

Friday, 26 April 2013

## UNHCR : Syrian refugee numbers top 1.4 million



The number of Syrians who have fled their conflict-ravaged homeland has surpassed 1.4 million, the United Nations refugee agency said Friday, warning that it was no longer able to meet their medical needs. As of Thursday, the total number of Syrians registered as refugees was 1,401,435, the UNHCR said. "This corresponds to 30 percent more than the total envisaged under the current Regional Refugee Response Plan by end June 2013," it underlined. The UNHCR said it has received just 55 percent of the funding it has sought to help cope with the crisis. "We cannot deal with all cases and the costs," Paul Spiegel, deputy director of the UNHCR's program department, told reporters in Geneva. Syrians have been pouring out of their country since March 2011, when a crackdown on protests against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad heralded the start of an armed rebellion. Numbers surged as the conflict morphed into an increasingly sectarian civil war, and the total topped a million in March this year. The overwhelming majority of the refugees have fled to neighboring Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan. A major difficulty for the UNHCR is the growing number of Syrians living beyond refugee camps, which makes it harder to run program to help them. The UNHCR underlined that because the Syrian population's pre-war health profile was similar to that of other middle-income nations, the refugees need more than basic care directly linked to the impact of the conflict. For example, a significant proportion of the elderly refugees need treatment for chronic illnesses such as cancer or cardiovascular disease.