

# Syria

## Refugee quota factsheet

## New Zealand Refugee Quota Syrian Refugees

The New Zealand Government works with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to offer permanent resettlement solutions in New Zealand for 1000 refugees annually.<sup>1</sup> Refugees from Syria are included in the 2017/2018 refugee quota and will be resettled to New Zealand throughout the year.

Prior to their arrival to New Zealand the Syrian refugees were living in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon recognised as refugees by the UNHCR.

Before settlement in the community all refugees accepted under the annual refugee quota programme complete a six week reception programme at Auckland's Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre.

In order to become successfully resettled, refugees will be accessing the assistance of mainstream services such as health, education, housing and Work & Income. The New Zealand Red Cross is the key agency responsible for assisting quota refugees in their initial community settlement.

*This document aims to provide New Zealand's community-based professionals with general information about Syria, the human rights situation in Syria, the Syrian culture as well as some general information on supporting successful refugee resettlement in your community.*

<sup>1</sup> This figure includes an additional intake of 250 Syrians in the 2017/2018 quota year before the permanent quota increase to 1000 refugees takes effect from 2018/19.

### Humanitarian situation and needs

In March 2011 Syria's government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, faced an unprecedented challenge to its authority when pro-democracy protests erupted throughout the country. The Syrian government used violence to suppress demonstrations, making extensive use of police, military, and paramilitary forces. Opposition militias began to form in 2011, and by 2012 the conflict had expanded into a full-fledged civil war.<sup>2</sup>

OCHA statistics as of 31 January 2017 show that 13.5 million of Syria's 22 million population are affected by the conflict and in need of humanitarian assistance, including over 6.3 million internally displaced.

Of these, over 4 million have found temporary asylum in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Only about 1.1 million of the Syrian refugees live in refugee camps, informal settlements and collective centres. The rest live outside camps, in cities, towns, and rural areas, often in difficult circumstances and in locations not easily reached by humanitarian aid organizations. The great majority of the refugees are Sunni Muslim Arabs, but the population also includes ethnic and religious minorities, such as Kurds, Druze, and members of various Christian and Shiite Muslim sects.

The scale of destruction of homes and livelihoods presents a major obstacle to return and reintegration efforts.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, 19 January 2017 [last updated], **Syria civil war**

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [31 January 2017], **Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Snapshot (as of 31 January 2017)**

<sup>4</sup> OCHA, December 2016, **2017 Humanitarian needs overview: Syrian Arab Republic**

## Cultural communications:<sup>5</sup>

### ■ MEETING & GREETINGS

- › When you meet a Syrian for the first time, whether man or woman, it is important to shake hands and/or introduce yourself. It should come as no surprise if a Syrian asks you personal questions, and this is a part of creating a personal relation. Be friendly and try to communicate by answering.
- › Women with a head cover (hijab) are seen regularly. Some shake hands with men, others will not. The best way to deal with such a situation is to greet those women by putting your hand on your chest and say "Good morning" or "hello". If the woman extends her hand, then you may shake it. Women can shake hands with women without awkwardness.
- › If you are sitting in front of a Syrian, do not cross your legs with the sole of your shoe facing him/her (it is considered insulting).
- › Syrians stand close to each other and may hug or clasp hands. People of the same gender sometimes walk hand in hand. They may also touch you on the shoulder.
- › Keep eye contact when communicating.

### ■ TITLES AND NAMES

- › At first introduction to a colleague, it is proper to address him or her by "Mr." or "Mrs." until you know them well. Then you may address them by their first name. For supervisors, it is more proper to address them by title or "Mr./Mrs." unless told otherwise. Westerners may be accustomed to cursing during informal conversations. Avoid such language completely.

## Supporting successful refugee resettlement:

- › Be aware of differences between yourself and your client / student in terms of customs, values and belief systems, as well as perceptions of service delivery and treatment. It may be advisable to obtain the assistance of a cultural adviser, or someone familiar with the culture of your client's home country to help you develop culturally appropriate forms of service delivery when working with a new refugee community in your area.
- › Many adult refugees will have only had limited formal education so communication styles may need to be adjusted accordingly.
- › Refugees may also have difficulty comprehending the importance New Zealand society places on official documentation. Some refugees may associate the recording of personal information with suspicion because of past experiences in their home country. As such, it is important to ensure refugee clients understand why you are recording information, where it will be stored and with whom it will be shared.
- › Explain your role carefully to the client and always use a professional interpreter if the client is not proficient in English. If your organisation does not have established procedures for using interpreters, interpreting services can be found through the following organisations: Interpreting New Zealand – [www.interpret.org.nz](http://www.interpret.org.nz) and Language Line – [www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/browse/language-line](http://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/browse/language-line)
- › The Citizens Advice Bureau Language Connect provides free and confidential support in different languages. Advice on settlement needs, such as housing, renting, health, education and any other settlement issues. They can also help with immigration questions. Please call 0800 788877 (free phone) or email: [language@cab.org.nz](mailto:language@cab.org.nz)

5 Cultural Orientation Center, November 2014, *Refugees from Syria*

## Language

Arabic (official), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian (widely understood); French, English (somewhat understood)

### ■ BASIC ARABIC:<sup>6</sup>

**Hello** – ahlan wa sahlan

**Welcome** – ahlan

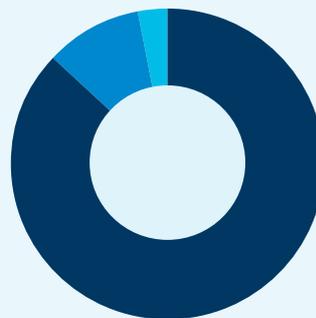
**Thank you** – shukran

**Yes** – aiwa/na'am

**No** – la

6 Source: Andrew Humphreys and Damien Simonis, [1999], *Syria*, Lonely Planet, Hawthorn, Victoria, p.289

## Religion



■ Muslim 87% (official; includes Sunni 74% and Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia 13%)

■ Christian (includes Orthodox, Uniate, and Nestorian) 10% (includes Orthodox, Uniate, and Nestorian)

■ Druze 3%, Jewish (few remaining in Damascus and Aleppo)<sup>7</sup>

7 CIA, 7 June 2016 [last updated], *World Factbook on Syria*

New Zealand is one of twenty six countries that take part in the United Nations Refugee Agency's regular refugee resettlement programme. Our annual refugee quota of 1000 refugees is a reflection of the government's commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities to provide protection to refugees.

The New Zealand Government and a number of local organisations, such as New Zealand Red Cross, are helping these families to resettle, and to access the goods and services they need to restart their lives.



**Damascus**  
is the  
capital city  
of Syria.

**6.3m**  
million people  
are internally  
displaced inside  
Syria; approximately  
half are children  
and youth.\*\*

*Parties to the armed conflicts in Syria committed war crimes, other serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross human rights abuses with impunity. Government and allied forces carried out indiscriminate attacks and direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects using aerial bombing and artillery, causing thousands of civilian casualties.\**

*Violations of international humanitarian law have been committed by government forces and non-state actors.\**

**13.5m**  
people inside  
Syria are in **need  
of humanitarian  
assistance** – the delivery  
of which is frequently  
blocked, in particular  
by government  
forces.\*\*

\* Amnesty International, 22 February 2017, *Amnesty International Report 2016/17*

\*\* OCHA, December 2016, *2017 Humanitarian needs overview: Syrian Arab Republic*

## Additional Resources

- › New Zealand Immigration has factsheets and videos for refugees and family members settling in New Zealand which are available at [www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/supporting-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/information-for-refugees-settling-in-new-zealand](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/supporting-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/information-for-refugees-settling-in-new-zealand)
- › Detailed UNHCR guidelines for working refugees are available in a publication called *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, see [www.unhcr.org/4a2cfe336.html](http://www.unhcr.org/4a2cfe336.html)
- › BBC, 11 April 2017, [last updated], *Syria country profile*, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703856](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703856)
- › BBC, 11 May 2017, [last updated], *Timeline - Syria*, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995)
- › Encyclopaedia Britannica, [2017], *Syria*, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/578856/Syria](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/578856/Syria)
- › Every Culture, [2017], *Syrians*, [www.everyculture.com/wc/Rwanda-to-Syria/Syrians.html](http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Rwanda-to-Syria/Syrians.html)
- › Human Rights Watch, 12 January 2017, *World Report 2016 - Syria*, [www.refworld.org/docid/587b58196.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/587b58196.html)
- › United States Department of State, 3 March 2017, 2016 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Syria*, [www.refworld.org/docid/58ec89bf13.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/58ec89bf13.html)

## Contact Information

For more information about New Zealand's Refugee Quota programme, or New Zealand's Refugee Policy, please contact:

### **Sarah Ward**

Refugee Resettlement Coordinator  
Refugee Quota Branch  
New Zealand Immigration  
Ph: 09 928 2844  
Email: [Sarah.Ward@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:Sarah.Ward@mbie.govt.nz)

If you require further information or support on any health or education issue for the refugees recently resettled in your region, please contact the following specialist agencies located at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre:

### **Refugees as Survivors New Zealand (RASNZ)**

(09) 270 0870  
[www.rasnz.co.nz](http://www.rasnz.co.nz)

### **Refugee Health Screening Service**

(09) 276 6719  
[www.refugeehealth.govt.nz](http://www.refugeehealth.govt.nz)

### **AUT - Centre for Refugee Education**

(09) 921 9366  
[www.aut.ac.nz/community/aut-in-the-community/centre-for-refugee-education](http://www.aut.ac.nz/community/aut-in-the-community/centre-for-refugee-education)

### **Refugee Quota Branch**

(09) 928 2648  
[www.immigration.govt.nz](http://www.immigration.govt.nz)

### **New Zealand Red Cross**

0800 RED CROSS  
[www.redcross.org.nz](http://www.redcross.org.nz)

*Please note: No personal information will be released without written consent from the client.*