

Institute for the Study of International Migration

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## INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY SHARING AND REFUGEES

Since the formal inception of the international refugee protection regime in the 1950s, there has been a great deal of debate surrounding where the responsibility for the protection of and provision for refugees falls. Everyone recognizes that no one state can provide for all the refugees seeking asylum within its borders and that solutions to displacement crises across the world cannot be reached without international cooperation. The principles of international solidarity and national responsibility are among the core tenants enshrined in the agreements that underpin the international refugee protection regime, including the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. National authorities have the principal responsibility to provide asylum, but the international community is to cooperate with governments that face an unduly heavy burden in carrying out its responsibilities.

As the Syrian displacement crisis pushes into its fifth year and nears 5 million registered refugees and Iraqi, Palestinian, Afghan, Sudanese, and Somali refugees remain in situations of protracted displacement, the issue of responsibility sharing has gained even greater attention. Notably, with the exception of Turkey and Egypt, the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region that are hosting refugees are not Parties to the UN Refugee Convention. Yet, they have accepted far more refugees than many of the countries that have ratified the Convention or Protocol and sit on the Executive Committee of the UNHCR. The refugees present costs as well as opportunities for these countries. Understanding the perspectives of these governments and other stakeholders, including refugees and local host populations, on responsibility-sharing is imperative for helping find solutions for the millions who have been displaced by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq to countries of asylum across the MENA region.

The team is in the process of conducting an extensive literature review and a series of in-depth interviews with stakeholders across the five countries of study—Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey—to answer research questions in the following three key areas:

- Mapping ‘de facto’ responsibility-sharing in the MENA region, and by examining commitments around the Syria crisis, it will highlight what commitments exist with different types of contributions, including protection, humanitarian assistance, resettlement, humanitarian visas, development assistance, asylum, and legal migratory channels.
- Gaining a deeper understanding of (and filling a notable gap in existing literature on) the politics of responsibility-sharing in the MENA region where most states are not Parties to the Refugee Convention or Protocol but nevertheless host millions of refugees.
- Combining these perspectives with a largely neglected dimension of responsibility-sharing debates: interaction between responsibility-sharing models and the behavior of displaced populations themselves, including the expectations of refugees. Based on fieldwork and interviews with refugees in the Middle East, the project will explore how particular types of resettlement and relocation proposals reflect or ignore the behavior, agency and choices of displaced people themselves.

This project is being funded by the Migration Studies Delegation (Delmi), an independent, public inquiry commission under the direction of the Swedish Ministry of Justice.

For further information, contact: [Susan Martin](#).

### REPORTS & PUBLICATIONS

[International Responsibility, Protection and Displacement: Exploring the Connections between R2P, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons](#)

OCTOBER 26, 2016



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