
Security Restrictions and Hardships for Refugees in Egypt

A quarter from Europe, mainly skilled professionals, technicians, managers, craftsmen, and some in agriculture. In Egypt, it seems that there was never specific legislation to facilitate the entry of migrant workers into the country. A law passed in 1952 following the Nasser revolution, prohibited foreigners from obtaining work permits as long as the labor market had Egyptians to fill the positions. The principle remains the same today. An organization cannot exceed 10% of its workforce with unskilled or semi-skilled non-Egyptian labor, or 25% in the case for skilled workers. In 2006, the Egyptian government placed a strict control on the formal entry of foreign domestic workers, prohibiting any “request for a work permit for a house manager or a similar position such as a nanny, cook, maid, etc. of any nationality.”[8]The rights and entitlements of non-Egyptian labor in the country are the same as those of Egyptians under the Egyptian Labor Code, but “subject to the condition of reciprocity,” where Egypt has labor agreements with other countries that host Egyptian migrants.

With increasing recognition of the importance of migration, Egypt is gradually attempting to develop more systematic facilitation of its nationals into international labor markets, but more specifically within the Arab region, where most of its recent migration history is based. Migration and development is the key to its most recent deliberations in association with the League of Arab States. Because of the levels of poverty and unemployment within the country, however, restrictions on migrant labor entry into Egypt will remain restrictive individuals who want to obtain refugee status must have a Refugee Status Determination Interview with a representative of the UNHCR. The principal applicant and all of his or her family members must go through separate interviews at the UNHCR local office, presenting their UNHCR asylum-seeker registration cards, original identification documents (such as a passport or an ID card), and other documents that might be relevant to their refugee claim. Applicants are entitled to have a legal representative to assist them during their interview. At the end of the interview, applicants are issued an appointment slip by the interviewer indicating the date when they can start checking for their interview result, which is usually approximately eight weeks from the date of the interview.

Refugees who pass the Refugee Status Determination Interview are provided with a UNHCR yellow refugee card, which is stamped by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Refugee Affairs section of the Ministry of Interior’s Department of Migration and Citizenship. According to the Ministry of Interior’s Decree No. 8180 of 1996, refugees generally receive a three-year temporary residency permit. This Decree is not being implemented, however, because of a ministerial decision allowing them only six-month renewable residency permits. Such permits are renewable as long as the refugee “remains of concern to UNHCR

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Most refugees in Egypt, including those from Syria, are scattered in urban neighborhoods, where they rent and share accommodations. The Egyptian government provides no social benefits to refugees, other than permitting them access to education in public schools and health care in public hospitals. Any social benefits they receive are provided by Egypt's UNHCR office. Although Egypt made a reservation to article 22, section 1 of the Refugee Convention, thereby denying refugees the right to be admitted to public schools, the Egyptian Minister of Education issued Ministerial Decree No. 24 in 1992, allowing the children of recognized refugees, which includes Syrians, to attend public schools.

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