



19 June 2018 – On World Refugee Day 2018, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean calls for renewed support for the protection and well-being of refugees and other displaced populations, and their right to seek health services with dignity, without discrimination, and without undergoing financial hardship.

Working with national health authorities and international partners, WHO continues its crucial work for safeguarding refugee health. WHO supports health authorities in all key areas, ranging from mainstreaming refugee and migrant health in all policies, to improving access to health care, safe water, and sanitation, housing and nutrition and providing humanitarian assistance. WHO also works with its national and international partners to ensure that refugee and displaced populations are free from diseases that are preventable.

Examples of this important work, in close partnership with governments, can be seen all over the Region: whether it's free vaccination programmes and improving health information systems; assessing available health services; or ensuring access to health care for the hundreds of thousands of refugees returning to their country. WHO's work helps guarantee health for all, including refugees.

Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, commented: "Refugees and other displaced populations are vulnerable in multiple unique ways. Lack of access to health care, especially for women and children, increased risk of communicable diseases in overcrowded and often unsanitary living environments, and increased demand for mental health and trauma care: these are the major barriers to guaranteeing refugee health."

With more than half of the world's refugees fleeing from Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and Syria, WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region accounts for the largest percentage of the world's 17.1 million refugees, with many countries experiencing large migration flows from Africa and the Region towards Europe.

As part of the WHO mission to "Promote health – keep the world safe – serve the vulnerable", WHO is working intensively to ensure that all people, including refugees and displaced populations, have equitable access to quality health care with dignity, without discrimination, and without undergoing financial hardship.

On World Refugee Day 2018, we invite the world to join our call for safeguarding and protecting the health of all refugees and displaced populations in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and beyond.

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