



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK  
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME  
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

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## The responsibility of the EU and of its Member States **IRAQI REFUGEES: NECESSARY PROTECTION**

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) is very concerned about the fate of Iraqi refugees in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Increasing numbers of Iraqis are seeking to leave Iraq, their safety in the country no longer guaranteed.

Since February 2006, nearly 750 000 people have fled. In total, since the beginning of the conflict, the number of displaced persons within Iraq has reached 1,9 million. According to the UNHCR's recent estimates, 50 000 new people are currently being displaced every month. As for the number of refugees abroad, this is estimated at more than 2 million.

This all has direct effects in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The great majority of Iraqi refugees is divided between Syria (1,2 million) and Jordan (750 000). Egypt and Turkey are taking in a growing number. However many refugees there have no residence permits and find themselves denied access to work, education and health care.

Marc Schade-Poulsen, Executive Director of the EMHRN has said: « The situation of Palestinian refugees in Iraq, forced once again to leave their homes and prevented from crossing the borders into neighbouring countries, who are already taking in a large number of Palestinian refugees, is especially worrying.”

In this context, and in the spirit of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, it's imperative that the EU and its Member States play a more proactive role in supporting efforts to protect these refugees. It is especially important that the EU and its Member States review an increase in the funds they are intending to allocate to the protection of these refugees. However, financial support alone will not be enough.

The EMHRN regrets the announcement made by the German Presidency of the EU, stating that Member States do not wish to participate in a resettlement programme for these refugees. “It's all too easy to give the Mediterranean partners the entire responsibility for taking care of these refugees” said Marc Schade Poulsen, adding that « It also goes against the principle of shared responsibilities, much-lauded by the EU within the framework of putting in place asylum and immigration policies”.

The EMHRN would like to stress that in 2006, the EU Member States would only have taken in 20 000 Iraqi asylum seekers. However, the human rights non-governmental organisation regrets that there are very few reliable statistics available on the number of people who actually have been granted refugee status in the Member States.

Finally, the EMHRN asks the EU Member States and the Mediterranean countries to refrain from any act of refoulement of Iraqi asylum seekers and in relation to this, would like to point out the dispositions of international humanitarian law and human rights laws.

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**The EMHRN (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network) gathers more than 80 human rights organizations, institutions and individuals based in 30 countries around the Mediterranean. It works to promote and protect human rights within the framework of the Barcelona Process and the co-operation between the European Union and the Arab world.**

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