolled out the Partnership Toolbox and Protection Mainstreaming Plan across Syria, contributing to further improving the quality of programming and accountability. NRC joined 5 other INGOs in forming the Syria Resilience Consortium, securing over 38 million USD in funding to strengthen the resilience of conflict-affected Syrian men, women, boys and girls.

To enable the provision of humanitarian assistance even in the most hard-to-reach areas, NRC and ECHO have agreed on a robust, alternative procedural framework which enables safe, responsible and accountable operations in situations where NRC's regular procedures cannot be adhered to due to the prevalence of 'Exceptional Extreme Operational Conditions'.



NRC Education Officer Walaa Alam surrounded by children attending the Centre for children in Sahnaia on the outskirts of Damascus.

Photo: Karl Schembri/NRC

COUNTRY OFFICE INFORMATION

JORDAN

2016 saw the consolidation and expansion of quality integrated programming in both camp and non-camp settings in Jordan. In addition to the continuation of innovative and flexible programmes serving Syrian refugees in the refugee camps of Za'atri and Azraq, work in the host community has been shaped by the expansion of operations to new geographical locations – Ramtha, Mafrq and Amman – and the development of new partnerships with local organisations.

While maintaining its focus on access to civil and legal documentation and refugees' housing rights, the ICLA team has responded to the growing interest amongst Syrian refugees related to access to legal employment. The urban shelter programme evolved in 2016 to include a range of shelter modalities, coupled with the integration of renewable energy and energy efficient interventions linked to negotiated reductions in rent for extended lease agreements. NRC's urban shelter programme was nominated as a finalist for the World Habitat Awards.

Building on the education initiative to reach 1 million children in school, NRC is developing a manual on school expansion citing best practices established through the ongoing project while engaging in programmatic activities that increase access to and quality of education offered to Syrian refugee children. NRC piloted a response for youth in the host community, building on the successful work in the camps; providing access to structured learning and social engagement opportunities for both Syrian and Jordanian youth. NRC has played a key role as regional lead in the Middle East on the Global Refugee Youth Consultations and is supporting UNHCR in its 2016 youth-themed NGO consultations.

The end of 2016 saw the start of the development of a livelihoods strategy to strengthen integrated livelihoods programming based on a number of pilot initiatives implemented to date.



Emad (27) joined NRC to work with maintenance teams producing recycling bags and raincoats for workers and people in Za'atari Refugee Camp.

Photo: Alisa Reznick/NRC

COUNTRY OFFICE INFORMATION

LEBANON

Over 3,000 housing units were provided to refugee families in 2016 through NRC Lebanon's Shelter programme. The programme benefits both Lebanese host communities and refugees in need of housing by upgrading unfinished or substandard shelters to a minimum standard. In 2016, the Urban Displacement Outside of Camps (UDOC) initiative worked to expand camp management approaches to assist refugees who are living in host communities in Lebanon.

In 2016 NRC reached the most vulnerable refugees living in Informal Tented Settlements (ITS) and in urban shelters, with water, hygiene and sanitation programming (WASH), and implemented successful Community Support Projects, benefiting host communities and alleviating pressure on WASH infrastructure.

NRC's Information Counselling & Legal Assistance (ICLA) services further strengthened its reach of programming in 2016, through increased mobile legal clinics, mobile courts, and the deployment of volunteers mainly from within Syrian refugee communities, reaching more than 212,000 beneficiaries with information, counselling and legal advice.

NRC supported the Ministry of Education's 2016 Back to School campaign to ensure free access to education for all children in Lebanon. Over 3,000 families with school-aged children were reached in 2016 through home visits and information sessions and 81% of referred out-of-school children were able to enrol in public schools. In November 2016, the Better Learning Programme (BLP) launched in Lebanon, aiming to improve the learning experience for students affected by the trauma of displacement or as a result of conflict.

In late 2016, in the remote mountainous Aarsal district of the Bekaa Valley, NRC was able to distribute over 5,300 winter shelter kits to refugees in informal tented settlements (ITS), as well as 1,245 and winter stoves to households not living in ITS across Lebanon.



NRC staff help rebuild destroyed roofs and houses to ensure they meet basic construction and safety standards.

Photo: Dar Al Mussawir

COUNTRY OFFICE INFORMATION

TURKEY

Since its establishment in January 2016, NRC Turkey has been gradually developing a multi-faceted programme aimed at addressing the immediate and medium to longer-term needs of Syrian and other refugees, as well vulnerable Turkish host families where appropriate.

During 2016, NRC's programming ranged from the distribution of non food items (NFIs) and multi-purpose cash in response to emergency needs, to the provision of technical and vocational training in support of the restoration of livelihoods. In addition, NRC's education activities provided direct support to refugee children engaged in non-formal education in south-eastern Turkey, while enhancing quality through teacher training.

Towards the end of the year, NRC Turkey consolidated its programming under 3 main pillars which will continue to form the basis for NRC's programmes into 2017: Non-formal education, offering a pathway into the Turkish formal education system; protection, primarily through the provision of Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) services; and promoting livelihoods through life/vocational skills training for vulnerable refugee and host community youth.

As the main INGO providing assistance in Ankara, NRC plays an active role in the NGO community in Turkey, participating in all relevant interagency coordination mechanisms and contributing towards joint initiatives such as the development of a common curriculum for non-formal education. In addition, during 2016 NRC Turkey closely collaborated and developed strong relationships with various relevant Turkish authorities and institutions, including the Ministry of National Education, Employment agency Iskur, the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation, and the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD).



Syrian refugee youth attend a cooking class as part of a vocational training in Ankara.
Photo: NRC

COUNTRY OFFICE INFORMATION

IRAQ

In one of the world's most complex humanitarian crises, over three million Iraqis are internally displaced across the country, and matters are expected to worsen as needs increase and new emergencies develop.

In 2016, NRC was the main relief agency responding to mass displacement from Fallujah and Ramadi, initially through the distribution of life-saving assistance followed by WASH and NFI interventions. In 2016 alone NRC provided critical assistance to an estimated 167,493 internally displaced people (IDPs) across Iraq with distribution of food rations, hygiene kits, water and dignity kits. NRC continued its support in 2016 to people displaced since 2014 with education, shelter, WASH, and legal assistance.

NRC provided access to quality education for conflict affected children and youth in camps, host communities and non-camp settings, reaching 38,697 students, teachers and education personnel. Over 5,000 of those children were newly displaced from Mosul. NRC was on the ground in two displacement camps within 48 hours providing education in emergencies and psychosocial support. In the shelter sector, NRC provided IDPs, refugees and host communities with access to basic household items and adequate shelter solutions. NRC also provided water and sanitation solutions to 107,709 individuals, while ICLA activities provided assistance to 12,000 beneficiaries with civil documentation and housing, land, and property rights.

Through the Cash Consortium NRC has scaled-up multi-purpose cash assistance across Iraq, allowing more than 9,000 vulnerable households to meet their needs and promoting their resilience and empowerment. In November 2016, NRC developed a Plan of Action for Mosul, appealing for US \$15 million for a six-month emergency response targeting 210,000 conflict-affected people. Additionally, NRC has ramped up its winterisation support for people in newly retaken areas, complemented by water trucking to 1,500 households in east Mosul.

NRC's access work has ensured an understanding of the situation in hard to reach areas of Iraq, including population estimates, potential displacement trends, humanitarian needs overviews and priority protection concerns. Assessment findings have also informed local access strategies including physical access mapping, actor mapping, including local civil society organisations and local leaders, and access challenges.



NRC staff distribute heaters, blankets, solar lights and hygiene kits to displaced families in Hamam Ali, which was recently retaken from ISIS.

Photo: Sarhang Sherwany/NRC

COUNTRY OFFICE INFORMATION

PALESTINE

2016 saw a marked increase in humanitarian needs in Palestine due to increased housing demolitions in the West Bank and the ongoing blockade in Gaza. In response, NRC provided quality humanitarian and legal assistance, and continued to host and chair the Shelter Cluster and the West Bank Protection Consortium, which looks to prevent forcible transfer.

In 2016, NRC Palestine's Information Counseling Legal Assistance (ICLA) services prevented the evictions of 98% of assisted beneficiaries from their homes in the West Bank. The ICLA team also provided information sessions on Housing, Land and Property (HLP) and Residency rights and provided direct legal assistance to beneficiaries through Legal Aid Centres and Mobile Legal Aid Clinics.

NRC implemented the 'Improved Education' approach in 2016 and pioneered a school-based psycho-educational intervention, the 'Better Learning Programme' (BLP) in nearly 200 Ministry of Education, Higher Education (MoEHE) and UNRWA schools classified as most vulnerable in Palestine.

In 2016, NRC's Shelter programme in Gaza looked to ensure adequate living conditions through repairs/upgrades, WASH solutions and support to HLP rights for the most vulnerable. NRC's Urban Displacement Outside of Camps (UDOC) programme in Gaza strengthened communities and local authorities' capacities to respond to displacement in 2016 through emergency preparedness and upgrades to two schools for use as designated emergency shelters.

Research, policy development and humanitarian advocacy in Palestine is set against the backdrop of prolonged belligerent occupation, with no resolution in sight. In 2016, NRC continued to engage and provide specialized legal and policy advice to a range of key actors in Palestine, promoting humanitarian assistance and protection in line with international law.



Palestinian students practising breathing exercises at Ain Jalout Secondary Girls School.
Photo: NRC

ADVOCACY

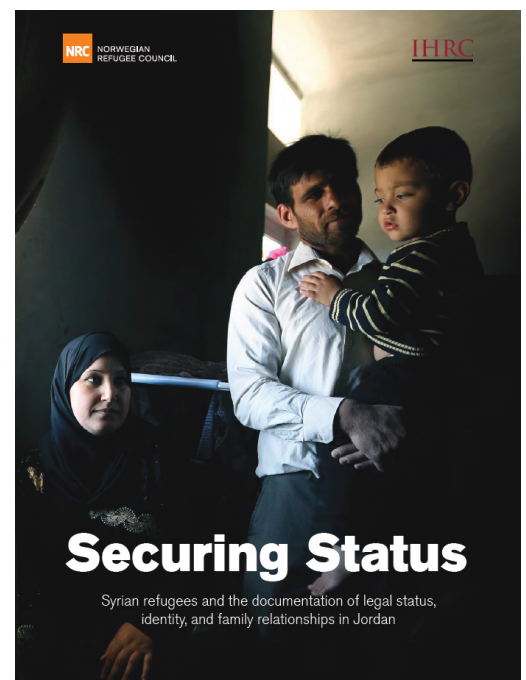
On the Syria response initiatives, NRC produced a private briefing paper on access challenges in Syria and continued to lobby, together with other aid agencies, on the importance of renewing UN Security Council resolution 2165 and ensuring its implementation. The resolution focuses on the obligations to ensure sustained humanitarian access throughout Syria and to protect civilians. In December, NRC continued to draw attention to the situation in Aleppo through media engagements from the regional and Syria Response offices.

In Iraq, NRC's advocacy work generated positive results in the weeks and months following the launch of the military offensive in Fallujah. It further shaped the humanitarian response in Mosul, including positive changes in increased coordination at field level by the UN and the NGO Coordination Committee of Iraq (NCCI); increased pressure on the Government of Iraq by international political actors to ensure that the rights of people fleeing are protected during security screening; increased presence of protection actors to provide a protection response and monitor and document human rights violations; as well as increased pressure on the Government of Iraq to only allow state actors to partake in the military offensive, thereby keeping militia groups on the periphery.

NRC has also continued to examine protection and access challenges related to the ongoing military operations in and around the city of Mosul. NRC produced a joint private report with IRC and Oxfam ahead of the December 2016 Brussels donor conference on Iraq. NRC has continued to produce regular field updates on the situation in Mosul, including working to build and maintain international media attention on the humanitarian situation as detailed further below.

In November, NRC together with Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic, published the [Securing Status report](#) which examines the registration situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan, barriers to securing legal status and suggested ways forward when essential documentation is unavailable. [New research](#) was also published by NRC in January on Housing Land and Property rights and issues related to civil documentation. Based on the results, as many as 70% of Syrian refugees do not hold a national ID. Up to half of married Syrians that we interviewed did not hold marriage documentation, and a significant portion of children have not yet been registered. Consequently, as many as 20% of Syrian refugee children under the age of five are now at risk of becoming stateless. Our surveys also showed that a significant majority of Syrian refugees own property in Syria, yet less than 20% of those interviewed reported that they still possessed relevant documentation to prove their ownership claims.

In Palestine, NRC continues to support efforts to ensure Palestinian families living in both the West Bank and Gaza have access to humanitarian aid and to highlight the humanitarian impact of ongoing demolitions of aid projects and Palestinian homes and basic civilian infrastructure in Area C of the West Bank.



COMMUNICATION

The year 2016 saw an overall scale-up in communications and media capacity across the Middle East region—from the regional office to country offices, reflected in highly successful media hits in the mainstream press, consolidation of social media and establishing NRC's social media presence in Arabic for the first time.

For the fifth year anniversary of the Syria crisis, NRC led an interagency report and media work holding the UN Security Council members accountable for “fuelling the fire”. The full report, *Fuelling the Fire: How the UN Security Council's Permanent Members Are Undermining Their Own Commitments on Syria*, [can be found here](#). The media work surrounding the report attracted significant coverage, including live interviews with Jan Egeland and Regional Director Carsten Hansen, among others.

NRC's emergency response and advocacy in Fallujah and Mosul was covered by significant media reporting, informed by daily NRC media updates and briefings to journalists. Media outlets engaging with the story included CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, The Telegraph, The Times, New York Times, Washington Post, Al Arabiya, Reuters, AP, and AFP. The media work undertaken during the Mosul response increased awareness globally on the situation, led to significant policy changes on access to safety for civilians fleeing conflict, increased coordination efforts across the humanitarian response in the lead-up to Mosul, highlighted major protection concerns, including at screening facilities, increased NRC's funding-base, and earned the NRC Iraq team the NRC Media Award for 2016.

The Syria Response Office has been regularly engaged with the media, with country director Thomas White giving [interviews on developing stories](#) as well as being open to media products from inside Damascus, including a video produced by the Middle East Regional Office about one of NRC's partners, The House of Love, [featured on the influential AJ+](#).

In 2016, the Middle East Regional Office set up new social media channels, most notably the [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages in Arabic in October. An [Instagram](#) account was set up at the end of June, which current has 1,130 followers.



Newly displaced Iraqi families wait outside a distribution point in Debaga camp where NRC provides water, food parcels, hygiene and baby kits.

Photo: Karl Schembri/NRC

FURTHER READINGS

Palestine

- [Palestine Country Office Fact Sheet](#)
- [Guide to Housing, Land and Property in the Gaza Strip](#)
- [Gaza: The Impact of Conflict on Women](#)

Lebanon

- [Evaluation of collective site management and coordination in Lebanon's informal tented settlements](#)
- [Women refugees in Lebanon and the consequences of limited legal status on their housing, land and property rights](#)
- [Palestinian refugees' right to inherit under the 2001 amendment law](#)
- [Lebanon Country Office Fact Sheet](#)

Turkey

- [Turkey Country Office Fact Sheet](#)

Syria Response

- [Report: Understanding statelessness in the Syria refugee context](#)
- [A Future in the Balance: Syria – Understanding the needs, aspirations, and challenges faced by displaced and local community youth](#)
- [Syria Response Fact Sheet](#)

Jordan

- [Jordan Youth Programme evaluation](#)
- [Integrated ICLA and Shelter Evaluation](#)
- [Securing Status: Syrian refugees and the documentation of legal status, identity, and family relationships in Jordan](#)
- [Jordan Country Office Fact Sheet](#)

Iraq

- [Rapid Perceptions Assessment – Mosul](#)
- [Iraq Country Office Fact Sheet](#)

Communication

- [Euronews quotes NRC's blog here \(at the end\)](#)
- [The World Weekly refers to NRC's fact sheet and takes a quote from the NRC blog](#)
- [McGill International Review quotes Jan from our statement in The Yemen Ceasefire: A Successful Truce or a Humanitarian Lull?](#)
- [Voice of America quotes Jan Egeland on Yemen's ceasefire](#)



7-year-old Razan is enjoying the education centre summer school activities in Zaatari refugee camp. Photo: Hussein Amri/NRC

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